

WEAR YOUR CROWN

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WEAR YOUR CROWN/"PILOT"

OVER BLACK:

*queen/kwēn/noun: queen; plural noun: queens*

*(slang) a black woman regarded as excellent or outstanding of her kind.*

TEASER

INT. DUFOUR RESIDENCE - BRIAR'S ROOM - NIGHT

An attic room of casual bohemian influence in lavender, cream, and grey designed for a teenage girl. A canopy bed sits against the large, and only window.

FOUR TEENAGE "QUEENS" lay strewn across the floor, GIGGLING, with a food tray of snacks and sodas in the middle of them:

BRIAR DUFOUR, 15, is the possessor of the room; a mixed-race black girl with honey-colored, curly hair. She's a "rare bird" of a girl whose big heart causes her stress more often than not.

BRIAR

I swear I have the weirdest dreams!

YARA

That's an understatement.

YARA HILSON, 15, a dark-skin beauty, has a perfect, friendly smile and flawless face. She's a studious girl with a sharp wit and a mental checklist of every single one of her goals.

YARA (CONT'D)

You got to stop eating crap before bed.

BRIAR

No way. I love my fucked up dreams. I have a dream journal with all of them written down.

YARA

Because of course you do.

THEO

Your dream wasn't that weird. At least not to me. I mean, dreams are supposed to be like that, right?

SHAMEEKA "THEO" ROBINSON, 15, is a brown-skin, soft-spoken honor student that's managed to fit in perfectly with the quartet of her more outgoing friends.

MIMI

Meh. I've had weirder dreams.  
Sexier dreams.

MEMPHIS "MIMI" JORDAN, 15--in a dinosaur onesie-- is a *thicc*, melanin-ated fashionista with a personality as bold as her colorful clothes. And a lack of brain-to-mouth filter to match.

YARA

Please don't.

MIMI

Sex dreams are normal. Boys aren't the only ones who have them, you know? Theirs are just gross because they wet the bed. Jude told me he has one at least once every two weeks.

BRIAR

Disgusting.

THEO

He shared that with you?

YARA

I can't believe you and Jude talk about stuff like that.

MIMI

Why not? Aside from you prudes, he's my best friend. Best guy friend anyway.

THEO

Did... Did he tell y-you what he...thinks about...when it happens?

Mimi rolls her eyes, taking a bite out of a chocolate-covered pretzel.

MIMI

The first time I asked he fed me some bullshit about how he doesn't remember them. Then when I asked him about it again, on the 4th of July, he said they were about me.

She shrugs nonchalantly, this time reaching for the last Oreo at the same time as Yara. She wins, taking a satisfying bite.

BRIAR

He's liked you since forever, Mimi.  
He learned to play the guitar for  
you. You should give him a chance.

YARA

Or put him out of his misery.

THEO

It's not right that you lead him  
on.

MIMI

I don't lead him on. He knows all  
we'll ever be is friends.

Briar hands Theo a comb.

THEO

But you talk about sex with him.

Theo settles atop the edge of Briar's bed. Briar sits between her legs on a Mandala floor pillow as Theo parts her hair with the comb.

MIMI

I talk about sex with everyone.  
Doesn't mean I want to date them.

Before Theo can retort, there's a KNOCK on the closed door.

A ridiculously handsome white man pokes his head inside--  
HOLDEN DUFOUR, 45, Briar's dotting father.

HOLDEN

Everything alright in here?

BRIAR

Yeah, we're good, daddy.

HOLDEN

Okay. Well, it's a little past  
midnight, so your mom and I are  
going to bed. You guys need  
anything before we turn in?

They shake their heads.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Okay.

Holden ENTERS the room to kiss his daughter 'goodnight'.

BRIAR  
'Night, daddy.

HOLDEN  
'Night, pumpkin.  
(to girls)  
'Night, ladies.

ALL  
Goodnight.

Holden EXITS, closing the door behind him.

MIMI  
I'd let your dad choke me.

BRIAR  
Oh, my God, Mimi! He's  
like...fortysomething. And my dad!

MIMI  
You cannot be this ignorant to how  
hot your dad is.

BRIAR  
Are you asking me if I find my dad  
sexy?

MIMI  
No. What I'm saying is your mom  
should teach a class on how to snag  
a dude that looks like that so the  
rest of us can learn.

Briar's face twist in horror at the idea of her friends  
wanting to fuck her dad.

THEO  
(braiding Briar's hair)  
Your dad *is* pretty attractive, Bri.  
Kind of strange you've never  
noticed other people noticing him.

MIMI  
Me. By "other people" she means me.

YARA  
I don't see it.

MIMI

I'm just saying your dad is the reason Ted Bundy had a girlfriend while he was on trial.

BRIAR

How?!

YARA

I think Mimi's point is that thirsty bitches like her will fall under the spell of any good-looking man.

MIMI

That's it. That's what I was trying to say.

BRIAR

I hate you sometimes.

THEO

I think your dad is more like a Disney prince.

MIMI

I bet he and your mom do it all the time. Like right now. I bet they're doing it right now.

YARA

Ew. Not with all of us here.

MIMI

Totally. And I bet he's super good at it.

HOLDEN (O.S.)

Haven't had any complaints so far... 'Night, girls!

They stare at each other for an uncomfortable beat before SCREAMING in embarrassment.

ROLL CREDITS over theme song ("Good as Hell" by Lizzo).

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. ROBINSON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS HALL - DAWN

The sun is barely up; house quiet and still.

Theo ENTERS the hallway and crosses to the bathroom. She closes the door just a crack.

The bedroom door at the end of the hall opens gently...

A THIRTYSOMETHING BLACK WOMAN and disheveled, OLDER BLACK MAN EXIT the room, tip-toeing cautiously toward the steps. The man holds his dress shoes in his hand.

They disappear down the steps.

The bathroom door opens. Theo stands in the door jam, arms folded, waiting...

We hear the front door OPEN softly, then CLOSE, catching on the latch with a low CLICK.

(long beat)

The woman, EBONY ROBINSON, 31, Theo's mother, comes up the stairs. She pauses at the presence of her daughter and her judgmental glare.

Ebony doesn't care for it. She scowls at Theo who doesn't relent her own scorn.

Ebony scoffs and stomps back into her bedroom, SLAMMING the door shut.

Theo storms into her own room, SLAMMING the door, too.

Theo's grandmother, IVONNE ROBINSON, 46, pokes her head out of her bedroom, curious of the loud commotion that woke her...

INT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - MIMI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is huge. With windows everywhere, letting in the morning sunlight. There's a loft bed and walk-in closet bigger than most studio apartments, but the place is cluttered and messy.

At the center of it is Mimi, checking herself out in a full-length mirror with vanity lights.

She's wearing a school uniform (black blazer, white button-down shirt underneath, black and green tartan tie, and green tartan skirt). She frowns at just how childish and unflattering it appears.

WOMAN (O.S.)  
Memphis! We're on the clock!

MIMI  
I hate this uniform!

WOMAN (O.S.)  
I know! You say that every morning!

MIMI  
But I really mean it today!

WOMAN (O.S.)  
I know! Come on, we got to go!

Mimi GROANS.

She grabs her bookbag and EXITS.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A large, open concept kitchen with hardwood floors and marble countertops. This is definitely the home of people with money.

A black woman in lavender scrubs, her hair in a bun, NICHOLE JORDAN, 45, puts fifty bucks into a sparkly novelty purse made to look like a shark.

Mimi ENTERS the kitchen.

MIMI  
I really do hate this uniform.

NICHOLE  
You make it work though.

Nichole snaps her fingers at her daughter, making her laugh.

MIMI  
Nobody snaps anymore, mommy.

NICHOLE  
Well, I'm bringing it back.

MIMI  
Doubtful.

NICHOLE

You don't know. I could be a trendsetter. By law and by nature all black women are anyway.

MIMI

They bite because we taste better than them.

NICHOLE

Seasoned to perfection.

Mimi laughs as she opens the fridge.

MIMI

Uggggggghhh...

She pulls a large sports bottle out of the fridge. There's a green/bluish sludge inside it that makes her face twist in disgust.

MIMI (CONT'D)

What's even in this?

NICHOLE

I don't know. But she said it's healthy and good for you to start your day with.

Mimi slams the door to the fridge.

MIMI

Why does she do this?

NICHOLE

Honey, she's just trying to help.

MIMI

There's nothing to help! Right?!

Nichole nods.

MIMI (CONT'D)

Okay, well, then please tell her to stop!

Mimi throws the sports bottle into the trash, grabs her shark purse, and storms out of the kitchen.

Nichole SIGHS. She grabs her keys and purse and EXITS.

INT. MAPLE RIDGE ACADEMY - MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

The school colors of emerald green, black, and white decorate the halls.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS in their green, tartan uniforms occupy the corridors, staircases, and landings, either loitering with friends or headed to their next class.

LOCKER

TWO WHITE BOYS slam into a set of lockers kissing wildly without regard.

A LOUD COUGH interrupts their making out-- it's Mimi. With her are Briar, Theo, and Yara, who's engrossed by the text book in her hands.

MIMI

Can you be done inhaling my drummer's face so I can talk to him about band practice?

Theo rolls her eyes at her friend.

THEO

In other words, you guys are cute--

MIMI

But spare us all.

THEO

Not what I was going to say.

GARRETT MOODY, 16-- dark hair, intense eyes, slick smile-- breaks their kiss with a DEEP SIGH and turns to Mimi:

GARRETT

Yes, Mimi, you can have your drummer. As long as I get him back.

He winks at his boyfriend, OWEN FABER, 15-- a shy brunette with soft eyes and freckles.

OWEN

There's no need. Five o'clock, your place, and we're covering that Beatles song you're currently obsessed with. I got your text, email, and Snapchat, Mimi.

MIMI

Why can't all boys be as focused and attentive as you?

YARA  
 (highlighting text)  
 Because then they'd all be gay.

MIMI  
 I know. So unfortunate.

BOY (O.S.)  
 I don't know. Some straight guys  
 seem alright.

They're joined by two very good-looking boys, one white, the other black.

The white boy, SEAN RHODES, 15, shoots Yara a starry-eyed smile and immediately we know he likes her.

SEAN  
 Hey, Yara.

YARA  
 (still reading)  
 Hey.

Yara, on the other hand, is a bit oblivious...

OWEN  
 Want to come watch us practice? We  
 could use the constructive  
 criticism.

DAMARIUS  
 We got our own practice after  
 school.

DAMARIUS ARNOLD, 15, the black boy, holds up the football helmet in his hand. It's black and green with a vicious snake logo on it.

OWEN  
 Shit. I forgot.

MIMI  
 Mmmm...bash my head against another  
 dude's or watch my boyfriend's  
 awesome cover band work out one of  
 the best song's ever written?  
 Doesn't seem like a tough choice,  
 guys.

GARRETT

It doesn't, but since I skipped  
last week's practice to do that,  
and coach was pissed, I don't think  
it's a good idea this time.

(to Owen)

Sorry, babe.

The WARNING BELL CHIMES. Students scurry to their  
destinations.

Briar GROANS dramatically.

BRIAR

I hate so much none of you have  
lunch with me.

Theo playfully knocks into her shoulder.

THEO

Us, too.

DAMARIUS

Well, we got AP Chem and Mr. Shiner  
don't play about them demerits.  
Let's go, man.

SEAN

Okay. Yara. Coming?

She nods, but is barely listening as her feet remain planted.  
Sean gently pulls her book out of her hands. She finally  
looks up, giving him her full attention--

SEAN (CONT'D)

AP Chem?

YARA

Oh, shit, yeah. Let's go.

Yara hurries down the stairs. Sean smirks, following her and  
Damarius to class.

MIMI

Ugh, God! Gym.

(to Briar)

Walk with me?

Briar nods and they EXIT.

Garrett grabs Owen and kisses him deeply.

A BALDING MAN in tweed pokes his head out of his classroom:

TEACHER  
Mr. Moody and Mr. Faber.

They break apart, caught.

TEACHER (CONT'D)  
Somewhere you and Miss Robinson  
need to be, Mr. Faber?

OWEN  
Mandarin with Ms. Zhao.

The LATE BELL CHIMES.

TEACHER  
I suggest the two of you get there.  
Quickly.

Owen grabs Theo's hand and rushes around the corridor to their class.

Garrett sheepishly enters the teacher's class, who closes the door behind him.

EXT. MAPLE RIDGE ACADEMY - BREEZEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Briar ENTERS from the dining hall with her "brown bag lunch."

She takes a seat on a brick wall between pillars. On the other side of her is the quad where only seniors are allowed during lunch.

She opens her ego-friendly insulated lunchbox and eats the organic grapes inside. She then pulls her cellphone from her pocket and opens TikTok.

(long beat)

The loud GIGGLES from a QUARTET OF GIRLS draws her attention.

BRIAR'S POV - GIRLS

They look to be Sophomores like Briar: there's a blonde, brunette, and redhead. The fourth girl has honey-blond hair like Briar's, but straight. All of them stunning.

And they're being flirted with by a DUO OF SENIOR BOYS.

Briar and the fourth girl catch each other's eye for a brief moment.

The girl scowls in Briar's direction.

She WHISPERS to her friends and all four girls part ways with the two boys into the dining hall.

Briar rolls her eyes, returning her attention to her For You page on TikTok.

EXT. MAPLE RIDGE ACADEMY - TRACK FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Mimi casually strolls along the track, drinking a bottle of Voss water, while her classmates jog or sprint past her.

A tall, skinny East Asian boy with floppy black hair catches up to her-- JUDE BURNSIDE, 15.

JUDE

You know these things are timed,  
right?

He takes the water from her hand and takes a gulp.

MIMI

Oh, no. Will it go on my permanent  
record? I'd hate to be at a job  
interview and they find out my time  
on the mile-run.

He hands the water back to her.

JUDE

Alright, alright. I got it.

MIMI

No clue as to why these fitness  
tests are even necessary.

JUDE

Well, as you just pointed out,  
they're not.

MIMI

Exactly. So why does every damn  
school in this country make you do  
it?

JUDE

...Tradition?

MIMI

It used to be tradition that women  
couldn't own or manage property in  
their own names.

JUDE

Wait. How did we get there?

MIMI

We were talking about unjust traditions within American society.

JUDE

I think us being graded on our level of fitness is a far cry from a history of women being treated like they weren't smart enough or strong enough to be responsible for the upkeep of their own land.

MIMI

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

JUDE

I'm going to ignore you using a Dr. King quote to justify your disappointment at having to complete a mile run in under 15 minutes.

MIMI

Whatever.

He takes note of the solemn look on her face, but waits for her to share.

(3 beats)

MIMI (CONT'D)

My mom made me one of her gross smoothies this morning for breakfast.

JUDE

And?

MIMI

And I threw it in the trash. I hate when she does that shit. Her passive-aggressive attempts to make me lose weight are very much not appreciated.

JUDE

Would you like for her to be *actually aggressive* about it?

MIMI

Better than her lazy attempts at being manipulative about it. I mean, I already know she wants to ship me off to fat camp in the summer.

JUDE

How do you know that?

MIMI

...I saw a brochure on her nightstand.

JUDE

Fuck.

MIMI

Yup. Just waiting on her to bring it up. And then I come here and get told I'm not fast enough, agile enough, strong enough... It's fucking annoying.

JUDE

I got to say this unpredicted burst of low self-esteem from you is--

MIMI

Weird?

JUDE

Pitiful. And inferior to who you are.

MIMI

Women are multi-faceted, Jude. More layers than an onion. We can feel more than one way about ourselves and the people around us.

JUDE

True. But the Mimi that sings lead in our band, has a horde of weird purses, and dips her French fries in mayo--which is so fucking nasty--has the cockiness of twenty white dudes on the internet. And she'd at least tell her stubborn mother acceptance is key in maintaining a good relationship. Trust me. My sister and my mom spent all of her high school years at each other's throats.

(MORE)

JUDE (CONT'D)

And even though time has passed,  
it's like pulling teeth to get  
Colleen to come home for Christmas.  
And we all know it's because of my  
mom.

MIMI

God, the fights between Colleen and  
your mom... Epic. Remember that  
time your mom threw her laptop out  
the window?

Jude stops walking, forcing Mimi to stop, too.

JUDE

Your mom loves you. She just  
doesn't see you.

MIMI

And if she hasn't by now, what's  
talking to her going to do?

JUDE

Surprise you, maybe.

MIMI

(scoffs)  
Doubt it.

INT. HILSON RESIDENCE - CONTINUOUS

FRONT DOOR

Yara ENTERS with two identical boys, her brothers: ELIJAH &  
ISAIAH, 10; they mean to tear through the house for the TV  
room, but Yara grabs them by their collars, stopping them.

**NOTE: They're in regular clothes; not school uniforms.**

YARA

Shhhhh... Daddy is sleeping. He's  
got a late shift tonight. And if  
you wake him up, I'll strangle you  
both.

She lets them go.

YARA (CONT'D)

Homework first.

They GROAN and SUCK THEIR TEETH, but listen, grabbing their  
backpacks off the floor and head towards the kitchen.

Yara locks the door, tosses her keys into the key bowl, and follows her brothers.

INT. HILSON RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - LATER

Yara sits at the kitchen table with her brothers. She's helping Elijah with his homework, while Isaiah breezes through his math assignment.

OS, the front door OPENS, then CLOSES.

(long beat)

A black woman in business casual, rocking short dreads twisted into an updo, ENTERS-- TERI HILSON, 36, Yara's mother.

TERI

Hi, guys.

They say 'hello'. Teri walks around the table to each of them, planting a kiss atop their heads.

TERI (CONT'D)

How was school?

Yara shrugs.

YARA

School, you know.

ISAIAH

Sebastian fell off the monkey bars during recess. His lip was bleeding but he seemed okay. His mom had to come pick him up anyway.

Teri moves around the kitchen grabbing ingredients from the fridge and cabinets for dinner.

TERI

Lord. I'll call Jackie to check up on him.

ISAIAH

Yara let me FaceTime him. He's cool. He didn't even need stitches. He's been home playing Skyrim all day.

TERI

What about you Eli? Was your day interesting?

He thinks a moment...

YARA  
The class guinea pig is still  
alive.

Teri chuckles.

TERI  
Guess that's a plus given previous  
histories.

YARA  
I'll say.

A tall, barrel-chested black man in a Class B firefighter's uniform ENTERS; Yara's father, KWAME HILSON, 40. He pecks his wife sweetly.

YARA (CONT'D)  
We too loud?

He moves to his daughter and kisses her cheek.

KWAME  
Nah, baby girl. Was time for me to  
be up anyway.

TERI  
Starting on dinner for the kids,  
but made you a little something-  
something.

She takes a lunchbox from the fridge and hands it to him.

KWAME  
Alright. My baby threw down.

TERI  
You act like I can't burn in this  
kitchen when I need to.

He whispers something in her ear that makes her GIGGLE like a schoolgirl.

Yara takes it all in, loving how affectionate and caring her parents are...

ISAIAH  
Ew. Take that upstairs. Children  
are present.

Kwame wraps his arms around Teri, hugging her from behind.

KWAME

Boy, you better recognize good love when you see it. That way when it happens to you, you don't take it for granted.

ISAIAH

Being in love seems...goofy.

YARA

It is. But a good goofy. Now, eyes on your fractions please.

ISAIAH

I'm done.

YARA

Then do your composition.

Isaiah GROANS, but does as Yara says.

INT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - POOL HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The 600 sq ft structure has been converted into a home recording studio.

Mimi SINGS The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby" in a slow, haunting melody. Jude accompanies her on an acoustic guitar.

They're joined by RIVER, 20, a black girl with a nose piercing, lip ring, and long, hot pink braids. River gently plays the mandolin.

Owen joins in, too; softly playing the fiddle.

Mimi and Jude SING the chorus together.

They're good. All of them.

The song ends and they CHEER at their practice session having gone great.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. DUFOUR RESIDENCE - BACKYARD - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

Briar EXITS the house from the patio doors and makes her way toward the shed across the lawn.

It's a pretty big shed, designed to look like a smaller version of their craftsman home.

INT. HOLDEN'S WORKSHOP - CONTINUOUS

A woodworking shop. There's measured pieces of lumber organized in cubicles on a tall shelf, woodcarving tools on display, a band saw, drill, and three different work benches.

Holden is in the center of the area at the large saw table.

A light above him FLASHES RED three times. Holden takes notice. He stops working, safely turning off the machine and removing his goggles.

He approaches the shed doors and opens them. Briar ENTERS.

BRIAR

Want to watch a scary movie with me?

HOLDEN

Absolutely not.

Briar takes a seat on the stool by the buzz saw table.

BRIAR

Come on!

HOLDEN

I'll watch *House Hunters* with you. I'll watch *Moonstruck* for the 1000th time. I'll even watch that depressing foreign movie you like so much, but I'm not watching a horror movie with you. I hate them. And you can blame your aunt for the reason why.

BRIAR

So, you'll watch *Death Note* with me?

HOLDEN

Your initial question was really just a ploy to get me to watch weird anime with you, wasn't it?

BRIAR

You got played, son.

HOLDEN

Didn't you read all the books?

BRIAR

And now I want to watch the show. With you.

She puts on a big smile and he melts at her silliness. There's little to nothing he'd ever deny her. Especially quality time.

HOLDEN

Midnight. Then you 100% have to go to bed. We can't go on a binge; you have school.

BRIAR

Got it. Important question though: ice cream or chips?

HOLDEN

Popcorn.

BRIAR

(finger guns)  
With Reece's Pieces.

She hops off the stool, kicking up a bit of sawdust with her feet.

HOLDEN

You know I didn't think you were even still into anime. Not like you used to be.

Holden tidies up the project he was working on.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

You haven't really seemed all too interested in it since you and Echo stopped hanging out.

Briar shrugs, suddenly distant at the mere mention of the other person.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Hey. Any time you want to tell me about what happened between you two, you can.

BRIAR

It's not that dramatic, dad. We're just not friends anymore. Happens.

She's clearly not going to give him anything more than that. And he doesn't want to push.

HOLDEN

Okay.

He opens the doors, then turns out the lights.

Briar and her father EXIT, arms wrapped around each other.

The doors closes then auto-locks.

INT. ROBINSON HOUSE - THEO'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A shared girl's room with one full-size bed and bunk beds. Though it's the master bedroom, it's still cramped with just barely enough room for three beds, a closet, and walking space.

Theo's sisters, AISHA, 13, and COURTNEY, 10, lie on their respective bunk beds, on their phones.

Theo lies tucked into the full-size bed reading *The Sun is Also a Star*.

Beside her nightstand is a small shelf, overflowing with other YA Romance titles.

The blushing smile on her face gives away that what she's reading she's thoroughly enjoying.

EBONY (O.S.)

Good read?

Theo looks up to her mother standing in the doorway in nursing scrubs. Her sisters don't even flinch, far too engrossed in their social media.

THEO

It's fine. Cute.

EBONY

Good.

Awkward beat.

EBONY (CONT'D)  
School okay today?

Theo rolls her eyes back down to the book in her hands.

THEO  
Yeah.

EBONY  
For fuck sake, Shameeka... What do you want me to say? I already get enough grief from your grandmother, I don't need it from you, too.

THEO  
Okay.

EBONY  
I'm an adult. I don't have to explain myself to you.

THEO  
Then don't.

Ebony crosses the room and snatches the book from Theo's hand.

EBONY  
That little private school and your little rich friends got you walking around thinking you're better than other people. Got you looking far down your nose and telling people your name is 'Theo' when it's not.

THEO  
It is! It's my middle name! So, I'm not lying when I tell people to call me that.

EBONY  
You don't know everything,  
*Shameeka.*

THEO  
I know enough. I know he's married.

Aisha and Courtney's attention is now drawn to their big sister and mother.

Ebony stews, scowling angrily at her daughter staring back at her.

EBONY

Don't test me. And change that snotty attitude before I change it for you.

She tosses the book onto Theo's lap. Ebony turns to EXIT--

THEO

Mimi's bought my lunch every day for the last 5 weeks. You still haven't put any money on my account.

It's a dig, made to make her feel unfit, like a worthless provider. For all Theo's shy sweetness, the girl knows how to be ruthless when she wants to be.

EBONY

Lights out.

Ebony flicks the lights off and SLAMS the door shut as she EXITS.

Aisha and Courtney's cellphones glow in the blackness.

AISHA

Harsh, 'Meeka.

THEO

Whatever.

Theo flicks on her reading light, illuminating her face in the dark room, and picks up her book.

INT. HILSON RESIDENCE - YARA'S ROOM - LATE NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

Yara bolts upright in bed, panting.

A blushing smile grows on her face... Seems the dream she's awoken from was entertaining. To say the least.

She chuckles to herself, then falls against her pillows with a DREAMY SIGH.

INT. ROBINSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Ivonne (in a bus driver's uniform) puts \$40 bucks into the book Theo was reading last night, and the book back into her granddaughter's bookbag.

Theo ENTERS the kitchen, smiling at her grandmother.

THEO  
Morning, ma-ma.

She kisses her cheek and receives a precious kiss in return.

IVONNE  
Ready for your big test?

THEO  
It's just a pop quiz. I think I'm good though.

IVONNE  
You know, I don't think I've ever seen anything lower than an 'A' on anything you've ever brought home. Ever. Not homework, a test, a picture you drew, an essay, or pop quiz. I wish school came as easy to me as it does to you. Because, child, I was no good at it. And it ticked my mama off like you wouldn't believe.

THEO  
School's nothing but math equations and history dates most of the time. It's not hard.

Theo slips her book bag on.

THEO (CONT'D)  
But being smart like you, that's really knowing something.

IVONNE  
You know exactly how to make my day brighter, don't you?

THEO  
I'm only telling the truth.

Ivonne kisses her cheek again.

IVONNE  
And I appreciate it, baby.

Ivonne grabs a lunchbox and bottle of apple juice from the fridge as Ebony, Aisha, and Courtney come down the steps and into the kitchen.

EBONY  
Y'all ready?

Theo bothers not to answer and instead breezes by her mother, out the front door, without a glance in her direction.

EBONY (CONT'D)

If she thinks she's too grown for me to tear that ass up, she's sadly mistaken.

IVONNE

As if you were any damn better when you were her age. In fact, you were worse, as I recall. Wipe that frown off your face, girl, and let's go.

Ivonne EXITS, following Theo.

Ebony holds her tongue and heads out; her two youngest behind her.

INT. MAPLE RIDGE ACADEMY - MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

LOCKERS

Briar closes her locker.

BRIAR

Damarius? You think you like Damarius?

YARA

What's wrong with Damarius?

BRIAR

Nothing. He's cool. Good athlete. Okay student. Nice. Not as funny as he thinks he is though.

YARA

Like all boys.

BRIAR

True. What sparked a crush on Damarius?

YARA

...I keep having dreams about him.

BRIAR

Dreams...? Ohhh...those kind of dreams.

YARA  
Yeah. And it's kind of snowballed  
from there.

BRIAR  
For how long?

YARA  
Few weeks, I think.

BRIAR  
Okay. You going to do anything  
about it?

YARA  
(smirks)  
I might.

INT. MAPLE RIDGE ACADEMY - GYMNASIUM - CONTINUOUS

Mimi ENTERS and notices the ropes hanging from the ceiling,  
and the obstacle course set up around the gym.

MIMI  
Oh, fuck this.

Someone grabs her hand. It's Jude. He puts a folded piece of  
paper into it.

MIMI (CONT'D)  
What's this?

She unfolds the paper-- it's a doctor's note excusing her  
from gym.

JUDE  
Don't say I never did anything for  
you.

She SQUEALS and hugs him.

He smiles happily, cheeks turning pink.

JUDE (CONT'D)  
Sorry I only grabbed the one and  
not the whole pad from my mom's  
office. Thought the whole thing  
turning up missing would just draw  
more attention to me stealing it.

MIMI  
This is enough. At least it is  
today, to get me out of this hell.  
(MORE)

MIMI (CONT'D)

Think Miss Tower will let me go to the library?

JUDE

No. She's going to make you change and just sit on the side watching. Just like when girls fake their period to get out of dodgeball.

MIMI

Hate dodgeball. So much. Why can't we do something less violent, like Twister?

JUDE

That's actually a cool idea.

MIMI

I have them occasionally.

JUDE

(points to doctor's note)  
Mine is better.

CLASSMATES start to file into the gym.

JUDE (CONT'D)

Now, if you'll excuse me, some of us unfortunately *have* to participate in gym today.

MIMI

Thanks, Jude. For real.

He shrugs, then follows the other boys into the boys' locker room.

INT. MAPLE RIDGE ACADEMY - DINING HALL - CONTINUOUS

Briar ENTERS. She looks around and spots the table of 4 GIRLS she watched yesterday.

She rolls her eyes. Then takes a breath that sounds more like a RESIGNED SIGH... She maneuvers her way through tables and rambunctious STUDENTS toward them.

TABLE

Briar stands there a moment, waiting to be acknowledged by the four girls enjoying their own private joke.

BRIAR

H-Hi. Hey, Echo...

They finally realize she's standing there and grow silent with her presence.

BRIAR (CONT'D)  
 ...I saw *Death Note*. Half the first season anyway. With my dad.

The fourth girl, ECHO WATKINS, 15, narrows her eyes at Briar.

**Note: Echo is mixed-race, like Briar, but her complexion is more white than hers.**

ECHO  
 Are you fucking kidding me?

BRIAR  
 Yeah, I finally watched it. It was really good, but my dad--

ECHO  
 Why are you talking to me?

Briar is taken aback.

The other girls look on, eyes darting between both girls.

ECHO (CONT'D)  
 Like, what are you doing over here, talking to me?

BRIAR  
 I just... I just wanted to say 'hey'.

ECHO  
 What for?

Briar rolls her eyes.

BRIAR  
 To waste my time, I guess.

ECHO  
 Clearly.

BRIAR  
 Well, I'm bored now with you being a bitch, so I'm going to go.

ECHO  
 Not quick enough.

Briar wants to give her the fight she seems so eager for, but thinks better of it.

Briar EXITS out the doors to the courtyard/quad.

EXT. MAPLE RIDGE ACADEMY - FOOTBALL FIELD - CONTINUOUS

The varsity FOOTBALL TEAM practice on the field.

Sean is the backup quarterback. He's getting particular attention paid to him by the COACH on their next play.

TRACK

A track circles the field.

Yara runs with her classmates.

YARA'S POV - DAMARIUS

Damarius removes his helmet, walking off the field toward the water cooler on the sidelines.

Yara stops jogging. She crosses the track toward the football field and approaches Damarius. They're divided by a chain-link fence.

YARA  
Hey, Damarius.

DAMARIUS  
'Sup, Yara.

YARA  
I think I should've joined a sport.

DAMARIUS  
Why?

YARA  
So I wouldn't have to do the mile-run and a bunch of other stupid calisthenics. You get to opt-out of gym when you play a sport and just take study hall instead.

DAMARIUS  
Unless you're on the football team. Then gym class gets used as practice and you end up doing two-a-days.

He nods at his team as emphasis to his point.

YARA  
Right.

DAMARIUS

Besides, you can't take a sport.  
You're like in every academic club.  
You ain't got the time, girl.

She GIGGLES.

YARA

Not all of them. But I'd make time.  
For something I was really  
interested in.

She gives him a flirty smile.

DAMARIUS

Well, good. That's what sports are:  
dedication. You got that and the  
rest falls into place.

YARA

Like the HSNCT.

DAMARIUS

I think it's a little different  
than quiz bowl.

YARA

Not really. Knowledge is about  
dedication, too.

He thinks about it a moment, then nods.

DAMARIUS

Yeah. Yeah, I can see that.

She smiles.

Coach blows his WHISTLE at Damarius.

COACH

Damarius! I know Miss Hilson is a  
lot prettier than me but she's not  
going to get you to regionals! Over  
here! Now!

Damarius turns to EXIT--

YARA

Hey, wait a second. W-Want t-to  
hang out...with me? On Saturday?

He's stunned.

COACH (O.S.)

Damarius!

DAMARIUS

Like-Like a date or...something?

YARA

Or something. But calling it a  
'date' sounds good, too.

DAMARIUS

Shit.

Coach blows his WHISTLE once more at Damarius!

SEAN

D! Come on!

DAMARIUS

I, uh, can't. Sorry, Yara. BroCode.

Damarius runs off to join his teammates.

YARA

"BroCode?"

SEAN

Sean watches Yara walk away from the fence. Instead of  
joining her class, she heads toward the gymnasium.

INT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

DINING TABLE

An Afro-Latinx woman, JAMILA ROBINSON, 33, Mimi's other  
mother, sits a plate down in front of her then takes the seat  
across from her.

MIMI

*¿Que es esto?*

JAMILA

Garlic chili Tofu with sesame  
broccolini.

Nichole eyes the meal in front of her just as suspiciously as  
their daughter.

JAMILA (CONT'D)

Oh, come on, you two. It's good.  
Try it.

Nichole picks up her fork, ready to give it an attempt--

MIMI

No way. Can I have something else?

JAMILA

No, you may not, *mi amor*. This is not a restaurant.

MIMI

Okay, what if I made it myself?

NICHOLE

Mimi, just try it at least, please. You might like it.

MIMI

Doubtful.

NICHOLE

Your mother cooked your dinner. Show her enough respect by appreciating it please.

Mimi SIGHS, but picks up her fork nonetheless.

MIMI

It doesn't look like enough though.

JAMILA

It's plenty. We talked about this. Portion-control is key.

MIMI

To what?

JAMILA

A healthy diet...and weight loss.

Mimi throws her fork down with a CLATTER!

MIMI

I don't need to lose weight.

NICHOLE

Mimi.

MIMI

And I don't need to eat Tofu to be healthy. *Estoy sana*. Fat people can be in excellent health.

JAMILA

Don't call yourself that please.  
And your health could be better.

MIMI

You mean I could be skinnier.

NICHOLE

Mimi.

JAMILA

Don't put words into my mouth. That  
is not what I said at all.

MIMI

Yes, it is! It's all you say with  
tasteless dinners, vegetable  
smoothies, asking my gym teacher  
more questions than my history  
teacher, and fat camp brochures on  
your nightstand! Just tell me I'm a  
fat troll that disgusts you and get  
it over with! *Niña gorda*.

JAMILA

I just want what's best for you.  
Why are you making me out to be a  
villain?

MIMI

Because you're acting like a wicked  
witch!

Mimi breaks from the table and storms out! We listen as she  
STOMPS up the stairs and SLAMS her bedroom door shut!

Tears fill Jamila's eyes.

JAMILA

...Why would she think I hate her  
like that? How could she even think  
that?

NICHOLE

Easily.

Nichole grabs Mimi's plate and EXITS in the direction her  
daughter went.

INT. MIMI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BED

Mimi writes furiously in her journal, tears filling her eyes, but never falling.

A KNOCK at her bedroom door stops her writing.

She takes a deep breath, scowling at the door.

NICHOLE (O.S.)  
Mimi. Can I come in please?

MIMI  
You're going to anyway...

The door opens gently. Nichole ENTERS.

NICHOLE  
Thought I'd at least be polite and ask first.

Nichole closes the door. Mimi puts her diary in her nightstand drawer, then locks it.

Nichole takes a seat on the bed beside her.

MIMI  
I see you brought that nasty plate in here.

NICHOLE  
You know, I tried a piece, and it ain't that bad.

Mimi scoffs.

NICHOLE (CONT'D)  
I'm serious!

Nichole sticks a piece of tofu on the fork and puts it to Mimi's lips. Mimi grimaces at it.

NICHOLE (CONT'D)  
Try it. Try it, please.

Reluctantly, Mimi opens her mouth and eats it... Her scowl softens a tad but that's all the indication she gives.

NICHOLE (CONT'D)  
Told you.

MIMI  
I didn't say anything.

NICHOLE  
(chuckles)  
Right. Okay, miss.

MIMI  
I mean...it's not a steak, but it's  
not pig's feet either.

Nichole smiles. She sets the plate down on Mimi's nightstand.

NICHOLE  
That was an ugly scene.

MIMI  
And it's 100% my fault?

NICHOLE  
No. But she's your mother, and you  
can't talk like that to her and  
storm off. She'd tell you the same  
if it was me you were mad at, so  
I'm telling you.

MIMI  
I don't enjoy being upset like  
that, but she... I wish she didn't  
think I needed to be fixed.

NICHOLE  
I swear to you, Memphis, she does  
not think that.

MIMI  
I think I've got a strong case  
against that notion. She wishes I  
was pretty. Like her. Like the both  
of you.

NICHOLE  
Your mother doesn't think there's a  
single imperfect thing about you.

MIMI  
She's got a funny way of showing  
it.

NICHOLE  
She does. No doubt she's wrong in  
her worrying about you, but I  
promise you that's all it is. She  
thinks your beautiful.

MIMI

How can she when she doesn't see me? Really see me. Because if she did, she wouldn't be the only person in my life that makes me feel ugly.

Mimi's eyes water, but she refuses to cry about this. And it breaks Nichole's heart.

MIMI (CONT'D)

I've got homework to finish.

Not knowing what else to say, and wanting to give Mimi space, Nichole nods. She stands, reaching for the plate--

MIMI (CONT'D)

You can leave it.

Nichole bends to kiss her daughter's forehead.

Nichole EXITS.

EXT. MIMI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Nichole ENTERS the hallway from Mimi's room, closing the door behind her.

Jamila waits at the other end of the hallway.

JAMILA

Should I talk to her?

NICHOLE

(cold)

No. You've said enough, Jamila.

Nichole EXITS into the master bedroom.

INT. MOVIEPLEX - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The theater's lobby is empty and quiet. No one really goes to the movies on a Tuesday night.

CONCESSION STAND

Theo is hunched over the counter reading her book. She's near the end already.

Beside her is her co-worker, AMY, 22, a Goth princess tucked into the stiff employee uniform of: black slacks, white button-down, and black bowtie, just like Theo.

She stands beside Theo looking bored as she scrolls through her cellphone.

A TRIO OF TEENAGE BOYS approach the counter. Neither Theo or Amy acknowledge them.

(long beat)

One boy CLEARS HIS THROAT, trying to gain their attention.

THEO	AMY
(droll)	(droll)
Welcome to Movieplex V. How may we make your moviegoing experience stretch beyond your imagination?	Welcome to Movieplex V. How may we make your moviegoing experience stretch beyond your imagination?

The lead boy, KAI, 17-- a tall black boy in a purple and gold letterman jacket-- smiles.

KAI  
Is working here that exciting?

THEO	AMY
Not on Tuesdays.	Not on Tuesdays.

KAI  
Can we get one large tub of popcorn  
and three bottles of water please?

AMY  
I did the last guy.

Theo huffs, tearing herself away from her book.

She and Kai briefly make eye contact, and it's love at first sight for the boy. Theo, on the other hand, pays him no mind whatsoever, oblivious to his lovestruck grinning.

THEO  
Butter?

KAI  
Uh, y-yes, m-ma'am-- I mean, yes.  
Yes. I love butter.

Kai's friends chuckle at his bumbling attempt to flirt.

Theo pours butter on their popcorn and grabs three bottles of water. She hands Kai his snacks and rings him up.

THEO  
\$32.50, please.

The boys pull their dollars together and pay her.

THEO (CONT'D)  
Thank you. Enjoy your movie and let  
us know if we can make your night  
with the stars even more out of  
this world.

KAI  
So you—you're here on Tuesdays?

THEO  
(returning to her book)  
Every Tuesday night.

KAI  
Cool. I-I'm Kai.

She nods.

KAI (CONT'D)  
What's your name?

She points to his receipt.

KAI (CONT'D)  
"Theo." That's dope.

That draws her attention just enough to make eye contact with  
him.

THEO  
Thanks.

KAI  
You're welcome.

(awkward beat)

KAI (CONT'D)  
I-I'll see you later...Theo.

Kai and his friends EXIT to their designated theater.

(long beat)

AMY  
You really got it bad for that Jude  
kid, huh?

THEO  
Why'd you bring that up?

AMY  
(snorts)  
That jock boy was trying to flirt  
with you.

Theo thinks about it a moment... But her hopeful face turns  
lovelorn as her eyes fall back to her book.

THEO  
Not my type.

AMY  
Unfortunately.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MAPLE RIDGE ACADEMY - MAIN HALL - MORNING

LOCKERS

Damarius is shoving a heavy text book into his bookbag when Yara appears. She slams his locker shut with a scowl, making him jump.

YARA

Okay, what the hell is "BroCode?"

DAMARIUS

(sighs)

Yara, look, you fine, girl, but my boy got feelings for you and I can't do him dirty like that.

YARA

Your boy? Who?

Damarius smirks.

DAMARIUS

You really don't be noticing him... Sean.

YARA

Sean? Sean Rhodes???

DAMARIUS

He feelin' you. Bad. And the homie asked me to respect his game, so I am. Sorry.

Yara rolls her eyes.

The LATE BELL chimes.

DAMARIUS (CONT'D)

Let him shoot his shot. He a good dude, Yara. Promise.

Damarius EXITS, off to his next class.

YARA

(grumbles)

So stupid...

Yara heads in the opposite direction, off to her own first period class.

EXT. LOWE'S - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Holden and an EMPLOYEE of the super hardware store tie down the 2x4s he just purchased to the bed of his truck. He thanks the other man and slips a twenty in the palm of his hand before he EXITS.

Holden pulls his keys from his back pocket, ready to climb into the driver's seat when he spots someone: a BLACK MAN loading his own truck with new gardening tools.

Holden approaches him.

HOLDEN

Finally getting 'round to doing the backyard?

The black man-- CALVIN WATKINS, 45, Echo's father-- takes notice of him.

CALVIN

Umm, yeah. Yeah. Summer's been at me for a while about it.

Holden casually leans against Calvin's truck.

HOLDEN

Oh, yeah? What's the plan?

Calvin shrugs.

CALVIN

Nothing crazy. Just a firepit for now.

There's an awkward beat between them; Holden's trying to connect but Calvin is anything but interested.

HOLDEN

Hey, Cal, man, I don't know what happened between the girls--

CALVIN

You don't? I'm genuinely surprised by that. You and Briar seem so close. Thought she would've said something...but I see why she wouldn't.

HOLDEN

She just said she and Echo drifted apart.

Calvin chuckles wryly.

HOLDEN (CONT'D)

Look, Cal, if you know why they aren't friends anymore just tell me. I mean, maybe we can help patch up what went wrong between them.

Calvin hesitates, but appears susceptible to possibly sharing with Holden.

INT. MAPLE RIDGE ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Yara is paying close attention to her AP Chemistry TEACHER'S lecture.

But becomes distracted by the back-and-forth WHISPERING between Sean and Damarius two lab desks away from her.

They both peek a glance at her, not expecting to meet her curious gaze, and stiffen, turning around in their seats.

Yara rolls her eyes.

Boys are dumb.

EXT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Yara EXITS into the busy hall.

Sean and Damarius EXIT behind her. They dab and part ways, with Sean attempting to catch up with Yara.

SEAN

So, I think we should talk...?

Yara stops, turning to him.

YARA

Is this what boys do? Call dibs on girls like they're the last donut in the box?

SEAN

What? No. That's not what I meant. That's not what either of us meant. Can I explain? D knows that I like you, but I can never seem to get your attention. He even tried to wingman for me a couple times, but I think that just drew you more to him than me. Then he told me you asked him out.

(MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)

He was real about it and said he wanted to say 'yes' but didn't out of respect for me and that I like you. That's all "BroCode" means. I swear.

Yara relents in her anger in favor of sympathy:

YARA

I'm sorry I didn't notice you trying to get my attention. You're nice and smart and I like being friends with you... But I only want to be friends with you.

SEAN

Yeah. That's, uh...obvious. Can I ask why?

YARA

You're not going to like the answer.

SEAN

I'm beyond curious now.

Yara sighs.

YARA

Well...I...don't exactly...find...white boys...appealing.

SEAN

'Appealing' as in...

YARA

Attractive. Physically. And romantically.

SEAN

So, what you're saying is: you're not interested in dating me because you don't like white dudes?

YARA

Romantically.

SEAN

Yeah, you said that. Why though?

YARA

You want me to explain the emotional and societal complexities of interracial dating to you before the late bell?

SEAN

Or some other time that allots for a lengthier conversation?

The LATE BELL chimes.

YARA

Sean, we're friends. That's good enough. I got to go. I got Spanish and you know how *Señora Vasquez* makes you wear the *sombrero* when you're late.

SEAN

Okay, but, Yara--

She's already hurrying down the hall with the other stragglers trying to get to her next class.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Goddamnit.

INT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Mimi walks through the door with the mail in her hand.

JAMILA (O.S.)

Mimi, that you?

She quickly sorts it into the mail organizer on the wall.

MIMI

Yes.

JAMILA

Come in here.

Mimi kicks off her shoes.

LIVING ROOM

Jamila is on the chaise lounge with a closed book in her lap.

Mimi flops down atop the pouf ottoman near her feet.

MIMI

What's up?

JAMILA  
I want to talk.

MIMI  
About the other night?

JAMILA  
Yes.

MIMI  
Keeping it 100?

JAMILA  
That what you want?

MIMI  
Only way to have this conversation  
in my opinion.

Jamila thinks about it a moment before nodding.

JAMILA  
Okay. Keeping it 100.

MIMI  
...You start.

Jamila puts her book on the end table beside her and swings her feet to the carpeted floor.

JAMILA  
*Memphis, eres hermosa.* I mean that.  
I think you are the most beautiful  
girl in the world.

MIMI  
Then why do you treat me like I'm  
not?

JAMILA  
I don't mean to. I just--

MIMI  
Think I need fixing.

JAMILA  
"Adjusting."

MIMI  
Same thing. I don't need either.

JAMILA  
Not in my eyes. And the eyes of  
everyone who loves you.

MIMI

But?

JAMILA

...But the world does not like overweight black girls with confidence. That's not who people expect, or want, you to be. They find it audacious. And out-of-order.

MIMI

Because we let them make the rules. But if I love myself, and ignore their rules, then I change the game.

JAMILA

And force them to play with you or against you. And they won't side with you. I don't want your life to be any harder than it will be.

MIMI

You think you're helping but you're hurting. You should be on my team. My side.

JAMILA

I am, *mija*!

MIMI

No, you're not! You're trying to mold me into the image of what other people see as acceptable and not what I see as acceptable.

JAMILA

Because if you're not what they want they'll hurt you and break you down and I can't watch that light, the beautiful, glowing light inside you, die out. Killed by people who aren't worth a hundred of you.

MIMI

If you know that about me, if you love me, just as I am, then let me be! Stand next to me and be proud!

JAMILA

I am nothing if not in awe of you constantly, Memphis!

MIMI

Then show it! Stop trying to help  
me survive and let me live!

Tears well in both their eyes; emotions running hot and high.

(3 beats)

MIMI (CONT'D)

This was never about me being  
"healthy." It was about how other  
people see me. And I'm a reflection  
of you.

JAMILA

*Oh no. Alto ahí.* That is not at all  
what I was saying. I want the way  
you move through this world to be  
free of struggle. Your path clear.  
All parents want that. It's not  
realistic but we want it anyway.  
And we'll fight tooth-and-nail for  
it.

MIMI

I get that. But maybe overweight  
black girls wouldn't have such a  
hard time if the people that  
claimed to love us fought tooth-and-  
nail along side us on the cluttered  
path, instead of thinking we need  
adjusting for clearer one.

Mic drop.

Jamila's rendered speechless, confronted with her failure to  
truly understand and support her daughter.

Mimi stands, wiping the fallen tears from her eyes.

MIMI (CONT'D)

I've got homework.

Mimi EXITS, hurrying out of the room and upstairs.

Jamila drops her head into her hands, crying.

INT. DUFOUR RESIDENCE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Holden and a beautiful black woman-- KIMBERLY "KIM" DUFOUR,  
40, Briar's mother-- sit on the sofa with their feet in each  
other's lap.

Holden watches a documentary on The History Channel, while Kim quietly shuffles around Excel spreadsheets from the folders in her lap.

OS, the front door opens then closes.

BRIAR (O.S.)  
Home!

HOLDEN & KIM  
In here.

Briar pokes her head into the room.

BRIAR  
Hey.

KIMBERLY  
Wait a minute. Come in here.

Kim tosses her paperwork onto the coffee table. Holden turns the TV off.

Briar slips off her shoes and drops her backpack, ENTERING the room.

BRIAR  
What's up?

KIMBERLY  
Sit.

Briar takes a seat on the coffee table across from her parents.

HOLDEN  
(attempts to leave)  
I'm just going to--

KIMBERLY  
Nope.

HOLDEN  
(sits back down)  
Okay.

BRIAR  
This seems like it's going to be a talk-talk.

KIMBERLY  
It is.

Kimberly looks to Holden.

HOLDEN

Um, right. Okay... Today, at the hardware store, I ran into Calvin. Echo's father. And we had a talk...about why you and Echo aren't friends anymore.

Briar's face falls into shame.

BRIAR

Oh...

KIMBERLY

Briar. Did you tell Echo she wasn't black enough to be your friend anymore?

BRIAR

No. Not like that.

HOLDEN

What did you say to her?

BRIAR

Nothing really...

KIMBERLY

You sure about that? Because Calvin said you told her she wasn't black but "just visiting." He said you called her "off-white Barbie."

BRIAR

Okay, yes, I said those things to her, but it wasn't as heinous as she made it out to be.

HOLDEN

Sounds pretty heinous to me.

BRIAR

I was critical in what I had to say to her, yes. But I only said that stuff when she got all in her feelings about it and started attacking me.

KIMBERLY

I wonder why. Has the irony of this whole thing been lost on you?

HOLDEN

What the hell would even spark this conversation between the two of you to begin with?

KIMBERLY

Yara.

BRIAR

No.

KIMBERLY

Really? Because I've heard the not-so amusing way she used to "poke fun" at Echo, and you, when you first started hanging out with her.

BRIAR

Me and Echo just outgrew each other. Has nothing to do with Yara.

Holden and Kimberly exchange looks; they doubt it.

A beat.

BRIAR (CONT'D)

I tried apologizing to her...but she didn't care.

HOLDEN

You blame her?

BRIAR

...No.

KIMBERLY

I'm going to say this once and never again, because I can't believe I have to tell my biracial daughter this, so hear me good. You, nor anyone else, get to measure someone else's blackness. You don't get to quantify and qualify them. Especially with colorism. You are not the gatekeeper of another person's identity. And you don't get a say in how true someone is to themselves. However Echo or you or anyone else sees themselves is up to them and their cross to bear if it isn't genuine.

(MORE)

KIMBERLY (CONT'D)

And maybe had you been less malicious in your "concerns" for Echo, she would have been more receptive to your eventual apology. Do you understand me?

BRIAR

Yes, ma'am.

HOLDEN

Echo is a good girl, Briar. She was like family in this house. And you were the same in hers. She didn't deserve you coming at her the way you did.

Briar nods solemnly.

KIMBERLY

That's it. Go do your homework. We'll call you down for dinner.

Briar shuffles out of the room, picking up her backpack and shoes along the way.

Holden and Kimberly listen to her hurry up the stairs to her room.

HOLDEN

At least she didn't slam the door.

KIMBERLY

She's not crazy.

Holden snorts.

Kimberly sighs. She grabs her paperwork from the coffee table.

HOLDEN

Hey. Swamp memories?

KIMBERLY

The swampiest.

HOLDEN

Want a glass of wine?

KIMBERLY

God, yes.

INT. ROBINSON HOUSE - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

FRONT DOOR

Ebony-- in a cheap cocktail dress and heels-- slams into the house. Her face screwed up into a scowl that morphs into wet eyes and trembling chin as she fights back tears.

(3 beats)

Theo comes down the steps with an empty glass in her hand. She spots her mother in the dark, back against the door, wiping at her eyes.

THEO  
Mom. You okay?

Ebony slips off her heels.

EBONY  
You'll be happy to know I'm no longer seeing David.

THEO  
...I'm sorry.

Ebony scoffs.

EBONY  
Please, 'Meeka.

THEO  
I am. He wasn't good for you.

EBONY  
And what do you know about what's good for me? You're a fifteen year old child. You don't get to decide what's good for me. I'm grown. I'm your mother.

THEO  
I'm just saying that being with a married man wasn't what you needed.

EBONY  
That little fancy school full of white kids got you confused on who's the adult around here. And those books are filling your head up with childish shit about love.

THEO

You don't know anything about love either! If you did, you wouldn't've been messing around with a guy that was never really yours!

Without thinking, Ebony picks up one of her shoes and chucks it at Theo, knocking her down on the steps. The glass falls out of her hand and breaks. A piece of it cutting into Theo's hand.

Ebony GASPS; shocked by her own action, hurting her daughter.

EBONY

'Meeka, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

She rushes to her aid, but Theo bolts up the stairs.

THEO'S ROOM

Theo runs into her room. Her sisters stare at her with concern.

AISHA

'Meeka, you okay? What happened?

Theo says not a word as she wraps her bleeding hand in a sock she grabs off the floor. She then picks up her cellphone and texts someone.

AISHA (CONT'D)

Who you texting?

Theo grabs her bookbag and stuffs clothes inside, along with her homework, her cellphone charger, and the book she's currently reading.

She pulls a hoodie on and slips a pair of sneakers onto her feet.

COURTNEY

Where you going?

She opens the window by her bed.

THEO

Tell ma-ma not to worry. I'll call her in the morning.

Theo EXITS, climbing out the one-story window.

INT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - MIMI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

BED

Theo sits at the foot of the bed with Mimi sitting at the headboard. The cut on her hand is wrapped in a proper bandage.

MIMI

Whoa.

THEO

Yeah.

MIMI

I'm sorry that happened.

THEO

...Me, too.

MIMI

She ever get like that before?

Theo shakes her head 'no'.

THEO

She didn't mean it. But I still don't want to be at home. Near her.

MIMI

I don't think you should. She going to come banging on the door for you in the middle of the night?

THEO

No. She'll figure out where I am but won't come for me. I know her. She's too embarrassed right now.

MIMI

Will you go home when she does come for you?

THEO

Have to.

MIMI

Told you you could stay here. You know my moms don't mind. Plus, they got hands and can give your mama all the smoke.

Theo chuckles.

Mimi pulls her in for a hug. She pecks Theo's cheek.

THEO

Thanks.

MIMI

None needed.

Mimi grabs her tablet off the floor and her AirPods.

MIMI (CONT'D)

Read your book.

Theo smiles as Mimi settles into bed. She does the same at the other end, grabbing her book from her bag.

Mimi's a good friend. And Theo's glad she's hers.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. MAPLE RIDGE ACADEMY - DINING HALL - AFTERNOON

Yara, Mimi, and Owen ENTER the dining hall. Mimi and Owen head for the lunch line but Yara has a brown bag lunch.

Sean catches up to Yara.

SEAN  
Hey.

YARA  
Hey.

SEAN  
Can I sit with you? I want to talk.

YARA  
If you're going to tell me what I said was racist, you can save it because--

SEAN  
I'm not. Actually...

He leads her to her usual table. They sit. Sean pulls a thick folder from his bookbag and drops it atop the table.

YARA  
What's this?

SEAN  
Research.

Sean slips on a pair of eyeglasses. He opens the folder and Yara can see whatever it is is *well* researched; outlined, highlighted, with scribbled notes in the margins.

YARA  
Research on what?

SEAN  
The emotional and societal complexities of interracial dating.

YARA  
'Scuse me?

SEAN  
I chaptered it out, but we don't have to go in numerical order.

(MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)

We can skip around. And we can touch on certain things you want addressed but don't want to spend that much time on. Because point-by-point might become tedious after a while.

YARA

Sean. You did grad-level research on this?

SEAN

I'm going to be honest, this might be doctorate-level. I have the third-highest GPA in our class, after you and Theo, so you shouldn't be surprised at the amount of nerd I put into this.

YARA

Is this dissertation to change my mind or for you to understand how I feel?

SEAN

Both. I started out thinking I could try to change your mind, then after a few dozen webpages, and a couple of books, I saw why you said 'no'.

YARA

This isn't a personal rejection, Sean.

SEAN

I know. But... Well, like I said, I like you. I wanted to put in the time to understand something you feel pretty cut-and-dry about.

YARA

This is weirdly sweet. But also an example of entitlement, condescension, and a blatant disregard for my romantic choices and boundaries.

SEAN

I know. The last paragraph is just a rambling apology.

She laughs. Sean smirks, loving her smile.

Their moment is interrupted by none other than River rushing up to Yara.

RIVER  
(British accent)  
Where's Mimi?

YARA  
River, what are you doing here?

RIVER  
I got to bloody find Mimi. I have  
the biggest fucking news.

YARA  
She's in the lunch line.

RIVER  
You're a goddess.

RIVER

River rushes toward the long lunch line in search of her bandmate.

River spots Mimi and Owen at the front of the queue ready to swipe their lunch cards.

RIVER (CONT'D)  
Mimi! Owen!

They turn to their excited friend.

OWEN  
River! How'd you sneak on campus?

RIVER  
Who fucking cares?

OWEN  
The police might. Since you don't  
go to this school. And you're not a  
minor.

RIVER  
Pipe down, goody-goody, I come  
bearing great news: we got a gig.

Mimi SQUEALS, startling the whole cafeteria.

MIMI  
Are you serious?

OWEN  
Like a gig-gig? A paying gig?

River nods.

OWEN (CONT'D)  
What is it?

MIMI  
I don't care. Tell me when.

RIVER  
My aunt's boss is getting remarried and looking for a band, and blessed Auntie Felicia, suggested us. Her boss got interested and asked for a tape. Auntie Felicia played her one of our songs. She loved it, and now we got a real live paying gig in 3 months for \$1200.

All three of them SCREAM WITH JOY at the happy news, drawing the attention of everyone within the dining hall.

INT. MOVIEPLEX - LOBBY - NIGHT, CONTINUOUS

Amy locks the front doors after a couple EXITS; last customers of the night.

She moves to a circuit breaker on the wall and turns out the outdoor marquee lights.

AMY  
Thank, Christ. Saturdays are my night, kids!

Amy plays GOTH ROCK loudly over the PA System.

Theo, Amy, and TWO other COWORKERS perform their closing duties:

MONTAGE

Turning up all the lights

Sweeping theaters

Taking trash out back

Mopping the concession stand floor

Dumping old popcorn in giant bags. Which they give to HOMELESS PEOPLE waiting out back.

Cleaning the soda machines

Vacuuming the hideous red pattern carpets

Arranging the candy displays neatly

Cleaning the hot dog/nachos topping station

Windex-ing the windows

END OF MONTAGE

Music off, theater sparkling, Theo covers the cash registers and grabs her purse.

Her coworkers wait for her at the door.

CO-WORKER #1  
(looking outside)  
Theo, girl, I think your mama  
waiting for you.

THEO  
Shit.

AMY  
You okay? Need me to take you  
somewhere.

THEO  
No. It's okay. Thanks though.

Theo EXITS. Her co-workers follow behind her.

Ebony is indeed waiting at the curb for her, leaning against her 2011 Honda Civic with duct taped back window.

Theo says 'goodnight' to her two co-workers heading further into the parking lot to their cars.

She shuffles toward her mother.

They stand in awkward silence for a beat.

EBONY  
Want to tell your bodyguard to  
relax.

Ebony nods to Amy a couple feet away, leaning against the building, smoking a cigarette and pretending to scroll through her cellphone.

Theo smiles at her protective friend looking out for her.

THEO  
She's just concerned.

EBONY  
Jesus, Shameeka, what are you  
telling people?

THEO  
This is a weird way to apologize...

EBONY  
I didn't mean to... I was angry and  
my reaction was beyond stupid. I  
don't ever want you... I don't ever  
want you to feel like you're not  
safe around me.

(fights back tears)  
I'm sorry you were upset enough to  
leave. I never thought I'd be that  
type of mother. The kind that takes  
her hurt out on her children. I was  
just...angry that you were right.

THEO  
You seem to hate when I'm right a  
lot.

EBONY  
I know... 'Meeka, you are so much  
smarter and kinder and pleasant  
than I ever was at your age. I am  
so proud of the young woman you  
are.

THEO  
But...?

EBONY  
But I hate that you won't let me be  
your mother. You don't let me make  
mistakes. You don't let me grow and  
learn. You judge me. And it's bad  
enough living with your grandmother  
and having her cut her eyes and  
suck her teeth at me all the time.  
I don't want the same treatment  
from my daughter.

THEO  
I have let you make mistakes. The  
problem is you keep making the same  
one. It's always some guy...

(MORE)

THEO (CONT'D)

Some guy you put all your hopes and dreams into and he turns out to be human garbage. I don't want to give you a shoulder to cry on anymore. I'm your child, not an ally in your failures.

EBONY

You make me out to be such a terrible mother.

THEO

I don't. And you're not.

EBONY

But...?

THEO

...But I want you to be better. I want you to put me, Aisha, and Courtney first.

EBONY

It is utterly ridiculous for you to think I don't. Everything I do, I'm thinking about the three of you.

Theo remains quiet. She doesn't believe her, but doesn't want to hurt her with the truth.

THEO

I can't be your sidekick. And I can't be your punching bag either.

EBONY

I promise to never do something like that. Ever again. I'm sorry, Shameeka. So sorry.

Theo hesitates, but ultimately meets her mother halfway for a hug.

EBONY (CONT'D)

Can I take you home, or is Amy going to take you somewhere.

THEO

No. I'd like a ride home. Please.

Ebony steps aside and opens the passenger side door.

AMY

Theo. You okay?

THEO  
I'm fine. Thanks.

Amy nods.

AMY  
Let me know if you're not.

Amy walks into the parking lot, heading to her car.

Theo climbs into the front seat. Ebony into the driver's seat.

EBONY  
Good friend. Weird as hell, but good.

Ebony buckles in and turns the engine over.

INT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - DEN - CONTINUOUS

NICHOLE  
Say that again?

MIMI  
My band, Poison Apple, we got a paying gig! We're doing a wedding!

Mimi SQUEALS, jumping up and down.

NICHOLE  
Holy shit.

JAMILA  
That's such great news, *mija*!

Nichole is in shock that someone actually booked her daughter's "garage band" for their wedding.

Jamila is genuinely happy, jumping from her chair to hug her daughter proudly.

JAMILA (CONT'D)  
I'm so happy for you!

MIMI  
Really?

JAMILA  
Of course I am. Why would y-- I'm over the moon. I can't wait to see you guys perform.

NICHOLE

It's a wedding, not a theater. You need to be on the guest list.

MIMI

I can see if I can put you guys on the guest list.

NICHOLE

Goddamnit. I'm going to have to go to this thing?

JAMILA

Yes, Nic. We're supportive, proud mamas. We're going to help Memphis on her path.

A small smile grows on Mimi's lips at her mother having understood their in-depth conversation and called it back.

She's making an effort and it's exactly what Mimi needs right now.

INT. JORDAN RESIDENCE - MIMI'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mimi is sitting on her bed wearing a bonnet and mud mask, FaceTime-ing her friends.

MIMI

Damn, Bri, your mama came at you hard. She was not having it.

INTERCUT - FACETIME

Yara is wrapping her hair in a satin scarf in the bathroom.

YARA

Why does she care so much what you said to corny-ass Echo? You only told her the truth about herself.

Briar is in her own bathroom. Her hair is damp and she's wearing a faded Northwestern University T-shirt.

BRIAR

I don't know if it's completely the truth though...

Yara rolls her eyes.

YARA

I think the girl has moved to full-blown passing but whatever.

(MORE)

YARA (CONT'D)

I mean, why would she be hanging  
out with the likes of Fallon  
otherwise?

Yara brushes her teeth.

BRIAR

Can we be done talking about Echo  
please? Theo. You okay?

Theo's on her bed, massaging cocoa butter onto her legs.  
She's also wearing a bonnet like Mimi.

Theo shrugs.

THEO

I'm fine. I don't think she'll do  
it again. She seemed genuinely  
sorry. She just lost it for a  
second is all.

MIMI

Don't make excuses for your ratchet-  
ass mama, Theo.

Mimi puts whitening strips on her teeth.

THEO

I'm not. We talked. We still don't  
see eye-to-eye about anything, but  
nothing like the other night is  
ever going to happen again.

YARA

Hope so.

THEO

(softly)  
Me, too.

Yara puts her retainer in her mouth.

MIMI

Wait a minute. I forgot something.  
Why was Sean at our table, Yara?

THEO

He's eaten with us before.

MIMI

When you guys have a project you're  
partnered on. There was no school  
work on that table. What's the tea?  
Spill.

YARA  
 Nothing piping hot.  
 (shrugs)  
 He said he had feelings for me,  
 asked me out, and I said no. I  
 don't date white boys.

Briar, Mimi, and Theo collectively GROAN.

YARA (CONT'D)  
 What?

MIMI  
 Boys are boys, Yara.

YARA  
 False. Not all boys are created  
 equal.

MIMI  
 Yeah, some are idiots and bullies.  
 And some are smart, nice, with big,  
 blue eyes.

YARA  
 And yet I'm. Not. Interested.  
 Besides, I have a crush on  
 Damarius.

MIMI THEO  
 Damarius?! Damarius?!

YARA  
 Yes. And I'm going to pursue that  
 now that I talked to Sean.

Briar is braiding her damp hair.

BRIAR  
 I don't think it works like that,  
 Yara.

YARA  
 It does if I say it does. Watch me  
 work.

MIMI THEO  
 (snaps fingers) (snaps fingers)  
 The queen has spoken. The queen has spoken.

BRIAR  
 I don't think this is going to go  
 the way you hope, but fingers  
 crossed, girl.

Briar starts washing her face with cleanser.

YARA  
Anyway, hater...

MIMI  
Anyway, I have an official paying gig and all of you better be there.

BRIAR  
Mimi, I don't think the potential bride would like it if all of us and your moms showed up at her wedding, just to watch you play and hold the chocolate fountain hostage.

Theo rubs hand cream into her palms.

THEO  
Yeah, Mimi, I think you're going to have to just let your moms record it on their phones then send video to us.

YARA  
We'll be there in spirit, channeling all our love and support to you guys from across town.

MIMI  
If y'all loved me for real, you'd crash this wedding.

YARA  
If we loved you, we'd stay miles away from it so Poison Apple can continue getting more paying gigs.

MIMI  
(sighs)  
Fine. If you insist on doing the mature thing...

THEO  
Is Jude excited about you guys playing at a wedding?

MIMI  
About to find out; he's calling me now. Gotta go. 'Night, all.

Mimi leaves their group chat.

YARA  
I should go, too. I got to proof-  
read my paper for English Lit.

Yara waves at the camera.

YARA (CONT'D)  
'Night.

Yara leaves their FaceTime group.

BRIAR  
Just you and me, lady. How you  
doing? Really?

Theo's sister, Aisha, walks into the room, inadvertently  
disturbing her momentary privacy.

Theo EXITS her room for the bathroom down the hall. She  
closes the door behind her and turns the bathroom light on.

THEO  
I'm not scared of my mom. Or  
worried. I know it was just a  
moment. A bad one. I'm  
just...anxious. More than ever now.

BRIAR  
For what?

THEO  
...To leave. I can't wait to get  
out of here.

BRIAR  
Two more years. Two more years and  
you are off to Yale or Stanford or  
wherever you want to go.

THEO  
I...I don't think I'm going to go  
to college.

Briar's taken aback.

BRIAR  
What you going to do then?

THEO  
Travel. See stuff. Live somewhere  
else.

Briar turns the light out in her bathroom and ENTERS her  
adjoining bedroom. She flops into her desk chair.

BRIAR

Where?

THEO

(smiles)

I've been reading about Fairbanks, Alaska. They have a "midnight sun season." And you can see the Northern Lights from there.

BRIAR

Sounds pretty.

THEO

Might be.

BRIAR

Theo. Do me a favor? Whatever you decide to do when we graduate high school, let me know what it is before you up and disappear.

THEO

I'm not going to disappear.

BRIAR

Sounds like you want to.

THEO

I don't want to disappear. I just want to escape.

Briar nods.

BRIAR

I get that.

THEO

Don't tell anyone. Especially Yara. She'll tell me I'm stupid and try to talk me into going to Spelman with her.

BRIAR

(pensive)

I get that, too.

THEO

Thanks. See you first period?

BRIAR

Yup.

THEO  
Don't forget to read chapters 10  
through 20 for history.

BRIAR  
(whiny)  
The French Revolution is so boring.

THEO  
It's actually not. It's all about  
class warfare, inequality, and  
royal tyranny.

BRIAR  
Uggggghhhh...

Theo rolls her eyes.

THEO  
Read the stupid chapters. 'Night.

Theo ends their call.

BRIAR

Briar grimaces at *The French Revolution: From Enlightenment  
to Tyranny* on her desk...

She scrolls through her contacts on her phone.

She finds 'ECHO's' contact.

She hesitates a beat.

SUPER:

She taps Echo's contact info and opens her text. She types  
"Hi" but then deletes it. She tries again with "Can we talk,"  
then deletes it.

A beat.

She types "I'm sorry" and hits send. She tosses her phone  
onto her bed.

Briar turns on her desk lamp, leans back into her chair and  
grabs the book, opening it to chapter ten.

CUT TO BLACK.

ROLL CREDITS OVER INDIE POP SONG

END OF SHOW