

The Parts In-between

by  
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FADE IN:

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - DAY

CHRISTINA JOHNSON (53, African-American) sits frustrated at a computer. She types.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)  
*"Ellen stands at the foot of the bed looking at the man she has brought home. She lets her nightdress slip off her shoulders to reveal the shapes men only dream of."*

Christina winces, deletes the second sentence and types again.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)  
*"She peels off her negligee to expose her robust, melon-like..."*

Shaking her head, she back-spaces furiously and then starts again.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)  
*"She rips off her clothes and flashes her big 'ole boobs."*

CHRISTINA  
Shit.

Defeated, she closes the laptop and starts packing-up.

As she makes her way out, she instinctively stops by a piano. Without looking, she plays the following sixteenth notes (E-D-C-B-A). She leaves.

INT. JAMAL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JAMAL JOHNSON (17, African-American) plays an electric keyboard attempting Miles' Davis So What to a funk beat. He tries three times and finally gets it right and is visibly pleased. His cell phone rings and he must stop.

BOBBY (O.S.)  
J-Man where you at? We don't have this rehearsal space all night.

JAMAL  
(looking at his watch)  
Shit.

He hurriedly packs up to leave.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - NIGHT

RASHAD JOHNSON (56, African-American) a dashiki-wearing, barrel-chested, bald man with a beard, finishes a lecture.

An attractive female underclassmen (RONISHA, 23, African American) looks at the D+ on her paper and glares at the instructor.

RASHAD

For those of you who have not picked up your term papers, they are in the box outside my office. It seems I need to remind you that this is a *Research One* institution and integrity is of the utmost importance. If we are going to subvert the White Power Structure through academia, then we must uphold high standards. Now, shall we?

The class reluctantly stands and gives a half-hearted "harambee."

Ronisha stays seated at her desk while the rest of the class leaves. As she rises to approach, her frown turns to a flirtatious smile.

RONISHA

Dr. Johnson?

RASHAD

(distracted)

Yes?

RONISHA

I was wondering if I could talk to you about the grade on my paper. Oh, what a great tattoo!

She touches his arm and now has his full attention.

RASHAD

Um, yes. It's West African. How can I help?

RONISHA

Well, I didn't do so good and I was wondering if we could look at it together. I'd be willing to buy you a beer somewhere.

RASHAD

Well, that's very kind, but I'm not sure, I mean, office hours are best. I need to get home and, um thanks though.

RONISHA

Sounds like there is a power structure that needs to be...subverted.

RASHAD

(nervous laugh)  
Excuse me?

RONISHA

You're married.

RASHAD

Exactly.

RONISHA

Then I'll come to your office and we'll get everything straight.

RASHAD

Yes, we'll work something out.

RONISHA

I plan on it.

She turns to leave and Rashad contemplates her backside. He then glances at the clock.

RASHAD

Shit.

He finishes packing-up.

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Christina sits with her psychologist.

DR. MUMFORD

I'm not really sure what you mean. Does he scare you or just annoy you?

CHRISTINA

I don't think that scared is the right word. But I've had these uneasy feelings about him for years.

DR. MUMFORD

Is he overbearing?

CHRISTINA

I can't remember having a deep, meaningful conversation about anything with him. Plus he is so successful and I feel like I'm in competition with him for some reason. I mean, I'm just...well not much.

DR. MUMFORD

First of all we need to deal with the last statement. Did you make a list of your accomplishments? What about the affirmations?

CHRISTINA

You were serious? Stand in front of a mirror and tell myself how capable I am?

DR. MUMFORD

What harm could it do?

CHRISTINA

None, I suppose. I actually start to stutter when I talk to him.

DR. MUMFORD

If he has made you feel less than whole and has not been supportive of your emotional core, then you need to address that.

CHRISTINA

You mean address him?

DR. MUMFORD

If you truly think that you will not be able to ask him to take responsibility for the way he has made you feel, then you need to consider a life without him.

CHRISTINA

Isn't that a bit drastic?

DR. MUMFORD

How much do you want to get on with your life?

A new-age sounding chime signals the end of the session. Christina starts to get up.

DR. MUMFORD  
How's the medication holding up?

CHRISTINA  
I need a refill.

DR. MUMFORD  
No problem.

Christina starts out the door.

DR. MUMFORD  
Christina, you are not the first woman to have a problem with her father. We'll get through this, but you must be strong.

CHRISTINA  
Okay.

Christina leaves.

EXT. BACKYARD GARDEN - DAY

A stately EDWARD PETERSON (75, African-American) tends a flower bed. He wears clean white gardening gloves and measures fertilizer with a measuring cup. He finishes and looks over his perfect flowers, nods his approval and then packs up his tool case. Before he goes in, he turns and looks at a complete garden of spectacular flowers.

INT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Edward walks into the kitchen, puts his tool case under the sink and washes his hands. He then walks down the hall, which is covered with photos of a regal military career and a dignified couple on their wedding day. He sits in the living room, looks at his watch and waits for it to ring. Shortly, it does.

EDWARD  
Hello, dear.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)  
Hi, dad.

EDWARD  
How was your day? Did your students perform well on their essays?

CHRISTINA (O.S.)  
Well, let's just say I have my work cut out for me.

EDWARD

But you are keeping your standards rigorous. The worst thing you can do for those kids is give them good grades for merely trying.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)

They will get the grades they deserve.

EDWARD

Good. I'm glad to hear it. Your mother and I never settled for second best for you.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)

Are you coming to the reunion?

EDWARD

Yes. I told you that I would, so I am.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)

I think it will be fun. Jesse says that Uncle Robert will behave and I know you want to see the kids.

EDWARD

Whether or not your uncle drinks himself blind is of very little concern to me.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)

It could serve as an opportunity...

EDWARD

It will serve as an opportunity for me to represent the family. That is all. How is James?

CHRISTINA (O.S.)

Jamal is fine. He's at rehearsal.

EDWARD

The jazz trio or the gangster group?

CHRISTINA (O.S.)

I hate to break this to you, but rap is here to stay.

EDWARD

Yes, I guess you are right. I'll be seeing you at dinner.

CHRISTINA (O.S.)

Bye, dad.

EDWARD

Goodbye, dear.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

CHRISTINA passes back essays to a group of students.

CHRISTINA

Remember, if you are having trouble, it's on you to come during lunch so we can work on this together. And trust me, if your first paragraph has a problem with tenses, the AP reader will probably not bother make it to the end of the essay.

She comes to a student who reads a book by the trash novelist *Zane*. Christina drops a paper with a D on the desk.

CHRISTINA

Katrina, I think if you spend more time working on your own essay than reading trashy erotica you might do better on these essays.

KATRINA

I like it.

CHRISTINA

It hardly qualifies as literature. Give it to me and look at your paper.

Christina holds out her hand.

KATRINA

She's one thing that you ain't.

CHRISTINA

And what would that be?

KATRINA

Published.

Christina snatches the book and moves on as the student sucks her teeth.



INT. SUBURBAN KITCHEN - NIGHT

Christina prepares dinner and hears Rashad come in.

CHRISTINA  
Is that you?

RASHAD (O.S.)  
Yeah.

CHRISTINA  
Chicken okay?

Rashad enters the kitchen.

RASHAD  
Sure. Where's Jamal?

CHRISTINA  
Rehearsal

RASHAD  
He hasn't brought in the trash  
cans.

CHRISTINA  
You know his gig is coming up and  
that agent says he is coming.

Rashad doesn't answer.

CHRISTINA  
He hasn't said it, but he would  
like both of us to be there.

No answer.

CHRISTINA  
Your silence will not protect you.

RASHAD  
When is it?

CHRISTINA  
Next Thursday. Eleven o'clock.

RASHAD  
Are you kidding Chrissy? I teach  
at eight the next morning. Is his  
father going to be there?

CHRISTINA  
Of course he isn't. Come on  
Rashad, a teenager getting signed  
to a major label. Even you have to  
be impressed with that.

RASHAD

When I was his age...

CHRISTINA

When you were his age you couldn't get the stink of doobie smoke out of that bush you wore on your head.

Rashad touches his bald head.

CHRISTINA

Not that you could pull that off these days. Or that you could fit into those bell-bottoms that...

RASHAD

Okay, okay. I'll be there.

Rashad comes over to the stove.

RASHAD

That smells good.

He puts his hand on Christina's butt. She smacks his hand with a spatula.

EXT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - DAY

Edward comes out of the front porch with his gardening case and makes his way to the front gate. He looks down at the flower bed that has been run over and is crushed under tire tracks. Exhausted, he starts to fix the flowers.

As he works, a car blasting music pulls up across the street. The driver gets out and leans against the car, talking to friends.

Frustrated, Edward crosses the street and notices that the tread on the tires of the car match the tracks on his flower bed.

EDWARD

Excuse me. Excuse me. Good evening. I live in the house across the street and I was hoping to work in my yard. But your music is a bit too loud. Would it be at all possible...

The driver turns to face Edward and opens his jacket to reveal a gun. Edward pauses and goes back to his house. He takes a last look up and down the street and goes in the front door.

INT. CHRISTINA'S DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Edward, Christina, Rashad and Jamal sit for dinner.

CHRISTINA

What?! Dad, I grew up in that house.

EDWARD

I understand dear, but the decision's already been made. The realtor has already listed in the house.

CHRISTINA

Why didn't you tell me?

EDWARD

I'm telling you now. I'm sorry if this is shock, I will be better off at Green Haven.

CHRISTINA

What, may I ask, is Green Haven?

EDWARD

It is the retirement community I've signed on with. It is quite nice with a gym and library. I will be moving in next week as the realtor can then show the house at her leisure.

RASHAD

How much you asking?

CHRISTINA

That's not important. It's your house dad. Aren't you sad?

EDWARD

The price is not important and yes, I am sad, but it is the right thing to do.

CHRISTINA

But what about your flowers? You were written about in a magazine for your flowers.

EDWARD

And thus I have a record of my accomplishment. I am very proud of that, but I need to move on.

RASHAD

I have to agree with you sir. I think...

CHRISTINA

But what about all your stuff, the furniture, pictures and, and, all that?

EDWARD

I will need to pare down with a yard sale. I have room enough for what I really need at Green Haven.

CHRISTINA

Well, can I come and get some stuff before the yard sale?

RASHAD

Maybe we can bring over the piano and sell it with your stuff.

EDWARD

Don't be ridiculous. Now if you don't mind, I would like to hear about James' latest musical endeavors.

JAMAL

I got a gig coming up with the rap band.

RASHAD

I'm not sure Mr. Peterson is asking about the latest vulgarity-fest.

JAMAL

Whatever.

EDWARD

I think Rashad and I finally agree on something. How about your Jellyroll or Benny Goodman?

JAMAL

I was jamming on Miles Davis the other day.

EDWARD

Well done. Which one?

JAMAL

Kind of Blue.

EDWARD

See? He's a regular Herbie Hancock. How's your rhythm?

JAMAL

I gotta get my left hand steady.

EDWARD

You'll get there. That's why I bought you the metronome.

CHRISTINA

You know that the housing market has flattened lately. You could...

EDWARD

Christina, please.

CHRISTINA

Why can't we talk about this?

EDWARD

It sounds like you want to argue rather than talk. Now that's enough.

Christina gets up and starts clearing the table.

JAMAL

Grandpa, you know there's some rap you might like.

EDWARD

Well, you know I cannot abide the language.

JAMAL

It's not all like that. I'll rip some phat tracks and burn 'em to CD-R for you.

EDWARD

James, I didn't understand a word you just said.

The three of them laugh. Christina leaves in a huff.

INT. CHRISTINA AND RASHAD'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rashad sits in bed watching Christina out of the corner of his eye. He checks his breath with his cupped hand and checks his underarms.

Christina, in the bathroom, slams toiletries around. She comes into the bedroom, gets into bed snatching the covers. She punches her pillow and lies with her back to Rashad.

Rashad waits for a moment and then starts to scoot over her.

CHRISTINA

Oh, I don't think so.

Christina turns back over leaving Rashad disappointed. He tries tickling her ear.

CHRISTINA

You are taking your life in your hands Rashad.

He scoots back over to his side of the bed. After a moment, he picks up a copy of Franz Fannon's The Wretched of the Earth.

INT. RASHAD'S UNIVERSITY OFFICE - DAY

Rashad sits in his immaculate office with African masks and books everywhere. He types on the computer when he hears a knock at the half opened door. Without looking up...

RASHAD

Yes.

Ronisha peeks in.

RONISHA

Dr. Johnson?

RASHAD

(typing)  
Yes, come in. Have a seat.

RONISHA

How are you?

RASHAD

Fine, fine.

He finally looks up to see who is sitting in front of him.

RASHAD

Oh, it's you.

RONISHA

It certainly is.

RASHAD

Ronisha, right?

RONISHA

Got it.

RASHAD

Your paper?

RONISHA

I got it right here. Um, not what I was expecting. I was hoping we could stick something in and make it better.

RASHAD

Excuse me?

RONISHA

Perhaps something about imperialism or um, what's it called, forced assimilation?

RASHAD

Oh, well, let's take a look. Aw yes, I remember. This is, well, it's a mess. First of all, it needs to be in Chicago style not APA. As far as content goes, I think the problem is your central thesis, or lack thereof. What exactly are you trying to prove here?

RONISHA

You know, that colonialism totally messed-up Africa. That, um, that's why it's messed up today.

RASHAD

Okay, fair enough. Can you turn that into a clear statement and show how you will prove it? You see, the rest of your paper hinges on your clear thesis.

RONISHA

Do you think I could give it another try? My grade really took a dive with this paper.

RASHAD

Well, I don't think I can give you full credit. That would be pretty unfair to the other students.

(MORE)

RASHAD (CONT'D)

You do have another paper due in a month.

RONISHA

Well, that one is going to be perfect. I promise. But if I get stuck, can I call you?

Rashad is a bit speechless.

RONISHA

I'll tell you what. Here's my cell number. If you come up with any great ideas, maybe you can call me.

RASHAD

Um, sure. But the bulk of the work needs to come from you. After you have the thesis the real work begins. How much are you willing to put into this?

She stands to leave.

RONISHA

You have no idea.

She quickly kisses him on the cheek.

RONISHA

Bye, Dr. Johnson.

She slips out the door. Rashad has a stunned look on his face.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Christina and three other women (PATRICIA, CANDICE AND BEVADINE) prepare food for the cookout. There are large Tupperware bowls everywhere.

PATRICIA

I don't care. If he even puts one hand on me I'm gonna knock him down and stomp him in front of his children.

CANDICE

I know that's right.

PATRICIA

I'm not even going to go into what happened at Thanksgiving four years ago.



There is a pause and anticipation.

PATRICIA

Okay, well, we were all having a perfectly nice time. I was sitting here, Martha was there and Robert was in between us.

The other two women nod as if they know where the story is going.

PATRICIA

Needless to say, after about a million beers, Robert's famous hands start to wander. Sure enough, he put his hand on her leg again and BAM! He yelled like a puppy dog and everyone was wondering what was going on. Everyone just thought Robert was drunk.

CHRISTINA

Is that potato salad ready or what? We don't have a lot of time.

PATRICIA

That's not all! That's not all!

CANDICE

Girl, it only takes twenty minutes to get there. We got over an hour.

PATRICIA

So after about ten minutes, I swear I'm not lying, he puts his hand on MY leg!

General disbelief from the others - except Christina who is moving about the kitchen nervously.

PATRICIA

Now you know I don't play. I swear I'm not lying, I took a leg of turkey and started smacking his damn face.

BEVADINE

You did not!

PATRICIA

I sure as hell did! Martha was holding him down!

Everyone is hysterical with laughter. Christina has had enough.

CHRISTINA

I'm going to start loading the car. I want to make sure the tents are set up. I, I, have to go. I'll see you at the park.

She grabs some Tupperware and walks out of the kitchen. There is an uncomfortable silence.

BEVADINE

Maybe she needs some time with Robert.

The women try to hide their laughter, but can't.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Christina puts the Tupperware on the coffee table, picks up her sweater and as she puts it on, she notices that her friend has a piano. With a free hand she plays the following sixteenth notes (E-D-C-B-A). She picks up her stack of Tupperware and leaves.

EXT. COOKOUT - DAY

A DJ spins old-school music as people dance and line-up for food. Kids chase each other with water balloons. Family members contemplate a huge poster board entitled "Family Trees." Basketball and baseball games take place.

DJ

(into microphone)  
Alrighty party people! I think ya'll know what to do with this one.

The Electric Slide commences.

EXT. COOKOUT - ANOTHER AREA - CONTINUOUS

A drunken UNCLE ROBERT talks to a nervous younger woman.

UNCLE ROBERT

That's right. Back in the day all the girls used to call me Sugar Bear. You know why? Cause I'm so full of sweetness. Girl, Sugar Bear sweeter than you can imagine.

The young girl feels a pinch on her butt and abruptly leaves.

UNCLE ROBERT  
Sweeter than you know girl!

EXT. COOKOUT - TABLE - CONTINUOUS

An ELDERLY WOMAN looks the table picking at her food. Patient family members listen to her complain.

GRANDMA  
I can tell you right now that there is no bone in that stew. And these greens is from a can. I can tell. Back in the day we would spend three days getting ready for a cookout. Come here baby.

She takes out money and keys from her purse. She hands them to a ten-year old.

GRANDMA  
Go on up to Reilly's and get me some barbecue. Get extra hot sauce cause they always be skimping on the sauce.

The confused child looks at his mother.

MOTHER  
Mom, he's ten-years-old.

GRANDMA  
Well then you go cause I ain't eatin' this, I'll tell you that right now!

EXT. COOKOUT - ANOTHER AREA - CONTINUOUS

Christina rearranges food while talking to DONNA HUGHES (40ish, African-American). Jamal pouts nearby.

DONNA  
You did a really nice job Chrissy. I think everything is going great.

CHRISTINA  
I hope so. My Dad has got me on edge already. Have you seen Rashad?

DONNA  
I haven't seen him since last night on campus.  
(MORE)

DONNA (CONT'D)

You know he's putting a lot of pressure on himself to publish. He works really hard.

CHRISTINA

Yes, well, I don't know why he can't write at home. I don't know where he is half the time.

DONNA

I'll keep an eye on him for you, make sure he doesn't work himself to death. Oh, hey, there's Dr. Randall. Everything is great Chrissy. See ya.

Donna gives Christina a quick hug and leaves. Christina notices her bored son.

CHRISTINA

What's it going to take to remove that pathetic look off your face?

JAMAL

Permission to leave.

CHRISTINA

Not gonna happen Jamal.

JAMAL

Mom, I helped out a lot like you asked. Now I should be able to roll.

CHRISTINA

Why don't you ask your cousin to dance?

Jamal looks over to see an outrageously fat girl in an ill-fitting dress sitting by herself.

JAMAL

Speaking of things that aren't gonna happen...

Christina lifts her head as if to pray. Jamal, realizing he has hurt her feelings, quickly notices the basketball game.

JAMAL

Will you look at those old guys? I think they are going to need some young blood on one of the teams.

Christina kisses him on the cheek proudly.

JAMAL

Mom! Come on, people are looking.

He starts to leave.

CHRISTINA

I love you.

JAMAL

Mom!

Jamal leaves.

Christina looks across the tent to see her father sitting by himself annoyed by the loud music is.

She then notices Rashad talking to an attractive woman obviously flirting. Christina starts violently consolidating macaroni into tins without looking.

EXT. COOKOUT - ANOTHER AREA - CONTINUOUS

Uncle Robert has another girl (a little older and a bit larger) cornered.

CORNERED WOMAN

You shot a bear?

UNCLE ROBERT

No, Sugar Bear!

CORNERED WOMAN

I didn't know you had a gun.

UNCLE ROBERT

No! Sugar Bear! The girls used to call me that, Sugar...

CORNERED WOMAN

You're the bear?

UNCLE ROBERT

That's right. Because I'm so full of...

CORNERED WOMAN

You mean someone tried to shoot you? That's terrible!

UNCLE ROBERT

No! The girls used to call me Sugar Bear 'cause I'm so full of...

CORNERED WOMAN

Did the police come?

UNCLE ROBERT

Police?! No, they were all over  
eighteen! All the girls knew who  
Sugar Bear was.

CORNERED WOMAN

What girls? Robert what in the  
world are you talking about?

They stop talking and look around for a minute. Out of  
the blue, the woman jumps as she feels her butt being  
pinched. She promptly starts beating the crap out of  
Robert with her purse.

EXT. COOKOUT - ANOTHER AREA - CONTINUOUS

Grandma sits at a table with family members near the  
dance floor.

GRANDMA

No sir. We never danced like that.  
Good lord look at her! She's  
practically naked! She's just  
asking for trouble and I wouldn't  
be surprised if she ended up  
getting caught.

MOTHER

Getting caught? For what? Dancing?

GRANDMA

Pregnant you fool! Getting caught!  
What do you think it means?! Look  
at her! (yelling to the dance  
floor) Hey, get a room! There's  
kids here! You! Take her where you  
can do that in private!

MOTHER

Mother please!

GRANDMA

Please what? If your father was  
here...

MOTHER

Oh here we go...

The mother gets up and leaves. The grandmother stews for  
a moment and then sees the ten-year old boy dancing with  
another ten-year-old girl in the same way.

Shocked, grandma furiously digs into her purse and takes out a bible.

EXT. COOKOUT - BASKETBALL COURT - CONTINUOUS

Jamal plays basketball with many older gentlemen. Jamal sees an opening and charges full speed, knocking down an old man as he makes the lay-up.

JAMAL  
That's right! Y'all got nothing!  
Uh-huh, that's the way it is up  
here in this court!

A crowd gathers around the old man.

EXT. COOKOUT - ANOTHER AREA - MOMENTS LATER

Paramedics lift the injured man into an ambulance. Christina, Jamal, and the man's wife (MRS. HAWKINS) watch in horror.

CHRISTINA  
What in the hell did you think you  
were doing?

JAMAL  
We were just ballin' mom.

CHRISTINA  
Just balling? The man is in an  
ambulance!

MRS. HAWKINS  
An ambulance that will not be  
free. You know I'm not going to  
get stuck paying for this.

CHRISTINA  
Of course. SOMEONE is going to get  
about ten part-time jobs to pay  
for it.

JAMAL  
Mom! It was an accident. What's an  
old man doing playing basketball  
for anyway?

CHRISTINA  
JAMES PETERSON, YOU APOLOGIZE!

JAMAL  
(to WIFE)  
I'm very sorry Mrs. Hawkins.  
(MORE)

JAMAL (CONT'D)

I will pay for everything. Can I give you a ride home?

MRS. HAWKINS

I'm going to ride with my husband. (sarcastically) Christina, thanks so much for the wonderful gathering.

CHRISTINA

I'm so sorry Cheryl. I'll be over tonight to make sure Ted is okay.

MRS. HAWKINS

Don't bother.

The wife gets in the ambulance. The door closes and it drives off.

JAMAL

Mom, I swear I didn't do it on purpose.

Christina holds up her hand to stop his talking.

CHRISTINA

You now have my permission to leave. Get out of my sight.

She walks away from Jamal and arrives at the food table.

Christina then sees Edward sitting uncomfortably with the grumpy grandma. She then sees Rashad at the baseball diamond with the attractive girl from earlier. Without looking, Christina furiously moves beans from container into another. Beans spill out everywhere.

EXT. COOKOUT - ANOTHER AREA - CONTINUOUS

Almost the entire group gathers for a family photo. Christina tries to get everyone in order.

CHRISTINA

Now come on. The kids should be in the front because they are the shortest. Dad, you stay in the middle there. Good. All of you on the ends need to cram in a little.

Edward patiently waits while people try to get organized. All of a sudden a football comes out of nowhere and hits one of the kids in the face. The kid shrieks. Christina turns to see Rashad casually jogging toward the group. The attractive girl is a ways behind him.



RASHAD

Sorry. My bad. She doesn't really know how to throw yet.

Christina gives him a dirty look.

RASHAD

What? I didn't throw it.

Rashad exits.

CHRISTINA

Okay. Let's try this again. Hey, Tommy. What is your mom going to say when she sees a picture of you with a cigarette in your mouth?

Tommy flicks the cigarette behind him. It lands on the DJ table undetected.

CHRISTINA

Okay, are we finally ready to go? Alright, on the count of three. ONE, TWO...

Grandma screams from the tent. The DJ table has caught fire and the DJ swipes at the flames with a napkin. Chaos.

Exasperated, Edward calmly walks to the tent taking two pitchers of water off of a table. He puts out the fire. The crowd cheers and pats Edward on the back. He finds a seat and takes out a handkerchief to clean off his hands. Christina sits next to him.

CHRISTINA

(nervously)  
Well, Colonel Peterson saves the day again.

Edward does not speak.

CHRISTINA

Something tells me we won't be getting a family photo today.

Edward does not speak.

CHRISTINA

Dad I'm sorry. This whole thing is a mess.

The sound of breaking glass is heard.

VOICE (O.S.)  
 Damn it Rashad! I'm gonna shove  
 that ball up your ass!

RASHAD  
 Sorry! My bad!

Edward pulls a cell phone out of his pocket. Christina gets up and walks away.

INT. COOKOUT - PUBLIC BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christina comes into the bathroom and stops at the sink and turns on the water. She splashes her face and takes a deep breath. She hears voices from the nearby stall.

UNCLE ROBERT (O.S.)  
 That's right. Right there. Oh!  
 That's good. Who's you Sugar Bear?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
 You my Sugar Bear.

UNCLE ROBERT (O.S.)  
 Who's your Sugar Bear?

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
 You my Sugar Bear!

UNCLE ROBERT (O.S.)  
 That's right. You got that  
 sweetness right there.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)  
 Oh God. You my Sugar Bear! You my  
 Sugar Bear! That's the sweetness!  
 That's the sweet...

Exasperated, Christina rushes out of the bathroom.

EXT. COOKOUT - OUTSIDE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christina comes out of the bathroom and stops in her tracks. In the distance, she sees Edward getting into a cab. She kicks at the dirt like a little girl.

EXT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - DAY

Christina stands in the front yard looking at the front door. She looks down and sees a sign that reads: "Yard Sale Next Sunday." She takes a deep breath and heads up the front steps.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Christina comes in the front door and surveys the house that is clean with only furniture. She looks around and then spots the fireplace.

FLASHBACK:

An Edward of forty-five years earlier sits on the couch with his wife on Christmas morning.

EDWARD

Any second now.

His wife smiles and pats his knee. Suddenly a thunder of little feet come down stairs and an excited, ten-year-old Christina comes in the room. She sees all the presents and then jumps on mom and dad for hugs and kisses.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Christina looks at the bare kitchen and table.

FLASHBACK:

Christina (as a teenager), Edward and his wife sit silently and solemnly at the table. After a long while...

CHRISTINA

Dad, I only have one senior prom.

EDWARD

And you only have one senior GPA. We had an accord Christina and you did not hold up your end. How in the world do you get a C+ in Chemistry?

CHRISTINA

Dad, the school paper has taken all my...

EDWARD

I'm not here to listen to excuses.

Edward gets up and leaves.

CHRISTINA

Mom?

MOM

I'll take care of it. Sweetheart you will go to your prom.

Christina weeps.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

FLASHBACK:

Christina, dressed in black, looks out of her bedroom window at a limousine. Family members in black wait outside the house. Edward appears in the door of the bedroom.

EDWARD

Christina, it's time. Are you ready?

Christina goes over and hugs him.

EDWARD

It's time to be strong dear. Pull yourself together and be strong. We'll get through this.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

Finished reminiscing, Christina wipes a tear from her face and gets in her car and starts the engine.

CHRISTINA

(to self)  
You'll be back.

EXT. GREEN HAVEN RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

Edward is near a moving van directing MOVERS into his new home.

EDWARD

Number thirty-two on the left wing. Please be careful with that hutch. That headboard in the bedroom obviously and all of the boxes marked "kitchen" go, well you'll figure it out.

The manager (MR. SANCHEZ) comes out to greet him

MR. SANCHEZ

Mr. Peterson what are you doing out here? I'm sure these fine gentlemen can take care of things. We have tea and cookies in the lounge. Would you like to meet some of the other residents?

EDWARD

Oh, hello. No, no. I'm sure there will be time enough for that later. Did you get my check?

MR. SANCHEZ

Yes, of course. I must say, you certainly did not need to pay that far in advance. It's quite unusual, but very much appreciated.

EDWARD

I didn't see any reason not to. Well I be able to get an invoice for that?

MR. SANCHEZ

Of course. It's already in your apartment on the kitchen counter.

EDWARD

So you will have access to the apartment?

MR. SANCHEZ

Myself and the security staff but no one else. Your privacy is of the utmost importance to us.

EDWARD

As it is to me. Tell me, what are the hours of the gym?

MR. SANCHEZ

You have twenty-four hour access to the gym.

EDWARD

I was hoping you would say that. I tend to wake up quite early.

MR. SANCHEZ

That military training I assume. You served during World War Two, correct?

EDWARD

Careful son. Don't give me more years than I want. Korea.

MR. SANCHEZ

Of course. Well, I'll leave you to the move and if there is anything I can do to help please do not hesitate to ask.

EDWARD

Trust me, I won't. Have a good day.

They shake hands and the manager leaves. Edward starts to take items out of the truck and places them on the curb.

Suddenly a small, pink umbrella for a tropical drink floats onto the bumper of the moving van. He picks it up and then looks around to see a woman (SOPHIA, 72, White) sitting on a bench near the entrance of the retirement home. She is dressed in a ridiculous Hawaiian mummu, sunning herself with a reflector board, drinking a tropical drink, listening to oversized headphones and humming to the music. Edward heads over to return the umbrella.

EDWARD

Excuse me? Excuse me?

He gently taps the reflector board. Startled, she whips the headphones off and spills her drink.

SOPHIA

Jiminy Christman! You scare the Scooby Doo out of me!

EDWARD

I am very sorry ma'am. I was, it's just that, well...

He holds up the umbrella.

SOPHIA

Hey, I've got one just like that. Is this fate?

EDWARD

I don't think so. You see, it flew out of you glass to my truck over there.

SOPHIA

Well, that sounds like fate to me! It could have flown to Neverland. Have a seat Pete.

EDWARD

Pete?

SOPHIA

Peter Pan? Neverland?

EDWARD

Ah, well, I only wanted to return this to you. I'm busy moving in.

SOPHIA

That doesn't sound like a boy who  
refuses to grow up. What has  
gotten into you Pete? Run out of  
fairy dust?

She extends a hand expecting it to be kissed. He shakes  
it as she holds on.

SOPHIA

I am Dame Sophia Elizabeth  
Angelique, but don't let the royal  
tone intimidate you. I just like  
the way it rolls off the tongue.  
Now, am I going to have to show  
you what I learned at Kung Fu  
camp?

A but stunned, he sits.

SOPHIA

Hey, do you like slatkey guitar?  
Check this out, it sounds like  
Polynesian cats doing the nasty.

EDWARD

Uh, well, no but I must...

She pops the headphones on his head.

SOPHIA

(shouting)  
Doesn't that sound like Polynesian  
cats screwing?

He takes the headphones off.

EDWARD

I'm sorry, what did you say?

SOPHIA

You know, cats...

She makes the screwing gesture with her fingers.

EDWARD

Well, I'm afraid I haven't the  
frame of reference.

SOPHIA

My, you do sound very educated. Do  
you have an advanced degree with  
like letters after your name?

EDWARD

Ma'am, I do not have an advanced degree. I only...

SOPHIA

I used to live on the island of Maui, loooooong before the big hotels and drunken high school grads. I was dating this Samoan guy...dumb as a stump, but he taught me how to surf. You ever been to Hawaii Pete?

EDWARD

(still confused)  
Uh, yes. Many years ago.

SOPHIA

Honeymoon or vacation?

EDWARD

Vacation.

SOPHIA

When was this? Maybe I saw you there.

EDWARD

Uh, I guess it must have been in the mid-seventies.

SOPHIA

No, I was gone by then. You do have a sort of beach and waves kind of quality about you though. Hmmmm, what is it about you?

EDWARD

I'm sure I don't know. But I must be going. My truck needs unpacking.

SOPHIA

Are you sure? Looks like you have a lot of help and I've got plenty more Mai Tai mix in the apartment. Can I interest you in a tropical delight? This one is obviously just getting the ants tanked.

EDWARD

Yes, I'm very sorry about that. It was discourteous of me to...



SOPHIA

Discourteous! Oh, I just love your cordiality! What a wonderful gentleman you are! Where does one acquire such refinement?

EDWARD

It's just upbringing I suppose. The military helped a bit.

SOPHIA

(excited)

A military man! I'll bet you cut a dashing figure in uniform. Do you have a gun?

EDWARD

Well, I certainly would not keep it here.

SOPHIA

I should hope not. I don't really approve of guns. I hope it doesn't get in the way of our relationship.

EDWARD

Relationship?

SOPHIA

(beat)

Consider it forthcoming.

She starts to collect her things and they both stand.

SOPHIA

Well, Pete, I will let you return to the breaking of your back. I'm in apartment twenty-two if you want that cocktail.

EDWARD

Ah, yes. Well, it was nice talking to you. And again, I'm very sorry about startling you.

SOPHIA

Forgetaboutit. Don't you just love how those Italian dudes from New York say that? Forgetaboutit.

She shakes his hand again and slightly curtsies.

SOPHIA

Ciao.

EDWARD

Goodbye.

She heads toward the front door of the retirement home. Before she goes in, she turns quickly.

SOPHIA

Burt Lancaster!

EDWARD

Sorry?

SOPHIA

You know, military guy, the beach, waves crashing? From Here to Eternity! Okay, great. See you Burt!

Edward stands with a confused look on his face, holding the cocktail umbrella.

EDWARD

(to self)  
Scooby Doo?

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT

Jamal's band jams on a funk groove. The group looks at each other knowing that it is time to hit the final chorus. The singer (BOBBY) makes his way to the mic and starts.

BOBBY

"And all I gotta do is pull the funk trigger. 'Cause everybody knows you my nigger."

Bobby starts pointing to invisible fans in an invisible crowd.

BOBBY

"You my nigger and you my nigger. I pull the funk trigger 'cause you my nigger"

As the chorus plays a few times, the bass player (DAVE) stops playing and rolls his eyes. The band notices that the groove is missing its bottom-end and the song dissolves and stops.

BOBBY

Aw man. What are you doing?

No response as the band awaits the forthcoming argument.

BOBBY

Dawg, we talked about this. We ain't getting signed with the NAACP. What is your problem? This song was stormin' last week. How do you think we got the agent's attention?

JAMAL

We had a hundred people rocking that place, cramming up against the stage.

DAVE

We had the crowd rocking before we played that song.

BOBBY

Nigger please. You gonna tell me...

DAVE

(calmly)

You want to embarrass yourself that's one thing. But if you ever call me that again you are going to wish you had health insurance 'cause I'll take your supposed street cred and stick it up your ass.

JAMAL

Okay, okay. Let's call it a night. I got to get home anyway.

Everyone glares at each other.

EXT. OUTSIDE REHEARSAL HALL - NIGHT

Jamal and Dave load gear into a van.

JAMAL

You know this is a big deal, this gig?

DAVE

Listen. You're seventeen years old. Getting signed might be the biggest deal in the world for you. But I'm majoring in International Business. If I don't get on the cover of The Source, I'm not going to die. I'm doing you a favor by playing in the first place.

JAMAL

And I appreciate that. I'm just saying it's only one song.

DAVE

Jamal, I need you to appreciate this: I'll get you through this gig then, I don't know. So start looking for someone else to play. I'm not trying to be a jerk about this, but I want to be clear.

JAMAL

We have a gig after that already booked.

DAVE

Jamal, have I made myself clear?

JAMAL

Yeah.

DAVE

Cool. I'll see you next time. Say hello to your family.

JAMAL

Yeah, you too.

Dave starts for his car and then turns around.

DAVE

Jamal, I'm not saying I don't want you to be a success. I do. I just decided a long time ago what's important to me. (pause) Have you?

Dave doesn't wait for an answer and gets into his car.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME WORKOUT ROOM - DAY

Edward, on the bench press, counts his press-ups. goes to another machine. He sets the weight limit and is about to start when there is a sudden burst of loud Chinese music.

He turns to see Sophia in the corner in the lotus position dressed in a kimono with her eyes closed. He glances at his watch and quietly makes his way to the door.

Outside the door he peeps through the window for one last look. Sophia slowly gets up and then starts into the first series of Tai Chi positions.

EDWARD

Good Lord. Where did she come from?

Edward exits.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Christina walks through desks as students write a timed essay. She is tense and distracted. After a while, the student who was reading the trashy book in class raises her hand. She waves it impatiently and Christina finally notices and goes over.

CHRISTINA

(whispering)

Yes?

STUDENT

Can I have my book back?

CHRISTINA

What are you talking about?

STUDENT

You took my book. I want it back.

CHRISTINA

This essay is being timed. Get to work.

STUDENT

It's mine. You stole it.

CHRISTINA

Get to work. You only have ten more minutes.

Christina starts to walk away.

STUDENT

(loudly)

This is bullshit!

CHRISTINA

Out! Get your stuff and get out!

STUDENT

How you gonna steal someone's book? Teachers ain't supposed to steal!

CHRISTINA

WHY! WHY! IT'S NOT "HOW YOU GONNA STEAL?" IT'S WHY WOULD YOU STEAL?!

(MORE)

CHRISTINA (CONT'D)

THIS IS A FUCKING AP ENGLISH  
CLASS! WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU  
PEOPLE!

The class is stunned. The student smiles smugly. She collects her things and confidently strolls out of the room.

CHRISTINA

(to class)  
What are you all looking at? Get  
back to work!

Christina goes to her desk, sits and puts her face in her hands defeated.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME VAN - DAY

Edward sits in the seat behind the driver seat reading a book waiting for the others who are ready to go on some kind of trip. The driver then gets into the van.

DRIVER

Oh, I didn't see you. How are you  
today?

EDWARD

Fine, fine. Am I the only one? We  
were supposed to leave ten minutes  
ago.

DRIVER

Everybody is coming. Sometimes it  
takes some of the resident a  
little while to get going.

EDWARD

Are we going to miss the lecture?

DRIVER

Not a chance. The talk doesn't  
really start until eleven. We say  
ten-thirty to make up for...well  
as you can see. Here they come.

A group of residents come out of the front door of the retirement home shuffling and slow.

DRIVER

Don't worry sir. We'll make it.

The group slowly starts to get in the bus

DRIVER

Okay folks, are we ready to roll?  
Is that everyone?

RESIDENT 1

That's it.

The other residents give each other a knowing look. The driver starts the engine and is about to leave when he spots Sophia coming.

DRIVER

Oops. Looks like there's one more.

The group moans at the sight of Sophia. Edward notices this. Sophia comes onto the van.

SOPHIA

Wow! That was close! You all weren't going to ditch me were you? Ha!

No one says a word. Sophia is forced to make her way to the back of the van clamoring past others garnering complaints along the way. She sits down and buckles up. She then notices Edward in the front.

SOPHIA

Hey Burt! It's me! How ya doing?

Edward smiles awkwardly and waves. The rest of the group looks at him suspiciously.

DRIVER

Well, anyone else has officially missed the bus. Let's roll.

They leave.

INT. ART MUSEUM LOBBY - DAY

A docent explains what the tour will entail.

Edward is listening politely and sees Sophia on the other side of the group. She spots him and winks. He smiles and tries to pay attention to the talk. Every time he looks over at her she is making faces, crossing her eyes, sticking out her tongue, trying to make him laugh. He tries to ignore her when the docent finally announces that the tour is about to begin.

INT. ART MUSEUM SCULPTURE ROOM - DAY

The group gathers around a sculpture.

DOCENT

So, as you can see, the form is recognizable, but not readily so. This is of course in the period after his studies of the Aztec.

Edward looks around to see Sophia, but can't spot her. Suddenly she appears behind and startles him

SOPHIA

(whispering)  
Hey Burt. So, what do you think of this stuff? Gonna buy one?

EDWARD

(whispering)  
I don't think I could afford one.

SOPHIA

I'm going to head over to the abstract stuff. They got some Pollack. You want to come?

EDWARD

No. Now if you don't mind, I'd like to hear the rest of this.

SOPHIA

Okay. Suit yourself. I'll see you on the van.

An annoyed member of the group (MRS. TOPCHECK) rudely shushes Sophia. Sophia winks at her and then leans into Edward.

SOPHIA

Henry Moore never studied Aztec. It was the Mayans he was interested in. They are related, but still...I'll be checking out the Jackson Pollack.

Sophia quickly leaves. Mrs. Topchek walks up to Edward.

GROUP MEMBER

(whispering)  
You need to watch out for her. There's been nothing but trouble since she showed up.

EDWARD

Really? Like what?

GROUP MEMBER

Well...she is quite odd.



EDWARD

Yes, I can see. What trouble has she caused?

GROUP MEMBER

She keeps the oddest hours and plays strange music at night.

EDWARD

So does my grandson. What did she do?

GROUP MEMBER

Some of us, Daphne, Sam and I think she might be involved in the supernatural.

EDWARD

The supernatural?

GROUP MEMBER

The occult.

EDWARD

Ma'am, are you suggesting that she is...a witch?

GROUP MEMBER

If the shoe fits.

EDWARD

Well, thank you for the advice. I'll watch out.

They go back to paying attention to the docent. Edward tries to listen and then looks up at the group as a whole seeing what looks like nothing more than a collection of boring old people. He waits for a little longer and then steps away.

INT. MUSEUM - ABSTRACT SECTION - DAY

Sophia sits on a bench alone contemplating a painting by Jackson Pollack. Edward approaches and sits next to her. They are silent for a moment. Then...

SOPHIA

Most people don't realize that he was a fine artist first. He was talented and respected by all his contemporaries as well. Lord how he worshipped Picasso.

(MORE)

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

Most people see something like this and write it off as sophomoric without taking the time to understand where he came from or what he was really like.

Edward contemplates the painting.

SOPHIA

(mesmerized by the painting)

I think that the biggest problem with people is that they just don't take the time to get to know... who people really are.

They both sit in silence.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Christina sits at her desk writing. She types a few lines and then stares at the screen. She looks around to see if anyone is looking, and then takes out a book by Zane...the very book she took from her student.

Embarrassed, she thumbs through looking for some sort of inspiration. A rather shocked look comes over her face.

CHRISTINA

(indignantly to herself)

People don't do that. At least not in cars.

She goes back to typing.

INT. SPORTS CAR - NIGHT

Ronisha checks her lipstick as she talks on the phone.

RONISHA

(into cell phone)

Damn right I went home with him. Well let's just say he had more under the hood of the car than somewhere else. (beat) It was amazing. Top floor with a view of the whole city. (beat) Yeah, I guess. If he calls, which he will. Trust me, after what I did for him he better.

Ronisha notices Rashad bundled up and walking towards his beat up car.

RONISHA

Hey girl, let me call you later. I just saw someone else, something I gotta do.

EXT. UNIVERSITY PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Ronisha gets out of her car, zips down her jacket and hurries over to Rashad. He is about to get into his car when she appears at the passenger side.

RONISHA

Dr. Johnson!

RASHAD

Oh my god! You scared me to death. Um, how's it going?

RONISHA

Well, I have kind of a problem. Can we talk?

RASHAD

Oh, well yes, I supposed so.

Rashad puts his handfuls of stuff in the backseat, opens the driver seat and gets in. He leans over to flip the lock up and notices Ronisha's midriff and cleavage in her open jacket through the passenger window. He opens the door and she gets in.

RONISHA

Thanks. How are you?

RASHAD

Fine. How are you?

RONISHA

I'm good.

Uncomfortable pause.

RASHAD

So what's on your mind?

RONISHA

Well, to tell the truth, I really need to get jumped.

RASHAD

Huh?

RONISHA

My car. Do you have any jumper cables? I think my battery is dead.

RASHAD

(laughs)  
Oh. I, uh, no I don't have any.

RONISHA

What's so funny?

RASHAD

I'm sorry. I thought you meant something...

RONISHA

What did you think I meant? It's okay, you can tell me.

RASHAD

Nothing. No, I'm sorry I don't have any. Maybe someone else...

RONISHA

But, no one else is around. I think we're all alone.

Ronisha leans into him and puts her hand on his knee.

RONISHA

It's just you and me and no one is around.

There is a sudden knock on the window. Ronisha and Rashad jump in fright. Rashad rolls down the window to reveal DONNA HUGHES. She leans down to speak into the car.

DONNA

(irritated)  
Hi Rashad. Who's your friend?

RASHAD

Hi Donna. This is Ronisha, a student. She has a dead battery. Do you have any jumper cables? She was just asking me if I had any and I just told her that I didn't.

DONNA

That's all?

RASHAD

Yeah. That's all.

DONNA

And you had to get into the car to say that you didn't have any?

RASHAD

Knock it off, Donna. Look, do you have cables?

DONNA

As a matter of fact, I do. Come on. I'll get them.

She looks Ronisha square in the face.

DONNA

You. Out.

They both get out of the car and Ronisha heads back to her car.

DONNA

Rashad, what the hell are you doing?

RASHAD

Wipe that look off your face. She needs a jump.

Donna raises an eyebrow.

RASHAD

Donna, go home before your woman's intuition gets us both in trouble.

Donna looks at him suspiciously and then walks over to Ronisha. Rashad gets back into his car.

EXT. RONISHA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

DONNA

I know his wife, so to get to him you're gonna have to get past me. That clear?

RONISHA

That shouldn't be too hard.

DONNA

(eyeball to eyeball)  
Bitch, you are way out of your league.

RONISHA

Whatever.

Donna turns and leaves. Ronisha leans up against her car and lights a cigarette.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL BAND ROOM - DAY

A solitary Jamal plays jazz on the piano. Two FRIENDS come in and startle him.

JAMAL

Damn, nigger, you scared the shit out of me.

FRIEND 1

What are you doing? I thought you was in a rap group.

JAMAL

I am. There a law against playing jazz?

FRIEND 2

No, but who wants to hear it?

JAMAL

Maybe I do.

FRIEND 1

What was that?

JAMAL

Miles Davis.

FRIEND 2

Who's that?

JAMAL

Are you kidding me? Are you that ignorant?

FRIEND 2

Who are you calling ignorant?

JAMAL

Man, if it wasn't for him we probably wouldn't have half the music we listen to today.

FRIEND 2

Whatever. Listen, you know Victoria, what's her name, that girl in English class?

JAMAL

That girl with the twist, always wears orange shoes.

Both friends laugh.

JAMAL

What?

FRIEND 1

Leave it to Jamal to notice her clothes. How about the fact that has a great ass?

JAMAL

What about her?

FRIEND 1

She was just asking about you. All kinds of questions and shit.

JAMAL

Really?

FRIEND 2

Yeah, how old you are, if you have a girlfriend. Shit like that.

JAMAL

Damn.

FRIEND 1

Yeah, she was all impressed and shit when we told her you were in a band. I told her you have a gig coming up.

JAMAL

Damn, she can't come.

FRIEND 2

Are you crazy? You have to put her on the guest list.

JAMAL

I can't. It's an over-twenty-one club.

FRIEND 1

How you gettin' in?

JAMAL

I'm in the band. They're making an exception. I just can't get caught drinking.

FRIEND 2

Well, she is in the library. You better get in there and talk to her.

JAMAL

Okay, let's go. But you all better keep your mouths shut.

FRIEND 1

Hey, we're on your side. We came here to tell you.

JAMAL

Yeah, thanks, but I'll do the talking. She was asking about me not you right?

FRIEND 1

True, true.

JAMAL

Let's bounce.

They leave.

INT. EDWARD'S NEW APARTMENT - DAY

Christina looks around while Edward puts things away in the kitchen.

CHRISTINA

I can't believe you are set up already. You didn't waste any time, did you?

EDWARD

No reason to leave things in boxes.

CHRISTINA

Where is that picture of you and mom?

EDWARD

Which one?

CHRISTINA

Hello? Your wedding picture?

Edward points to a photo on the bookshelf.

CHRISTINA

Oh. Sorry.

EDWARD

Shall we go to lunch? It's hardly the Ritz, but it will do.



CHRISTINA

Sounds good.

They leave.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME CAFETERIA - DAY

Edward and Christina make their way down a cafeteria line with their trays.

EDWARD

I don't usually eat here, but it's okay every once in a while.

CHRISTINA

Well, it looks good. I know you have high standards.

They take a seat.

CHRISTINA

How did you make out at the yard sale?

EDWARD

I made a pretty good profit from what was left after you came.

CHRISTINA

Don't be silly.

EDWARD

Where did you put all that stuff?

CHRISTINA

Most of it is in the basement. Some of it is in storage.

From across the room, they hear Sophia's voice.

SOPHIA

Burt! Hey Burt!

Sophia comes over and stands before them.

SOPHIA

If it isn't my modern art enthusiast and, hi, I'm Sophia.

CHRISTINA

Hi, I'm Christina, Mr. Peterson's daughter.

SOPHIA

Oh, Burt didn't tell me he had a daughter. Well it is a pleasure to meet you Christina. Your dad is an amazing man, full of life and an acute sense of culture.

CHRISTINA

Oh really?

EDWARD

We were just enjoying a nice quiet lunch.

SOPHIA

Then I will leave you to it. But not before I tell you daughter that you are an umbrella thief and still need to make that right.

EDWARD

That little paper umbrella?

SOPHIA

The very one. You still have it right?

EDWARD

Well yes, but I never figured you would still want it.

SOPHIA

I can't live without it. Okay, you two enjoy and Christina, it was a pleasure to meet you.

CHRISTINA

(trying not to laugh)  
The pleasure is all mine.

SOPHIA

Ciao.

CHRISTINA

Goodbye.

Sophia leaves.

CHRISTINA

Burt?

EDWARD

Don't ask.

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - DAY

Edward looks through his things in the kitchen. He finally finds the little umbrella, thinks for a minute and then leaves.

INT. HALLWAY OF RETIREMENT HOME - CONTINUOUS

Edward closes his door and turns to go down the hall when he sees Mrs. Topchek.

EDWARD

Oh, hello. How are you?

MRS. TOPCHEK

I see that you've become great friends with that woman.

EDWARD

I'm not sure what you mean.

MRS. TOPCHEK

You know.

She makes the 'crazy' motion with her finger at her temple.

EDWARD

Well, I wouldn't say we are great friends. In fact, I've not really been here long enough to get to know anyone closely.

MRS. TOPCHEK

Just remember what I said.

EDWARD

About the witchcraft?

MRS. TOPCHEK

Call it what you like. We think she doesn't belong here.

EDWARD

(impatient)

Ma'am, are you on some sort of committee to investigate the supernatural?

MRS. TOPCHEK

No, just looking out for our neighbor.

EDWARD

Ah, well that is very kind of you,  
but I think I can handle one  
little witch.

MRS. TOPCHEK

Suit yourself.

Edward walks away as the woman gives him a suspicious  
look.

INT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Edward looks for a place to put the little umbrella, but  
cannot see one. Finally he tries to stick it into the  
peephole. It will not go easily, so he leans into the  
door trying to make it fit. Suddenly the door flies open  
and Edward falls smack into Sophia and they fall side by  
side on the floor inside her apartment.

SOPHIA

Oh my god!

EDWARD

I'm so sorry.

SOPHIA

It's the beach scene in From Here  
to Eternity. Aren't you supposed  
to kiss me?

Edward, mortified, helps her up.

EDWARD

Goodness, I am so sorry. I'm such  
a klutz. I was only trying to  
return your umbrella.

He picks up the little umbrella, which is now snapped in  
two. This produces a wonderful smile on Sophia's face.

SOPHIA

Well, that is just about the  
sweetest thing I have ever seen. I  
must say that this looks an awful  
lot like flirting if you ask me.

EDWARD

NO! I mean, I was only being  
polite. You said you wanted it  
back.

SOPHIA

You fell for that?

EDWARD

(getting annoyed)  
Ms. Angelique, I was simply being polite. Please do not misinterpret my intentions.

SOPHIA

(pause)  
Please. Call me Sophia.

EDWARD

Yes, well then you may call me Edward.

SOPHIA

Deal. Would you like to come in?

EDWARD

No. Thank you, but I must be on my way.

SOPHIA

Then perhaps another time.

EDWARD

Perhaps.

SOPHIA

Okay, I'll see you around then.

EDWARD

Goodbye, Sophia.

SOPHIA

Goodbye Bur...Goodbye Edward.

He walks away. Sophia smiles.

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Christina and Dr. Mumford sit in silence for a moment. Then...

CHRISTINA

Well, the cookout went as about as bad as possible. I think Rashad is screwing around and I may get fired. How has your week gone?

DR. MUMFORD

Let's stick with you. What would you like to start with?

CHRISTINA

Rashad, I guess.

DR. MUMFORD

What makes you think he's seeing someone else?

CHRISTINA

Instincts.

DR. MUMFORD

You are going to have to do better than that Christina.

CHRISTINA

I don't know. I can just tell.

DR. MUMFORD

Are you two having trouble in the bedroom?

CHRISTINA

Not more than any other couple that has been married for nine years. It's just, well, we haven't...in quite a while.

DR. MUMFORD

Have you talked to him about it?

CHRISTINA

No.

DR. MUMFORD

If you are convinced, then you need to confront him.

CHRISTINA

I don't know anything for sure anymore. I communicate with him about as well as I do with my dad.

DR. MUMFORD

Have you ever communicated well with either of them?

CHRISTINA

You know he didn't even cry at my mother's funeral.

DR. MUMFORD

Who?

CHRISTINA

My Dad!

DR. MUMFORD

Take it easy. Just tell me what happened at the funeral. When was it?

CHRISTINA

Years ago. It's just, well we were on our way to the funeral. I was still a kid really. I was a mess and my dad gave me this speech about keeping my chin up and being decent. He was a stone during the ceremony.

DR. MUMFORD

You know people show emotion in different ways. Perhaps he was hurting too, but didn't show it.

CHRISTINA

It was his wife for Christ's sake! Who doesn't cry at his wife's funeral?!

DR. MUMFORD

Well you are allowed your resentment. Have you confronted him about it?

CHRISTINA

You're really big on confrontation aren't you?

DR. MUMFORD

I'm big on solving problems, Christina.

CHRISTINA

Whatever.

DR. MUMFORD

You sound like a teenager. Look, if you are not strong enough to take on the people who are disrespecting you then how are you going to respect yourself?

CHRISTINA

I don't know. I don't know anything anymore.

DR. MUMFORD

Well, that's why we are here. Now tell me what happened at the cookout.

CHRISTINA

I don't even know where to start.

DR. MUMFORD

How about the beginning?

INT. EDWARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Edward listens to soft classical music. At one point, he closes his eyes.

After a while there is a soft knock on the door. He reluctantly gets up and opens it. Sophia stands holding two bottles of champagne.

SOPHIA

Hi Edward.

EDWARD

Good evening.

There is an uncomfortable silence.

EDWARD

Are you celebrating?

SOPHIA

Not yet. It's my birthday and, well let's face it, I don't have a lot of friends here.

Pause.

EDWARD

(tentative)  
Well, come in.

SOPHIA

What a great place you have.  
Spartan, but tasteful.

EDWARD

Can I offer you something to  
drink?

SOPHIA

(holding up bottles)  
Sure.

Edward takes the bottles and heads for the kitchen.



EDWARD

I'm afraid I don't have champagne glasses. Will regular wine glasses do?

SOPHIA

We can drink it out of the bottle if you like.

Sophia looks around the apartment noticing books and framed pictures.

SOPHIA

You sure have a lot of books.

EDWARD

Mostly history. On occasion I'll read a novel, but not very often.

SOPHIA

That's cool. I mean history is cool. Who is this?

Edward sees her in front of Christina's high school graduation picture. Edward comes out of the kitchen with two full glasses.

EDWARD

My daughter. High school graduation.

SOPHIA

She's lovely. And this?

EDWARD

My wife. She died years ago.

SOPHIA

Lovely as well. Oh, is this a photo album? May I?

Edward nods. Sophia takes the champagne, clicks the glass with Edward.

EDWARD

Happy Birthday.

SOPHIA

Thank you.

Sophia pauses and looks as if she is about to cry and then recovers.

EDWARD

Are you alright?

SOPHIA  
Peachy. Let's sit.

They sit side-by-side on the couch and start to look at the album.

EDWARD  
That was the wedding day obviously. That's me with General Stuart getting my first medal. Ah, the Oval Office with President Nixon. Let's see, Christina's college graduation. Christina's wedding.

SOPHIA  
I don't get it.

EDWARD  
What do you mean?

SOPHIA  
Where are all the parts in between?

EDWARD  
Can you be more specific?

SOPHIA  
The parts in-between. You know. Pictures of you hanging out on the beach or at home with your family. The parts in-between.

EDWARD  
You mean candid photos.

SOPHIA  
Exactly. Where are the pictures of you playing poker with your buddies or on a road trip? The putt-putt golf course or carnival.

EDWARD  
What carnival?

SOPHIA  
Any carnival. Don't tell me you have never been to a carnival.

EDWARD  
Of course, I have. But it's not that kind of photo album.

SOPHIA  
Where is that photo album?

EDWARD

I'm afraid I don't have those kind of photos.

SOPHIA

You're serious?

EDWARD

I, just don't.

Sophia stands up with an empty glass.

SOPHIA

I'm going to get that bottle. By the time I get back, you are going to think up a story and tell it to me.

EDWARD

What kind of story?

SOPHIA

A good one. One about you that tells me something other than what is in this photo album. Deal?

EDWARD

(smiling to himself)  
Deal.

Sophia goes to the kitchen. Edward tries to think of a story.

SOPHIA

Okay, here I come.

She returns with the bottle and sits.

SOPHIA

Ready?

EDWARD

I think so. Okay, I was in Pusan after the invasion. MacArthur was delighted of course. A military genius he was. You know he could have been president if he knew how to keep his mouth shut.

SOPHIA

Not a history lesson, a story!

EDWARD

I'm getting there. Keep your pants on.

SOPHIA  
I'll try, but no promises.

EDWARD  
Do you want to hear this story or not?

Sophia makes the "zipping her lip" motion.

EDWARD  
So a bunch of us guys, well at least us black guys, decide to play poker. Anyway, the only thing any of us had to gamble was cigarettes. Now I don't even smoke, but I was determined to take all of their smokes. Someone pulled out a pack of cards. And I don't know how Johnson got this bottle of rot-gut whiskey all the way to Pusan, but we all started sipping on this shit. (Pause.) Take that look off your face. I know how to cuss too. Anyway we all start pulling cards from our pants...

LATER

Two champagne bottles stand on the table along with a half-eaten pizza. The music has now switched to Otis Redding's Try A Little Tenderness.

SOPHIA  
(laughing)  
Wait! How did you end up back in the golf cart if you had driven it into the creek?

EDWARD  
That's the part I don't remember. I guess we thought we could drive it out. So Bobby is still talking about this stupid stock option and by the time we got back to the clubhouse I had agreed to give him five thousand dollars!

SOPHIA  
Did you give it to him?

Edward is suddenly distant listening to the music.

SOPHIA  
Well?

Edward jumps to his feet.

EDWARD

Wait!

SOPHIA

What is it?

EDWARD

Shhhhhh. This is it. It's the best part! Right...right...here!

Edward plays piano in the air at the appropriate part in the song that matches the notes Christina had played on the piano (E-D-C-B-A).

EDWARD

I love that part! Man, that's my favorite part of the song. I love that!

Sophia looks at him fondly as he stands with his eyes closed. Suddenly there is a loud KNOCK on the door.

SOPHIA

Uh-oh. Busted.

EDWARD

I'll take care of this. Can you turn that down please?

Edward goes and opens the door. Mr. Sanchez and Mrs. Topchek stand indignantly.

EDWARD

Hello.

MRS. TOPCHEK

See! I told you she was in here too! Now it is about time you did something about her!

MR. SANCHEZ

Mrs. Topcheck please let me handle this. Mr. Peterson we've had some complaints about the noise. We were hoping you wouldn't mind turning the music down.

EDWARD

Of course. I'm very sorry to have disturbed you Mrs. Uh...

MRS. TOPCHEK

Topchek! That's it! She is out of here. We've all decided. Tell them Joseph!

EDWARD

Look, I hardly think that is your decision. I promise we will keep the noise down. I am very sorry.

MRS. TOPCHEK

Well you can go with your Jew-whore if you really want to.

EDWARD

Now that is enough! I will not stand for that kind of talk. We've promised to keep it down. Now if you will excuse us.

MR. SANCHEZ

Mr. Peterson we do have rules about noise.

Edward closes in on the manager and gets eye-to-eye.

EDWARD

(calmly)

Listen to me: Take this thing next to you out of here before someone gets hurt. (to both:) Now good night.

MRS. TOPCHEK

(as the door closes)

This isn't over!

EDWARD

Got that right bitch.

He returns to the living room to see Sophia sitting on the couch quietly. They both giggle.

INT. RASHAD'S CAR - NIGHT

Rashad drives while on the phone with a colleague.

RASHAD

That's not what I'm saying. If the tenure committee is gong to go on about getting published then they should be satisfied. Huh? Why the hell not? Are you kidding me? It's Temple Press for Christ's sake!

(MORE)

RASHAD (CONT'D)

How you gonna tell me that's not prestigious enough? Hold on, I got another call.

He looks at his cell, which displays Christina's name.

RASHAD

Shit. Look, I'll call you back.

He presses call waiting.

RASHAD

Hey Babe.

CHRISTINA

Where are you?

RASHAD

I'm about ten minutes away.

CHRISTINA

This is really important to him Rashad. We talked about this.

RASHAD

What did I just say? I'm ten minutes away.

CHRISTINA

The band is about to go on stage.

RASHAD

It's now nine minutes. Do yo want to stay on the phone until I walk in the door of the club? Hello? Hello?

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

Christina sits on a bar stool near the back, stuffing her cell phone into her purse.

CHRISTINA

(to self)  
Asshole.

Jamal comes up.

JAMAL

Is he coming?

CHRISTINA

He's five minutes away. Now get ready. I'm sure you're going to be great. Come here.

Christina fixes his collar and tries to give him a kiss.

JAMAL

Mom, not in front of the guys.

Jamal looks across the room to see a well-dressed man in his forties talking on a cell phone.

CHRISTINA

Who is that? Is that the guy from the record company?

Jamal nods and then looks at the stage to see Bobby making an impatient motion.

JAMAL

I gotta go.

CHRISTINA

Okay. I love you.

JAMAL

I love you too. I'll see you after.

CHRISTINA

You got it.

Jamal exits. An ANNOUNCER comes on stage.

ANNOUNCER

That's right, that's right. It's the moment you've been waiting for. Here they are, the one and only Crunch Town!

The crowd waists no time getting on the dance floor and the record agent looks on approvingly.

Christina beams with pride and glances at her watch which reads 11:10.

Time passes as the band plays. Christina looks at her watch that now reads 11:30. Suddenly Rashad comes in the door and he takes a seat next to Christina.

The band starts the groove for the "Trigger" song.

BOBBY

It's that time, here we go! All I got to do is pull the funk trigger!

Christina nervously looks side to side as the use of the N-word becomes more and more unbearable. Rashad, stunned, storms out. Christina chases after him.



INT. NIGHTCLUB - LATER

Jamal comes out to an empty dance floor. He spots Dave talking to an attractive girl, VERONICA. He goes over.

JAMAL

Hey.

DAVE

Hey.

JAMAL

Hell of a night, huh?

DAVE

Sure was.

JAMAL

You pissed?

DAVE

Doesn't matter. I'm done.

Jamal looks to the ground.

DAVE

Hey, this is Veronica. We go to school together. This is Jamal our teenage boy wonder of the keys.

VERONICA

Hey.

JAMAL

Hey.

DAVE

Yo, I gotta get my stuff packed up. You two get to know each other.

Dave leaves.

VERONICA

I really loved your band. How long have you been playing?

JAMAL

About eight years. I started playing basic piano shit then moved to jazz.

VERONICA

I can tell. You got a feel like Kenny Kirkland

JAMAL

You like Kenny Kirkand?

She gives him a patient smile.

JAMAL

I mean, not many people know who he is. You like jazz?

Another smile.

JAMAL

I mean, um, who is your favorite?

VERONICA

At the moment, your band.

JAMAL

(embarrassed)  
Um, how old are you?

VERONICA

Old enough.

JAMAL

I, um, I'm, well, how old is that? Not that it matters, I was just, well, you're drinking a beer so I guess, but that really doesn't mean, but they carded you so, see I'm...

Veronica smiles and lets Jamal make a fool of himself.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Christina prepares dinner. Rashad leans against the wall silent.

CHRISTINA

Let's not bring it up.

RASHAD

It was a disgrace, Christina.

CHRISTINA

I'm just asking for a peaceful dinner. We can address this at another time?

RASHAD

I suppose that means forget the whole thing.

CHRISTINA  
 Let's please just get through  
 dinner.

Rashad shrugs. Christina goes to the kitchen door and  
 calls out...

CHRISTINA  
 Jamal! Dinner!

JAMAL (O.S.)  
 Coming!

Jamal comes in and they all sit. The tension is thick.

CHRISTINA  
 How was school?

Silence.

JAMAL  
 Who? Me or him?

CHRISTINA  
 (trying to make  
 light)  
 You, ya smart aleck.

JAMAL  
 Fine.

CHRISTINA  
 Care to expand? What are you  
 reading in English?

JAMAL  
 J. D. Salamander.

Rashad and Christina exchange confused looks.

CHRISTINA  
 What's the title.

JAMAL  
 Catcher in the Rye.

RASHAD  
 It's Catcher in the Rye by J.D.  
 Salinger.

JAMAL  
 Whatever.

CHRISTINA  
 How is it?

JAMAL

Boring.

CHRISTINA

Really? Even with the main character going to all these clubs in New York?

JAMAL

I haven't gotten that far yet.

RASHAD

Have you looked at those books I gave you? The Chancellor Williams?

JAMAL

No.

RASHAD

Well, you should. It's your heritage after all.

JAMAL

Whatever.

RASHAD

That seems to be all he has to say tonight.

JAMAL

Now let me see, is that the book that explains how ancient Africans really discovered America or the one that explains how they talked about aliens?

RASHAD

Jamal you can make fun all you want but there is plenty of evidence in Mexico to show-

JAMAL

Discovering America or space aliens?

RASHAD

(shouting)  
I'm trying to help you!

JAMAL

Well, save it.

RASHAD

(standing)  
I give up!

(MORE)

RASHAD (CONT'D)

It's a complete waste of time to get him to understand anything!

CHRISTINA

Boys please.

RASHAD

You will stay ignorant your whole life! Writing self-hating songs that-

JAMAL

Maybe I'm just not impressed with your theories! Maybe you're full of shit!

RASHAD

I have a masters degree in Afro-American studies! I have a Ph.D! I think I have dedicated myself to a life of understanding my culture!

JAMAL

You're just an old man trying to make up for the fact that you were too pussy to join the Panthers!

Rashad grabs Jamal and slams him against the wall.

RASHAD

Listen you little shit. I could snap you in half!

JAMAL

Let go of me you pathetic asshole!

CHRISTINA

Rashad! Let him go! Rashad! That's my son!

Rashad holds Jamal for a minute and then lets him go.

RASHAD

That's right. He is.

Rashad leaves.

JAMAL

That's right! Go to the library! Write a peer-revised article for "the cause!" What the hell mom?!

The phone rings.

JAMAL

I don't believe this shit! I'm not staying here! I'm gonna apply to a far away school and get the hell out of here!

The phone rings again.

JAMAL

Is that how he shows all of his self-respect?! Wow! What a big man with big ideas! I'm soooooo impressed!

Jamal storms out. The phone rings again and Christina goes over to answer it.

CHRISTINA

(annoyed)  
Hello?

MANAGER (V.O.)

Mrs. Johnson?

CHRISTINA

Yes?

MANAGER (V.O.)

Hello, this is Mr. Sanchez from the Green Haven Retirement Community.

CHRISTINA

Look, I don't respond to telephone solicitations...

MR. SANCHEZ (V.O.)

No, I'm the manager of your father's complex.

CHRISTINA

Oh. Sorry. What can I do for you, Mr. Sanchez, I'm in the middle of dinner?

MR. SANCHEZ (V.O.)

It's your dad.

CHRISTINA

What is it? Is he telling you how to improve productivity in your staff or something?

MR. SANCHEZ (V.O.)

(pause)  
No. He's gone.

EXT. CARNIVAL - NIGHT

MONTAGE

Edward and Sophia have fun, while they do ordinary carnival things: fun house mirrors, ping-pong balls in fish bowls, wheel of fortune and so on.

INT. CARNIVAL - MAGIC SHOW - NIGHT

Edward sits quietly smiling as Sophia is absolutely captivated. The magician pulls different colored scarves out of his clenched fist, wowing the crowd.

SOPHIA  
(whispering)  
I can do that.

EDWARD  
Do what?

SOPHIA  
That trick. I have the scarves at home.

EDWARD  
Where did you learn that?

SOPHIA  
I used to date a magician in Vienna.

EDWARD  
Is there anyone you haven't dated?

SOPHIA  
I haven't dated a soldier yet.

Edward laughs to himself. As they watch, Sophia reaches over and holds his hand. Edward looks down pleased when he sees a tattoo on Sophia's arm. It is a number that reads P-876954.

Edward, now bothered, tries to watch the show nonchalantly.

INT. POLICE STATION - NIGHT

Christina stands at a desk talking to a police OFFICER.

OFFICER  
What was he wearing when went missing?

CHRISTINA

I told you. I wasn't with him. I don't know what he was wearing!

OFFICER

Okay. Take it easy.

CHRISTINA

Take it easy?! How would you like it if...

OFFICER

Ma'am we are doing the best we can with what we've been given...

CHRISTINA

Well your best sucks! My dad is missing, what are you going to do about it?!

OFFICER

Officially he is not missing unless he's been gone for three days. I'm doing you a favor by just taking your information.

CHRISTINA

A favor?! It's your damn job! My taxes pay your salary and...

The phone rings and the officer snatches to answer it.

OFFICER

(into the phone)  
Twelfth precinct Officer Burrell. Oh, hey baby. No, lasagna sounds great. Do we have any Chianti?

Christina storms out.

EXT. POLICE STATION STEPS - NIGHT

Christina dials furiously.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Rashad chats with some BUDDIES. He looks at his cell phone and rolls his eyes.

RASHAD

Hi sweetie. How you holding up?



INTERCUT: POLICE STATION/BAR

CHRISTINA

This is a waste of time. These guys are complete assholes!

RASHAD

Christina you may want to give him a couple of days. He is a grown man after all.

CHRISTINA

You think I'm overreacting?! Damn it Rashad, this is my dad we are talking about!

RASHAD

I realize that. I just think that there is the possibility of a logical explanation.

CHRISTINA

Are you going to help or not?

RASHAD

Of course, I will.

CHRISTINA

Wait a minute. Where are you? You're at that bar?!

RASHAD

Hold on. Calm down.

CHRISTINA

I don't believe this! I have to do everything myself!

The phone clicks off.

BAR BUDDY

Busted?

RASHAD

Busted. Hey Sam!

Rashad holds up his empty glass for another.

EXT. CARNIVAL PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Edward and Sophia, arm in arm, walk to the curb. Sophia holds a grotesquely large stuffed bear. Edward pulls out a cell phone and dials.

EDWARD

Yes, hello. I need a cab. I'm  
at... (to Sophia) where are we?

SOPHIA

We're at the carnival.

EDWARD

(smiling)  
We're at the carnival. The one on  
Radford Street. Really? Well,  
okay.

He puts the phone away.

EDWARD

Half an hour.

SOPHIA

Call another cab company and we'll  
take whichever comes first. I used  
to know this guy who was a cabbie  
and, well, never mind.

Edward smiles, rolls his eyes and pulls out his phone. As  
he does, loud music comes blaring out of a nearby HOTROD  
making it impossible to hear from the phone.

A young, skinny kid leans up against the car and notices  
Edward. Edward holds up his phone as if to say "Hey, I'm  
trying to make a call." The kid flips him off. Edward and  
Sophia look at each other and then Sophia flips off the  
kid. The kid, now pissed, comes over.

KID

Nigger, you best put your bitch  
right.

Edward looks the kid up and down. Then, a flash, executes  
a perfect Kung Fu move flooring the kid.

Edward and Sophia look at each other.

SOPHIA

Holy shit.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

The HOTROD screeches around a corner and zooms at top  
speed.

INT. HOTROD - NIGHT

Edward drives as Sophia bops to music.

EXT. EDWARD'S OLD HOUSE PORCH - NIGHT

Christina sits on the stoop with her knees to her chest. After a long while she gets up and goes to her car. She wipes her tears away as she gets in. She drives away.

After she is gone, the hotrod comes around the corner and screams to a halt in front of the house.

INT. HOTROD - NIGHT

SOPHIA

What's the plan Stan?

EDWARD

I'm not really sure. That's my house. Well, it used to be. It's on the market.

SOPHIA

Really? Howdy do! Let's go in.

EDWARD

Hold up. We're not out of this yet.

Edward notices his gun-toting neighbor across the street.

EDWARD

(pulling out his cell  
phone)

Here, call us a cab. I'll be right back.

Edward gets out of the car and goes across the street.

Sophia watches Edward as he talks to the tough guy. After a while, Edward and the tough guy come back to the car. Tough guy looks in the window. He nods at Sophia. She winks at him.

TOUGH GUY

(to Edward)

Five.

EDWARD

That's right. No questions asked?

TOUGH GUY

Sounds good. I'll be right back.

The Tough guy walks away.

SOPHIA

We cool?

EDWARD

Roger that. Cab?

SOPHIA

Ten minutes. Can we go in the house?

Edward looks at the house for a moment.

EDWARD

Another time.

INT. CAB - NIGHT

Sophia laughs while Edward counts money.

SOPHIA

Thousand?! Thousand?! I thought you meant five-hundred!

Edward keeps laughing.

SOPHIA

My hero.

She leans over and kisses him on the cheek.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

Christina and the manager walk toward Edward's apartment.

MR. SANCHEZ

We were all worried sick and all of a sudden they were in the dining hall at lunch.

CHRISTINA

They?

MR. SANCHEZ

Your dad and another resident.

CHRISTINA

Who?

MR. SANCHEZ

Her name is Sophia. I must say that this is not the first time she has...

CHRISTINA

What did they say?

MR. SANCHEZ

Um, not much. They just kept giggling and being very, um, coy.

CHRISTINA

Coy? What the hell does that mean?

They stop in the hallway.

MR. SANCHEZ

Well, you can ask him yourself. I'll be in my office if you need anything. The most important thing is that he is back safely.

CHRISTINA

Yeah, well thank you for your help. I'm sorry for being so rude before. I'm sure you understand.

MR. SANCHEZ

Of course I do. Let me know if I can help in any way.

CHRISTINA

Thank you. I will.

They shake hands and the manager leaves. Christina comes to Edward's door and knocks a couple of times. When no answer comes she decides to try the knob. The door opens.

Inside the apartment she sees the oversized, stuffed bear on a chair and wine glasses on the table. The T.V. is paused on the beach scene of From Here to Eternity with Burt Lancaster and Debra Carr kissing.

Christina comes to the table that has a prescription bottle on its side and blue pills spilled out. She then notices strange sounding Hawaiian music coming from the bedroom. She nervously goes and opens the door.

Sophia sleeps next to Edward who sits up shirtless lighting a joint. Christina stands speechless in the doorway. Edward notices her.

EDWARD

Oh, hello dear. Tell me, does that sound like cats to you? I just don't hear it. Honestly, I don't know where she comes up with this stuff. How's Rashad?

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

Car tires screech to a halt at a parking space. Christina runs to the front door of an office. The doors are locked.

Christina cries and slides down out of view to reveal a name on the door that reads: "Dr. Eloise Mumford, Psychologist."

INT. SOPHIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Edward sits on the couch in Sophia's very eccentric apartment. Sophia makes tea in the kitchen.

EDWARD

Where did you get all this stuff?  
Wait. Don't tell me. An ex-  
boyfriend.

Sophia comes in the room with a tray of tea.

SOPHIA

Edward behave yourself.

She sits next to him.

SOPHIA

How's Christina?

EDWARD

She'll live. Not in a million  
years could she have dreamed of  
what she walked into last week.

SOPHIA

I'm sorry I missed it.

EDWARD

You were out cold.

She sits next to him. After a moment, Sophia pulls a wrapped package from behind the couch.

EDWARD

What's this?

SOPHIA

Just a little something. I spotted  
it at the bookstore and thought  
you might like it.

EDWARD

What's the occasion?

SOPHIA  
Does there need to be?

EDWARD  
I suppose not.

SOPHIA  
Well?

Edward opens the present. It is a book about WWII tanks.

EDWARD  
I don't understand.

SOPHIA  
I saw it and thought of you.

They flip through the pages.

SOPHIA  
Wow, look at that one! I wonder  
how fast they could go.

EDWARD  
Faster than you would guess,  
especially by the time I was in  
one.

SOPHIA  
Let's find yours.

EDWARD  
Well, mine weren't around at that  
time.

They flip further and come to a photo of a Nazi tank.  
Sophia sort of blinks.

SOPHIA  
Don't really care for that one.

They flip more.

SOPHIA  
Holy guacamole, that one has like  
a dozen wheels.

She continues to look as Edward looks at her.

EDWARD  
This is very thoughtful.

SOPHIA  
Forgetaboutit. Really Edward, I  
hope that Christina is okay. I  
feel horrible.

EDWARD

Don't worry. I think this will be the last shock she has for a long time.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Christina is in her classroom alone on her cell phone.

CHRISTINA

Married?! Are you out of your mind?! Dad you hardly know this woman! Are you trying to kill me?! I can't handle this! Stop talking! I think I'm going to be sick, I...I have to go. I'll talk to you later.

She hangs up and starts out of her classroom. She bumps into her PRINCIPAL.

PRINCIPAL

Ms. Peterson, we've finally scheduled the meeting with the parents of the student you...well, your language in class that day.

Christina starts to cry and collapses into his arms.

PRINCIPAL

Really Ms. Peterson. This is an informal meeting. We'll get through this.

Christina stops crying and then suddenly pukes into a garbage can.

PRINCIPAL

Well, maybe we should schedule.

INT. CHRISTINA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jamal sits in front of the T.V. playing a video game. Christina comes in annoyed.

JAMAL

Hi mom.

Christina walks past him and reaches out to touch the piano without looking. It is gone. She goes into the kitchen and then comes right out.



CHRISTINA

(shocked)  
Where's the piano?!

JAMAL

I don't know. Rashad might know.

CHRISTINA

Why is it gone?!

JAMAL

Mom, I don't know.

CHRISTINA

Rashad! Rashad!

RASHAD (O.S.)

What?

CHRISTINA

Get down here! We've been robbed!

Rashad comes down the stairs.

RASHAD

What are you talking about?

CHRISTINA

The piano! It's gone! We've been robbed!

RASHAD

We haven't been robbed Chrissy.

CHRISTINA

Oh my God! I need that piano! Call the police!

RASHAD

Christina we talked about this. I sold it.

CHRISTINA

What?!

RASHAD

We talked about this! You said we needed the money. There is a check on the table. We got five-hundred bucks.

CHRISTINA

I did not! You're lying! I said no such thing! Damn you!

JAMAL

Mom, we can get it back.

RASHAD

I'm not so sure of that.

CHRISTINA

You better get it back! It's mine  
and I want it back!

RASHAD

Okay, I'll try. Christina, we  
talked about this.

Christina sits on the floor where the piano used to be.

CHRISTINA

(crying)

Everything is falling apart and  
you go and sell my piano!  
Everything is falling apart and  
what are you doing about it?

Jamal and Rashad look at each other.

CHRISTINA

What are you going to do about it?

INT. JAMAL'S CAR - NIGHT

Jamal sits in the car with Veronica.

JAMAL

So anyway, I start playing the  
song in the correct key and these  
niggers all look at me like I'm  
crazy. So we stop the song and I  
say, "What key are you guys  
playing in?" Nobody said anything  
and then this one nigger in the  
funny hat goes, "What's a key?"

They both laugh and then uncomfortable silence. Veronica  
then leans over and gets very close to Jamal's face.

VERONICA

Jamal, I had a really good time  
tonight. Did you?

JAMAL

(nervous)

Uh huh.

VERONICA

Good. I'd like to go out with you again. That sound good?

Jamal can only nod at this point -

VERONICA

(very sexy)

Good. Now, will you do something for me if I ask?

Jamal nods again.

VERONICA

When we're together, can you please not use the N-word?

Jamal nods.

VERONICA

I knew I could count on you.

She gives him a long, passionate kiss.

VERONICA

Call me, okay?

Jamal only nods. Veronica gets out of the car and leans down before she closes the door.

VERONICA

I like you Jamal. Do you like me?

Jamal nods.

VERONICA

Okay. Good night.

Jamal nods. She smiles and leaves. Jamal watches her go towards the door.

INT. JAMAL'S CAR - NIGHT

Jamal drives home with P-Funk's Tear the Roof Off This Sucker as loud as it will play, singing at the top of his lungs.

INT. UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Rashad sits nervously in front of a few stately looking professors. It is silent. Finally, a final COMMITTEE MEMBER comes in and sits.

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Gentlemen (noticing a female in the room) and well, colleagues. I'm sorry I'm late. Shall we get started? Dr. Johnson, we hear you have some concerns about the tenure process. Let me assure you that all of us want what is best for both you and the university. I'm sure we can come to some accommodation.

RASHAD

Well, first off I'm not looking for accommodation, but fairness.

COMMITTEE MEMBER

The process will be fair. What we want to be sure of is that you have the university in mind when you pursue publication.

RASHAD

I understand that.

COMMITTEE MEMBER

We want to be sure you know what is important to the university.

Rashad feels his phone vibrating in his pocket. He pulls it out under the table and sees Christina's name on the screen.

COMMITTEE MEMBER

So we can count on you to know what is important?

RASHAD

(still looking at screen)

Huh?

COMMITTEE MEMBER

Are you with us Rashad?

Rashad looks up at the committee and then at his phone.

RASHAD

Will you excuse me?

He hurries out of the room.

INT. UNIVERSITY HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Rashad answers the phone.

RASHAD

Chrissy? Hey, babe. Listen, I've been in contact with the lady who has your piano. I'm gonna get it back for you. It's gonna cost me, but I'm gonna get it back.  
(Pause.) I love you too.

Rashad closes the phone and then considers going back into the meeting for a moment before he turns and walks away.

INT. RASHAD'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Rashad talks on the phone.

RASHAD

I already tore up your check. No, it's my wife and...yes. I can't tell you how much I appreciate this. In fact, you may have just saved my marriage. Thank you. I'll see you tomorrow.

Rashad hangs up and sits at his computer. A KNOCK is heard at the door.

RASHAD

(without looking)  
Come in.

The sound of heels are heard and Ronisha's midriff appears next to Rashad's desk.

INT. UNIVERSITY HALLWAY - NIGHT

Donna walks by and then stops at the sound of arguing.

RONISHA (O.S.)

It's not fair!

Ronisha comes out of the office followed by Rashad.

RASHAD

Fair?! You have the grade you deserve! Now get out of my sight!

RONISHA

But my dad is going to kill me!  
He'll kick me out of the house!

RASHAD

Well, you should of thought of that before you turned in a trifflin' paper and tried to fix it with your booty. Now get the hell out of here!

Ronisha storms off crying. Donna, wide-eyed, looks at Rashad.

RASHAD

(to Donna)

What are you looking at?!

Rashad goes into his office and slams his door. An impressed smile appears on Donna's face.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Christina sits at a table near the window with her laptop. On the screen is a file entitled, "Midnight Affairs." She shrugs and deletes the file.

After a sigh of relief, she opens old document and starts to read: "The boy sits by the riverside as the dog runs up and down the shore. He calls the dog's name."

Christina hears an argument taking place outside the cafe. It is Dr. Mumford outside arguing with a man (STEVE). Christina ducks behind the laptop and spies

EXT. CAFE SIDEWALK - NIGHT

DR. MUMFORD

That's not good enough Steve! You are such a bastard!

STEVE

Take it easy Eloise! What's with all this hostility?

DR. MUMFORD

Because you are a selfish jerk, that's why!

STEVE

Because I'm fifteen minutes late? Give me a break. Don't you think you are overreacting?

DR. MUMFORD

It's the second time! You don't respect me at all!

STEVE

Okay, we don't need a confrontation.

DR. MUMFORD

Yes we do! You need to tell me why you don't respect women!

STEVE

I don't need this.

Steve walks away.

DR. MUMFORD

Damn it.

Dr. Mumford turns toward the window to fix her smeared mascara in the reflection of the cafe window. Christina ducks out of view. Then...

DR. MUMFORD

Steve! Wait! I'm sorry! Don't leave me!

Dr. Mumford races after Steve. Through the window, we see Christina quickly pack up her computer.

INT. CHRISTINA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rashad does dishes while wearing a cheesy apron. He hears a car screech to a stop outside. After a moment, Christina races into the kitchen.

RASHAD

Hi baby. I called for a truck to get the piano. I should have it back-

Christina pounces at him and starts kissing him crazily, rubbing his bald head.

RASHAD

Whoa, what's gotten into you?

Christina rips off her coat and continues kissing.

RASHAD

Chrissy, Jamal's going to be home soon.

Christina starts to take off the cheesy apron continuing her kisses.

RASHAD

Good God woman!

He finally picks her up and takes her over his shoulder and heads out of the kitchen making Tarzan noises and she laughs.

RASHAD (O.S.)

Harambee!

EXT. REHEARSAL HALL - NIGHT

Jamal and Dave lean against the wall.

JAMAL

Thanks for coming.

DAVE

It's cool. You sure they are going to be cool about this?

JAMAL

Well, if they aren't...we'll start our own band.

DAVE

Good man. Let's go.

INT. REHEARSAL HALL - NIGHT

The band plays the offensive Trigger song. Dave and Jamal exchange glances.

BOBBY

It's that time, here we go! All I got to do is pull the funk trigger!

The groove comes to an abrupt stop. Everyone looks at Jamal.

JAMAL

Look, we need to talk.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Jamal comes in through the door trying to be quiet. He puts his keyboard down and then notices the faint sound of P-Funk's Tear the Roof Off The Sucker coming from upstairs. He puts a confused look on his face and then starts toward the kitchen. On the way, he passes Rashad's study. He turns to see if anyone is coming and then goes in.



## INT. RASHAD'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Jamal looks over the books on the shelves which, hold an amazing collection of African history and Afro-centric studies. He picks out Carter Woodson's Mis-education of the Negro and sits down to read.

## INT. LIVING ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Rashad comes down the stairs in a robe and a happy look on his face. He starts toward the kitchen when he spots Jamal in the study. He is confused for a moment and then pleasantly surprised. He leaves Jamal be and goes into the kitchen.

## INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Christina and her girlfriends prepare. There is general chatter when after a while the other girls notice that Christina is not saying anything. She sits working on vegetables with a dumb smile on her face.

WOMAN #1

Girl, what is wrong with you?

CHRISTINA

(smiling)

Nothing.

WOMAN #1

You haven't said anything for half and hour.

CHRISTINA

I got nothing to say.

WOMAN #2

She looks weird.

WOMAN #3

She looks drunk.

WOMAN #2

Are you hiding something? Did you get a raise or something?

No answer.

WOMAN #3

Well, what is it Chrissy? Come on, it's us.

Long pause.

WOMAN #1

You got laid!

The room explodes in a fury of laughter and questions. Christina just sits with the dumb smile on her face. Woman #2 pulls out her cell phone.

WOMAN #3

Who you callin'?

WOMAN #2

My husband! She ain't gonna be only one getting some!

Much laughter.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME LOUNGE - DAY

Edward and Christina are sit on a couch silently. After a moment, Edward reaches over and hold's Christina's hand.

EDWARD

(gently)

Christina, I realize this must be a shock to you. But I assure you I know what I'm doing. Don't go and try to put in the crazy house.

CHRISTINA

Everything is happening so fast. I'm just having trouble. You know how I hate change.

EDWARD

Well, I'm hardly known as a flighty character. But if you just give her a chance. I haven't been what most people would call, what's the word, giddy in a long time. And I might seem like a solitary fellow, but I enjoy companionship too.

CHRISTINA

She is a bit on the odd side Dad.

EDWARD

You are not going to get an argument there.

CHRISTINA

But she is nothing like mom.

EDWARD  
(finding this  
curious)  
Did you think I was trying to  
replace your mother?

CHRISTINA  
Lately, I find it safest not to  
think at all.

EDWARD  
Christina, your mother was the  
light of my life. I could never  
replace her. That's why I was such  
a mess after...well.

CHRISTINA  
You were?

EDWARD  
Don't you remember how I left for  
a wee after the funeral?

CHRISTINA  
I thought you went hunting.

EDWARD  
Well, as long as we are being  
honest, I went on a bit of a  
drinking binge.

CHRISTINA  
You're kidding.

EDWARD  
Your mother meant everything to  
me. I just don't think you should  
see me in that...state.

CHRISTINA  
Maybe it would have been better if  
you had.

EDWARD  
Perhaps you are right. You are a  
grown woman now, and I supposed,  
I'll try to remember that.

Christina says nothing.

EDWARD  
Dear, I'm in the twilight of my  
years and for some crazy reason  
this person has made me feel  
alive. I want to be with her. I  
hope you can accept that.

CHRISTINA  
I will...eventually.

EDWARD  
Thank you. Shall we?

They stand to leave.

INT. RETIREMENT HOME HALLWAY - DAY

Christina and Edward walk down the hall towards Sophia's room.

EDWARD  
Now I think you already know she is a bit eccentric. But she is very excited about meeting you...again. I could tell you a lot about her, but I think it's best if we just have a nice chat.

CHRISTINA  
Okay.

EDWARD  
Did I tell you she is from Austria?

CHRISTINA  
Yes.

EDWARD  
Did I tell you she was Jewish?

CHRISTINA  
I doubt you could surprise me at this point, Dad. For all I know she was a magician in a circus.

EDWARD  
As a matter of fact...

CHRISTINA  
Sure. A magician. Why not?

They arrive at Sophia's door. Edward pulls keys out of his pocket.

CHRISTINA  
You have a key to her place?

EDWARD  
Christina, I'm a grown man.

Edward knocks as he opens the door.

EDWARD

Hello?

Inside the living room Sophia is on the ground - motionless. Edward rushes in and falls to his knees next to her.

EDWARD

No! No! No!

Christina stays in the doorway speechless.

EXT. FANCY HOUSE - DAY

An odd assortment of people are gathered - hippies, conservative types, all nationalities. Edward, Christina, Jamal and Rashad silently sit in a corner dressed in black. They seem quite alone in the crowd.

After a while, Edward starts to hyperventilate. He eventually puts his face in his hands in uncontrollable weeping. Christina and Rashad put their arms on his shoulders to console him. Eventually other people at the gathering do the same.

SUPER: TWO MONTHS LATER

EXT. EDWARD'S HOUSE - BACK PORCH - NIGHT

Edward sits on the porch gazing over his award-winning, garden listening to Baroque music. His cell phone rings.

EDWARD

Hello dear.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)

Hi dad. I'm right around the corner. Are you ready to go?

EDWARD

Yes. I'll come out front.

CHRISTINA (V.O.)

See you soon.

Edward turns off his phone and stands. He takes a last proud look at his garden before he goes and turns off the outdoor lights.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Edward comes out of the front door and sees the tough guy leaning against his car. The tough guy nods to Edward and then reaches in to the car to turn the music down.

Christina's car pulls to the curb.

INT. CHRISTINA'S CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Edward buckles in.

EDWARD

Okay. All set.

CHRISTINA

I'm so glad you are back here.

They both look at the house.

CHRISTINA

Are you?

EDWARD

Yes. I am. You were right.

CHRISTINA

Was the realtor mad?

EDWARD

Forgetaboutit.

They drive away.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The club is packed as Christina and Edward come in and meet Rashad and Victoria at the bar. The band is already on stage and the record agent is again in the corner watching. The infamous N-word portion of the Trigger song approaches and Rashad gives a worried glance to Edward.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

BOBBY

It's that time! It's that time.  
One, two, three, J-man!

The band launches into a groove where Jamal plays Miles Davis' So What? The crowd, skeptical at first, cheers for Jamal.

INT. NIGHTCLUB - CONTINUOUS

Edward is impressed. Rashad is relieved. Christina glances at the record agent who smiles and dials his cell phone.

Christina feels her phone vibrating and looks to see the name Dr. Mumford on the screen. She presses END and then presses CONTACTS. She deletes Dr. Mumford's name.

Christina puts her phone away and reaches down to hold Rashad's hand. With her other hand, reaches down to hold Edward's hand. They all watch the band together.

FADE OUT.