

FOREVER

Second Revision

Written by

MARA BROCK AKIL

Inspired by the book Forever by JUDY BLUME

story27 productions
5760 W. Adams Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90016

July 29th, 2022

FADE IN:

EXT. STUDIO CITY HILLS - DUSK

Peeking through palm trees and pine trees we find a picturesque view of the valley. The San Gabriel mountain range is snow-capped in the distance. Twinkling lights from taillights offer a beautiful glow at dusk.

CHYRON: NYE 2017

Another CHYRON (in the vein of an IG Stories post) pops up in the lower right hand corner: **Somewhere in Laker Nation**

In this lush backyard of this home in the hills, we glide past the hamburger float drifting in the steaming pool until we are now looking right into...

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

We hear muffled MURMURS as we push past the glass into the disheveled room of strewn-about sneakers, backpacks, sweats and balled socks propping up empty water bottles. A curled foot comes into frame. The tension releases with the rhythm of the murmur... OH! We are catching a Black teenage boy in the middle of a bout of self-love. His body is half under the covers, his phone is by his side featuring a muted, Brazilian boy-on-girl-on-girl Porn Hub action. Just as he's turning the corner for victory, in the quiet between his own ecstasy he hears a woman's MOANS. Her pleasure falls in the gaps of his and-- game over.

JUSTIN

Fuck.

This is JUSTIN JOHNSON [16, a beautiful young man who wobbles through the world on one foot of confidence and another of insecurity]. He lays back trying to get back in his body and block out the sounds of his parents having sex. No dice. He hits the bed in frustration, SCREAMS into his pillow. After a beat, his hand searches for his phone. He tosses the pillow to the side and moves his thumbs as fast as he can.

TEXT EXCHANGE with DARIUS:

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Yo get me out of here--
PARTY????????????

DARIUS
***Tea Cup EMOJI* Stay tuned my dude.**

CUT TO:

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

A couple hours later, it's completely dark outside. The only light is from the pool, and Justin is now asleep with his hands in his underwear. He wakes to a **TEXT**-- it's Darius.

DARIUS
B-I-N-G-O and Bingo was his name
Ho. Dust off your tux.

Justin smiles, scrambles out of bed, steps into the sweat pants on the floor and pauses at his door to quickly rehearse his next moves. This allows us to see the back of his door. Neatly written in now faded colored chalk are **REMINDERS**: 1/ Take a breath. 2/ Read the instructions out loud. 3/ Write neatly. 4/ Double check your work. 5/ Put finished HW in folder. 6/ Put folder in backpack. 7/ Take a breath. As he takes a cleansing breath, he exits his room right into the--

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Justin passes right by his little brother, JADEN [12, things come easier for him, but he still idolizes his big brother] playing video games in the loft-like upstairs lounge of this airy Spanish home with modern amenities.

JADEN
 Are we still playing Destiny?

Justin keeps walking, mumbling something inaudible.

JADEN (CONT'D)
 What? Are we playing or not?

We follow Justin down the stairs and through the well-appointed house to find his parents, DAWN [47, easy elegance that belies her loving but paranoid form of parenting] and ERIC [53, the more lenient parent who always plays referee] lounging in the plush--

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- that has an amazing view. Gregory Porter's "Painted On Canvas" plays as they sip wine by the roaring fireplace-- perfect conditions to ask something last minute:

DAWN
 (twinkle in her eye)
 There he is.

JUSTIN
 I see you guys all relaxed, got
 your easy listening playlist
 poppin'.

ERIC
 Son, I love this playlist you made
 us. Best Christmas present ever.
 Make me another one.

DAWN
 Yep, you got us ready to party.
 Daddy's home. I got the Monopoly
 board out, and dinner is almost
 ready. So whenever you guys are
 ready to get spanked, let me know.

There is an awkward pause.

ERIC
 Everything ok?

JUSTIN
 (as if he's put upon)
 Yeah. Darius asked me to go to
 this party with him.

Immediately bothered, Dawn checks her phone.

ERIC
 It's almost eight o'clock, son.

JUSTIN
 Yeah. He um, he just told me.

DAWN
 Were you invited?

JUSTIN
 (appealing to his Dad)
 He's invited and I'm-- I'm like his
 plus one, I guess.

DAWN
 Where is this party? And who's
 throwing it?

JUSTIN
 I'm going with Darius.

DAWN

That didn't answer my question.

Justin looks to his Dad for support.

ERIC

Son, just give us the who, what,
when, where--

JUSTIN

I don't know who's throwing it, and
I don't know where it is.

DAWN

And that seems appropriate to you?

ERIC

Dawn.

DAWN

What concerns me is that you still
don't know the self-preservation
steps you need to take to get what
it is that you want. So no, we are
not starting the new year this way.
You don't have any information for
the party-- you don't go to the
party.

JUSTIN

You always do this.

DAWN

Do what?

JUSTIN

Treat me like a child.

DAWN

Because you always act like one. I
ask for one thing: not to spring
things on us last minute, and what
do you do? Do you ever have any
consideration for what we might
want to do on the one New Year's
Eve we finally have your father
home?

She makes him feel like shit again.

JUSTIN

I just found out about it, and I
just want to go.

DAWN
Where is it, Justin?

Justin's eyes well up in frustration. His father sees it.

ERIC
Dawn.

DAWN
What, Eric? They just elected a white supremacist in office while cops are killing Black boys like it's open season, and I'm tripping?

JUSTIN
See.

DAWN
See what?

ERIC
(to Dawn)
Just stop-- damn. We were having a nice night.

JUSTIN
This is why I don't ever go anywhere because it's always-- Mom, there are kids at my school who don't even come home on the weekends.

DAWN
And they are what--?

JUSTIN
They're all white! Because you put me in a white school.

ERIC
That's usually called checkmate.

Justin laughs relieved while Dawn stews.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Look son, we need info. That's it.

DAWN
Do we need to get your executive functioning tutor--

JUSTIN

I swear to God if you hire somebody
to follow me around--

DAWN

I said tutor, not companion. Dawn.

ERIC

DAWN (CONT'D)

Speaking of all this extra money
we're spending-- did you train
today?

ERIC

(snaps at her)

Stop!

She falls back against the couch. Justin turns around, and we follow him as he retraces his steps back to his room. We can overhear Dawn and Eric...

ERIC (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You take shit too far.

DAWN (O.S.)

You don't take shit far enough.
He's graduating next year, Eric.

ERIC (O.S.)

You emasculated him.

DAWN (O.S.)

I what?!

ERIC

I tried to joke us out of this
shit. But damn--

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - UPSTAIRS LOFT - CONTINUOUS

Now upstairs, Justin passes right by his brother again still playing video games, but who heard everything and offers no eye contact out of respect for his privacy. Before he enters his room:

JUSTIN

I'm trying to go to this party.
I'll for sure play with you
tomorrow.

JADEN

Ok. Cool.

JUSTIN
Don't worry about anything. It's
all good.

Justin enters his room and closes the door.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the other side of his door, Justin silently rages at the door. It's ironic: the door reminder is to breathe.

Spent, he collapses on his bed. Then he springs up to **TEXT:**

JUSTIN
I need more info so I can go out.

DARIUS
Standby, I forgot you a virgin
still living in Fort Knox.

Followed immediately by a GIF: ***Black and white vintage footage of prisoners running from an armed guard.***

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - LATER

Justin, dressed for a party that highlights his Air Jordan 11's, exits his room with a smirk. "Pull Up" By Wiz Khalifa featuring Lil Uzi Vert sets his mood, as we follow him down the stairs...

EXT. NYE PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

... of a home that has every holiday memory over the years beautifully framed in a well-appointed gallery wall. It's clearly an upper-middle class white family of four people and two dogs.

When Justin reaches the bottom the stairs, he drops right into an already active party. And upon sight, the thirty kids there yell out: **HAPPY NEW YEAR!!**

It brings a smile to Justin's face, until everyone eventually goes back to what they were doing. No one knows him, and he knows no one. He "what's up?"s a few of the Basketball types that cross his way as he looks around the party for Darius. He eventually parks on the wall.

Then two GIDDY GIRLS [16, white] with fondue sticks in hand approach him.

GIDDY GIRL #1
What's your name?

JUSTIN
Justin.

GIDDY GIRL #1
(laughs)
No way-- Justin is *just in time*.

GIDDY GIRL #2
For fondue.

Giddy Girl #2 bites her cheesy bread, allowing cheese to drip down her chin so Giddy Girl #1 can lick it off, ending in a kiss. This is clearly more of a planned foreplay act for their pleasure than it is for Justin, who is now awkwardly turned on. He looks around and spots DARIUS [17, football player build with Nick Cannon charm] exiting the guest bathroom with a girl. Darius crosses the room to greet Justin. They dap up like brothers do.

DARIUS
My guy.

JUSTIN
Whassup?

DARIUS
(re: Giddy Girls kissing)
They're high. They dipped their gummies.

JUSTIN
Dipped, fondue, what? What is this freak show, my dude?

DARIUS
Apparently it's a delicacy.
(then)
Chloe, explain your theme again.

CHLOE [17, self-assured, hostess with the mostess] gets up with a fresh fondue stick and crosses over to Justin and Darius. We recognize her from some of the vacation photos.

DARIUS (CONT'D)
Chloe, Justin. Justin, Chloe.
This is her house.

JUSTIN
Nice house.

CHLOE

Thank you. So basically in the first chapter of Judy Blume's FOREVER there was a New Year's Eve party with fondue. Why reinvent the wheel, when Judy planned the party for us?

DARIUS

Basically, you just poke your stick in this warm cheese and wiggle it around.

CHLOE

You are so nasty-- but you nailed it.

Justin watches the sexual tennis match between these two.

DARIUS

Ok, Chloe.

CHLOE

What?

DARIUS

Exactly. What?

CHLOE

(walking away smiling)

Make sure Justin puts his name in the hat.

DARIUS

She is such a fucking tease.

JUSTIN

What do you get if you get your name pulled?

DARIUS

Hopefully your dick sucked. Since I didn't get you a Christmas gift, I thought I'd bring you to the lion's den, so you can get you some pride, young man.

Justin laughs.

JUSTIN

Happy to be a squirrel trying to get that nut.

Then the whole room calls out again: HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

Justin turns around to see KEISHA CLARK [17, Black girl who recently grew into her beauty, rocking her crop top, jeans, Jordans... oh, and a Blow Pop].

KEISHA
Hey, y'all. Happy New Year.

CHLOE (O.S.)
Keisha!!

Keisha looks up to see Chloe running full speed to her. The two friends tackle each other into a genuine hug.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
You tricked me!

KEISHA
Surprise.

CHLOE
Are you serious right now? You're here. I thought you were going to your "other" friend's party.

Chloe clocks a mood change.

CHLOE (CONT'D)
What?

KEISHA
Nothing.

CHLOE
No, what?

KEISHA
He was at the party.

CHLOE
Aww man. I'm sorry. I would never invite him to my parties.

Keisha looks up and sees Justin staring at her. He badly averts his eyes like he wasn't just all up in her business.

JUMP CUT TO:

INT. NYE PARTY HOUSE - LOWER FLOOR - LATER

A group of girls and a few boys do a group Snapchat.

Ryan Seacrest is tipsy in Times Square.

Lil Uzi Vert is pumping through the Sonos speakers.

CU on Justin writing out his name and putting the piece of paper in the knit Supreme beanie.

He needs something else to do, so he heads to the fondue but is intercepted by a DRUNK ATHLETIC WHITE GUY [16], who immediately hugs Justin.

DRUNK GUY

Oh bro, where you been? I love you
so much. Happy New Year.

Justin is met with a cacophony of emotions-- embarrassed, confused, agitated and amused. He tries to pry himself from the Drunk Guy's grip.

JUSTIN

I don't know you.

DRUNK GUY

Aw, man. Don't say that, don't say
that. Don't be that guy who
forgets his #1 fan. I love you.

(to friends, hugging
tighter)

Remember this face. This guy
shoots the three like a god. Just
got recruited to UCLA.

Justin assertively untangles himself from the Drunk Guy's embrace.

JUSTIN

It's not me!

DRUNK GUY

(sobering)

Who the fuck are you?

JUSTIN

The other Black guy.

Justin walks away and finds a seat near the fondue. He sits there a beat, making awkward faces, deciding if he should leave or not. He finally busies himself with making fondue, but has trouble getting his bread to stay on the stick. Nearby GIRLS laugh. Justin, embarrassed, leaves that stick to float in the cheese. When he looks up, he finds Keisha's stare and smile. He smiles back then looks away, trying to be cool. When he looks back up, she's still looking at him. Uh oh, she's walking over. He adjusts to being cooler... then she's there, asking with a laugh:

KEISHA

You have no idea who I am, do you?

She effortlessly prepares her fondue and eats it, while waiting for his response.

JUSTIN

Not again.

KEISHA

What? Am I that forgettable?

JUSTIN

(awkward laugh)

To forget requires that we met at some point.

Keisha stomachs that hit.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

My bad, you just caught me in a moment.

KEISHA

No, it's my fault. I forgot I was always invisible to you.

He laughs like she's tripping.

JUSTIN

Whatever, I'll be the villain in your theatrical release.

KEISHA

What a dick.

JUSTIN

Why am I being punished for not knowing you?

KEISHA

Maybe because I know at one point in your life, your favorite color was green, you were Frederick Douglass in the school play and you were obsessive about anything with a helmet. Standouts: Buzz Lightyear, Boba Fett and Daft Punk... and you don't even remember who I am.

He takes another look at Keisha, and then disbelief washes over him.

JUSTIN
Oh shit--
(snapping his fingers)
Umm, ummm--

KEISHA
Keisha.

JUSTIN
Keisha Clark?

KEISHA
Yup.

JUSTIN
Wow.

She smiles, liking his reaction to the new her.

KEISHA
Your turn-- what do you remember
about me?

He takes a moment to respond. She's immediately defensive.

KEISHA (CONT'D)
Oh, God. Why'd I even ask?

JUSTIN
Just give me a minute.

KEISHA
Tick. Tock.

JUSTIN
I never knew why you always let
them win.

He hits a nerve and triggers a memory.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
I remember you almost beat me once
at the 400. And if you could do
that, you could have easily beaten
all of them. But you never did.

She's moved that he has that memory and perception of her,
but she keeps it cool.

KEISHA
I slowed down to get some friends.

JUSTIN
 (looks her in the eyes)
 I get that.
 (then)
 So where are you now? Where did
 you end up going for middle school?

KEISHA
 I went to Brentwood with most of
 everyone here, but I transferred to
 St. Mary's last year for their
 track program.

Justin notices her Air Jordan 4 White Cements--

JUSTIN
 Damn, you got those when they
 dropped, lucky.

KEISHA
 You gotta know Santa's connect.

JUSTIN
 Oh, that's where I went wrong.
 (smiles at her)
 So you're still running.

KEISHA
 Never stopped.

JUSTIN
 You good?

KEISHA
 I'm ranked.

JUSTIN
 High?

KEISHA
 Fuck you.

JUSTIN
 Potty mouth.

KEISHA
 Whatever, you still playing
 basketball? Cause last time I
 checked you weren't ranked.

JUSTIN
 Ouch. Medic.

KEISHA
 Seriously, how's it going?

JUSTIN
 Well, I'm not the guy who got
 recruited to UCLA.

KEISHA
 What?

JUSTIN
 Never mind.
 (then)
 So, what--

Just then, a group of GIRLS rushes over to her--

KEISHA'S FRIENDS
 Keisha! We miss you!!!

They envelop her, pulling her away, asking her a flurry of questions about her new school, how she's been, mixed with compliments of her hair and her shoes. Justin backs away, a wallflower again, watching the fervor over her.

He fishes out his phone and looks Keisha up on IG. Her page is full of sexy shots of her in bathing suits, midriff tops and cut off shorts, mom jeans and biker shorts. But it's the one of her in her track uniform that he actually double taps.

He then watches her break away from all the attention she's receiving and check her notification. After a moment, she looks up and finds Justin's eyes. She smiles at him. He smiles back. They just made eyes over fondue.

Darius swoops by quickly.

DARIUS
 Apparently, me, you and Trey--
 that's the third negro amigo.
 We're all definitely getting our
 dicks sucked tonight as our
 reparations.

JUSTIN
 What?

DARIUS
 Yeah, they feel bad their parents
 voted for Trump. So they rigged
 the hat.

The friends share a laugh. Dap. Then Darius notices Justin looks a little nervous.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

Don't get all nervous now. This is what you've been praying for. It's here. It's happening.

As Justin gets butterflies, we TIME LAPSE of Justin as a wallflower with some minimal interaction with those around him... until:

CHLOE

Alright, twenty seconds to find your matches-- pair up!

The girls swarm around the room looking for the person who matches the name on their slip of paper. LINDSEY [16, cute, eager, eyes on the prize] coyly appears in front of Justin.

LINDSEY

I pulled your name. You're Justin, right?

JUSTIN

Yeah.

LINDSEY

Hi, I'm Lindsey.

JUSTIN

(likes what he sees)
Nice to meet you.

LINDSEY

You want to stay here or go outside?

JUSTIN

It is kind of hot in here.

The group swells into COUNTING DOWN to midnight.

GROUP

Ten, nine, eight--

She smiles, just as--

KEISHA (O.S.)

Excuse me.

Lindsey and Justin turn to see Keisha confidently standing there.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

I got Justin.

LINDSEY
 (re: her slip of paper)
 No, I got him.

Justin is shocked into a smile that he tries to hold back at the corners of his mouth to stay cool.

GROUP
 Three-- two-- one-- HAPPY NEW
 YEAR!!

Keisha steps in front of Lindsey and kisses Justin sweetly. The room spins, and we catch Lindsay's disappointed face, as she had claims and papers on him. Justin and Keisha finally part, staring only at each other. The world just shifted.

KEISHA
 Happy New Year.

JUSTIN
 Happy New Year.

CUT TO:

FOREVER TITLES

Memory vignettes of our hero couple in kindergarten:

They sit in circle time-- YOUNG JUSTIN [5] on one side of the circle, YOUNG KEISHA [6] on the other, in a sea of whiteness.

They line up with their respective line partners. Justin with a white girl, Keisha with a white boy.

They play with the classroom ducklings, in separate groups, but standing back to back.

They are far apart in art class. Even their self-portraits strung above their heads are miles apart.

Justin plays basketball, demonstrating he's the man amongst kindergarten boys, while Keisha is left hanging on the monkey bars, wondering where the other girls went.

INT. NYE PARTY HOUSE - LOWER FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Moments after they break away from the kiss, Lindsey retreats, and Keisha and Justin finally turn away, shyly, with stars in their eyes and butterflies in their stomachs.

KEISHA

Ok. I'm going to go find Chloe and wish her a Happy New Year-- I'll be back.

(turning away, happy)

Fuck.

She jogs off, and he watches her for a moment before coming back into his body... and then the room, where he sees half of his peers still making out and the "novelty HNY kissers" all back to eating snacks and checking their phones. John Legend is on TV performing "All Of Me" on New Year's Rockin' Eve. Justin finds Keisha talking with Chloe and laughs to himself at the irony of being right back where he started.

John Legend continues to serenade us as Justin walks outside toward the...

EXT. NYE PARTY HOUSE - POOL - CONTINUOUS

He touches his mouth and smiles at the memory of the kiss. Lost in his own thoughts, he doesn't realize he's hovering near the Two Giddy Girls making out on the pool lounge chair.

He walks over to a bench further back in the yard. Once he sits, he sees Darius behind a hedge. It appears he's getting a BJ. Justin shakes his head and looks in the opposite direction to see one of the WHITE BOYS behind another hedge-- he's getting a BJ too.

The safest place to look is at his phone, so he pulls it out and takes a picture of the party. He posts it on his **Snapchat** with the filter: **HNY! 2017**

He sees on the group **TEXT** with his Mom and Dad a picture of his father, mother, brother and the family dog overlooking Mulholland. Next text says **HAPPY NEW YEAR!** with the **confetti bursts**.

He smiles then turns his attention to the house, where Keisha is roped into the "All of Me" off-key sing-a-long with her peers. He watches her as she looks around for him... and finally spots him waving to her from across the yard. She waves him to join her. And we end with Keisha and Justin in a sea of whiteness singing arm in arm to great fanfare. And John Legend wishing everyone a "Happy New Year."

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Justin enters his cyclone-tossed room of rejected party outfits. He wipes the chaos on his bed onto the floor. Then he shuts off the lights and lays across his bed, staring up at the ceiling. After a beat, he smiles wide, **TEXTING**.

JUSTIN

Let me know when you get home.

He goes back to Keisha's IG page and likes a bunch of her pictures... including the one with her MOTHER on Mother's Day and her GRANDFATHER on Father's Day.

He gets a **NOTIFICATION** that Keisha sent an **IMESSAGE**.

KEISHA

I'm sorry, I don't have this number saved, who's this?

JUSTIN

Dang you don't have me locked in?

KEISHA

Lol, I'm home and already down memory lane. Look what I found.

Then she sends a **SCREEN SHOT** of a group photo of fourth graders holding their inventions. Young Justin holds his SuperFish. And Young Keisha holds her cardboard cut out of her gigantic phone scanner. He smiles at the memory.

JUSTIN

What's going on with my hair?

KEISHA

Looks better than mine.

(then)

Gotta go. Mom home and she likes to talk a lot when she hits the *Champagne bottle EMOJI*

(then)

Happy New Year! (with the fireworks effect)

JUSTIN

Pew pew (with the laser effect)

KEISHA

??? You were always different.

Justin pops up and goes to his bookshelf. He has Boba Fett and Mandalorian collector helmets serving as bookends. He quickly finds the fourth grade yearbook.

He finds the group shot she just sent him. He flips to her class picture. She was a very awkward girl. His fourth grade picture is of him smiling big but in a strained way.

He pulls down another yearbook. It's sixth grade. He flips to her class picture. There is a sadness behind her smile. Justin has the same big, strained smile.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

New Year-- new mom. She went straight to *bed EMOJI*. U still up?

JUSTIN

Yup.

KEISHA

What's on your mind?

JUSTIN

Can I see you again?

KEISHA

No

Justin reacts, confused.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

Sorry-- I mean NOW***?

He receives a **FACETIME** call from Keisha, who looks gorgeous at the right angle in the right light. As soon as he sees her, he laughs:

JUSTIN

I meant I wanted to see you in real life while we're still on break.

Keisha cracks up laughing. He likes her laugh.

KEISHA

Ok. Where you trying to go?

JUSTIN

Fairfax.

KEISHA

Cool.

JUSTIN

Tomorrow?

KEISHA

Sure.

JUSTIN

(hearing something)
Hold on a sec, don't hang up.

He turns his volume down and peeks outside his door to find his mother, now dressed for bed, approaching his room with a few pairs of his sneakers and a glass of water.

DAWN

Justin, I gave up on your room, but please keep my house clean.
Goodnight.

JUSTIN

(taking shoes)
My bad.

DAWN

(walking away)
My suggestion is you get to bed.
This is your last late night before school starts.

He rolls his eyes as he shuts his door, then throws the shoes by his bed and returns to his call:

JUSTIN

Sorry bout that. My mom, she's up patrolling the halls.

KEISHA

Oh, you got one of them, too?

JUSTIN

What, a warden?

KEISHA

(laughing)
Mine's more like a probation officer. By circumstance, she can't be on me every day, otherwise she would.

JUSTIN

(laughing)
Man, I got about one year and nine months til I'm out of here.

KEISHA

I know, right? I've got one of those calendars, and I'm crossing off the days.

There's a pause as they both sit with the thought of their futures.

JUSTIN

So what time tomorrow?

KEISHA

I don't know, two?

JUSTIN

Cool. So you like ramen?

KEISHA

I used to until I had to eat it all the time.

JUSTIN

Oh, I was going to say we should go get some ramen tomorrow too. But since you don't like it--

KEISHA

I mean, I'm not usually eating ramen out at restaurants.

JUSTIN

You might like this place-- it's nothing like the packs-- though the packs are good, too.

KEISHA

Oh, you a ramen connoisseur?

They share a laugh.

JUSTIN

I think I started to eat a lot of ramen because I watch NARUTO all the time-- I might be brainwashed.

KEISHA

You watch that show? I can't get into it.

JUSTIN

What?! You don't like NARUTO?

KEISHA

That girl calling after Sasuke all the time gets on my nerves. They for real need to give her a life outside of him.

Justin shakes his head in disbelief.

JUSTIN

Okay. We may have hit a geyser-- if you don't like NARUTO.

KEISHA
Well, then we have definitely
sprung a leak.

JUSTIN
Any anime?

KEISHA
Not really.

JUSTIN
Oh boy.
(then)
Ok, what about Marvel movies?

KEISHA
Ehh.

JUSTIN
DC?

KEISHA
Ehhh.

JUSTIN
Come on, STAR WARS?

KEISHA
Absolutely not.

JUSTIN
It was fun knowing you.

KEISHA
What? You're going to kick me to
the curb for some cartoons?

JUSTIN
Yes.

KEISHA
(sucks teeth)
Wow.

JUSTIN
Come on, you play any video games?
Pokemon Go? 2k? Madden? Something.

KEISHA
Now look, I am the queen of Pokemon
Go. Caught some bad boys on the
way home tonight.

JUSTIN
 Oh God, thank you. I'll tolerate
 this conversation for a few more
 minutes. You got one more chance.

KEISHA
 (right into camera)
 You're weird.

He brushes it off with a chuckle.

KEISHA (CONT'D)
 What's so funny?

JUSTIN
 I am weird.
 (beat)
 But somebody finally seems to like
 it.

KEISHA
 Really? Who?
 (laughing)
 I'm just playing.

She notices he's not laughing with her.

KEISHA (CONT'D)
 (yawning)
 I said I was playing.

JUSTIN
 Now you're yawning? We can hang
 up.

Keisha registers his mood and gets serious.

KEISHA
 I am getting sleepy, but I'm not
 ready to say goodnight.

JUSTIN
 Then please don't.

KEISHA
 But my arm hurts, I need to put my
 phone down.

JUSTIN
 Me, too.

They laugh and set their phones down, screens facing the
 ceilings.

KEISHA (O.S.)
In case we fall asleep. Good night.

JUSTIN
Good night.
(after a while)
It was nice to meet you, Keisha.

KEISHA (O.S.)
(she smiles)
It was nice to finally meet you,
too.

He smiles.

EXT. MULHOLLAND DRIVE - NEW YEAR'S DAY

The sunrise on a clear, crisp Los Angeles Day.

CHYRON: NEW YEAR'S DAY 2017

Then another CHYRON appears in the corner of this image: **Somewhere in Laker**-- then "**in Laker**" gets deleted and replaced with "**on My Grind,**" to finally read: **Somewhere on My Grind.** We hear the PRELAP of a bouncing basketball.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - BACKYARD SPORT COURT - CONTINUOUS

We watch Justin doing three-point-shot shooting drills. Dawn, fresh from her morning run, rebounds, all smiles.

DAWN
New year, new you, who dis?

Justin smiles.

JUSTIN
C'mon, I be out here.

DAWN
I'm not gonna argue with you, just enjoying you making use of the court.

She smiles at him and passes him the ball.

JUSTIN
Do you mind dropping me off at Fairfax, so I can hang out with some friends and do a little shopping with my Christmas money?
(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I might even walk down to the Grove, so maybe Dad can pick me up after he leaves the restaurant.

DAWN

Look at you using the who-what-when-where-why. That's all I ever ask. I'd be happy to take you.

EXT. FAIRFAX - SUPREME STORE - LATER

On a crowded street, Justin hangs in front of the Supreme store, looking for Keisha and trying to look cool among the crowded street of cooler kids. He checks himself out in the reflection of the storefront... he adjusts his sweatshirt, catching a glimpse of Keisha headed toward him, looking even prettier in the light of day with less makeup on. Her Champion track suit accentuates her body just right. He meets up with her with a nice hug. They smile at each other.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. SUPREME STORE - LATER

Justin and Keisha wait in the long line to get inside.

JUSTIN

Where do you go to school again?

KEISHA

St. Mary's Academy.

JUSTIN

Never heard of it. You like it?

KEISHA

It's hard dropping into an all girls school your sophomore year. Girls can be stupid.

JUSTIN

Why'd you leave Brentwood? Seems like you and Chloe are cool and everybody was happy to see you last night.

KEISHA

That's because I left. You're always cooler when you leave.

JUSTIN

So why did you leave?

Her mood shifts, she shuffles through her rolodex of excuses and pulls out:

KEISHA

Money. Tuition was too high for my mom even with financial aid. And at Brentwood I had good grades, but at St. Mary's I'm at the top of my class, workload is easier and their track coach has a good reputation with Spelman, Howard and Hampton. And that's where I want to go.

JUSTIN

Man, you got it all figured out.

She shrugs.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I get frustrated sometimes not knowing where I could end up. I just want to play D1 ball in college-- but...

(he can't say it)

I just got to play really well. Our season starts next week. And I got to--

(then smiling, a bit embarrassed)

Stop talking about it before I jinx myself.

KEISHA

Why so much pressure on yourself?

JUSTIN

I haven't been recruited yet. And everything rides on this season.

KEISHA

Maybe you should be somewhere practicing.

JUSTIN

Then I wouldn't be here with you.

DOORMAN

Next two please.

Justin and Keisha enter the store.

CUT TO:

INT. SUPREME STORE - DAY

Justin looks like a serious buyer, while Keisha meanders. She finally links up with Justin as he tries on shoes.

KEISHA
Those are nice.

JUSTIN
I think I'm going to get them.

KEISHA
Cool.

JUSTIN
What are you getting?

KEISHA
Nothing.

JUSTIN
You don't like anything?

KEISHA
(with a laugh)
Ummm yeah, the store.

JUSTIN
I'll get you something.

She smiles, but stirs, uncomfortable.

KEISHA
No, that's ok.

JUSTIN
My grandmother gave me a gift certificate from last Christmas that I have to use before it expires. You can use that. The one she gave me this year takes care of these.

KEISHA
You sure?

JUSTIN
Yeah.

Keisha goes over to exactly what she wants. It's a graphic t-shirt. She joins Justin in line, all smiles.

KEISHA
Thank you.

JUSTIN

You actually saved me a trip
because I wasn't going to get
anything if you didn't get
something.

KEISHA

So I helped you out.

JUSTIN

No, I helped you out.

That triggers Keisha, but no time to address since it's their
turn to be rung up by the pushy Cashier.

EXT. FAIRFAX - LATER

They exit the store, each carrying their respective bags.

JUSTIN

I'll carry that for you.

KEISHA

(offering her bag)

Thank you.

They head south on Fairfax. Her hand dangles near his free
hand... and she slides her hand in his. A confident, slight
smile corks the excitement bursting inside of Justin.

They walk and hold hands, then after a minute Keisha bursts
out laughing.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

I would have NEVER predicted this!

JUSTIN

(joins the laugh)

I know, right?

EXT. THE GROVE - DAY

They walk through the crowd of diverse people, hand in hand.
They notice all of the Black Women of different ages and
station in life smiling back at them.

KEISHA

Now we know how the Obamas feel.

Justin laughs.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

Isn't that your friend over there?

Justin looks up and sees Darius at a distance with a few friends-- a couple of white boys and another Black boy. They all look like football players.

Justin **FACETIMES** Darius.

JUSTIN

Yo, look up my dude.

DARIUS

Ayye, where you at?

JUSTIN

Over at the movies.

Darius looks up and sees Justin and Keisha. They wave across the fountain at each other.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - LATER

We find Justin and Keisha way in the back of the stadium seating theater. They are halfway through the popcorn and the first thirty minutes of the movie, HIDDEN FIGURES.

They steal glances at each other, always punctuated with a smile before turning their attention back to the screen. Then Keisha finally leans over.

KEISHA

I've seen this movie before.

JUSTIN

Then why'd you want to see it again?

KEISHA

So I could thank you by doing this.

She leans further over and kisses him, stops and stares him in the eyes.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

And not worry about missing anything.

JUSTIN

We can miss all of it if you want.

Justin goes to kiss her passionately but presses too hard against her lips.

KEISHA

Ow. Ow.

He recoils, embarrassed.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

KEISHA

No, just... softer.

She waits for him. He approaches her softer and they melt into their kiss and get hot and heavy necking in the back of the theater of this moderately-attended afternoon matinee.

The light from the movie screen illuminates Justin's face so we can see that he is surprised and aroused. This may be the first time he has experienced this kind of passion.

KEISHA (CONT'D)

(smiles in his face)

I see we have company.

A little embarrassed, he presses on as Keisha opens his pants and gives him a hand job. We can now see that Justin is mixed with excitement and fear of getting caught. His body wins, as he closes his eyes enjoying her touch. His hands find her breasts under her sweatshirt. Then she goes down on him-- his level of arousal spikes, and then he stops her and pulls her up.

JUSTIN

You don't have to do that.

KEISHA

(defensive)

I don't want to have sex. I was just--

JUSTIN

Neither do I--

KEISHA

You don't? You gay?

JUSTIN

What? No-- I just--

KEISHA

Sorry-- I mean queer.

JUSTIN

No, I--

KEISHA
So what's your problem?

JUSTIN
I just reconnected with you.

A near enough patron quiets them. In this emotional cocktail of defensiveness, embarrassment, rejection and trying to remain cool, an unfazed Keisha reapplies her lip gloss.

KEISHA
I'm not a ho.

JUSTIN
I never called you one.

KEISHA
I knew I shouldn't have come.

This date is spiraling quick. It's as if the molecules have changed in the air and the sweet, attentive Keisha quickly becomes cold and distant and almost someone else in her speech and cadence. Justin, off guard, just stares at her speechless, wondering if he's in a bad dream.

JUSTIN
(laughing uncomfortably)
What just happened?

KEISHA
What's so funny? You weren't laughing a minute ago, were you? You were moaning like a little bitch.

JUSTIN
Are you bipolar?

KEISHA
Nigga, what?

JUSTIN
Why are you talking like this?

KEISHA
Talking like what?

JUSTIN
Like-- never mind.

KEISHA
How would you know how I talk, when you never talked to me?

MOVIE GOER

Yo-- be quiet. Be a hidden figure.

A few people laugh, jarring Justin and Keisha back to the moment and their environment. In the quiet of their feud, we get to see what Justin is thinking about reflected onto the massive movie screen.

EXT. PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY (MEMORY)

Snatches of a morning carpool memory:

YOUNG JUSTIN [7] sitting in a booster in the back of his father's car. From his POV he sees the school yard filled with happy white kids of different hair colors and a few Asian kids running across the yard at Carpool drop off to greet each other... and YOUNG KEISHA [8] who gets off of her bus and walks alone across the yard.

ERIC

Make sure you say hi to the little Black girl-- what's her name again?

YOUNG JUSTIN

Keisha.

ERIC

Yeah, say hi to her.

YOUNG JUSTIN

Why?

ERIC

Hey, I'm not saying you have to be best friends or even friends, but acknowledge her. Say hi. You are the only Black boy in your class, and now since those twins left, she's the only Black girl. You should know each other if nothing else.

A chipper TEACHER comes to the back door and opens it.

TEACHER

Good morning, Justin.

Justin scoots out.

ERIC

Be yourself.

Just outside of the car, Justin is a little awkward himself. No one is there to run up to him, happy to see him, either. He walks right past Keisha, who is standing in the middle of the yard, looking around for someone it seems. Passing Keisha without looking at her, he says, barely audible:

YOUNG JUSTIN

Hi.

He never breaks stride to see her stop and turn back and smile.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - CONTINUOUS

Seeing Young Keisha in his memory jars him back to his current reality. And that's when he discovers that Keisha is gone and the star of HIDDEN FIGURES is demanding better bathroom accommodations. Justin notices Keisha left her Supreme bag, too. He grabs it and exits the theater.

EXT. THE GROVE - CONTINUOUS

Justin exits right into the hubbub of The Grove. He looks to his left, he looks to his right... then he spots Keisha and runs after her.

JUSTIN

Keisha-- Keisha.

She stops walking to allow him to catch up to her.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

What's going on?

Keisha, resolved, squares up to Justin and looks him in the eyes.

KEISHA

Did he show you the video?

JUSTIN

What video?

Her shoulders drop, disappointed he can't tell her the truth.

KEISHA

Just tell me. Please tell me if he's still showing everybody.

JUSTIN

I really don't know what you're talking about.

KEISHA

Since we're pretending, let's just pretend these last 24 hours never happened. Lose my number and go back to never knowing I existed.

She walks off and he goes after.

JUSTIN

Keisha--

KEISHA

(turns around)

And if you follow me, I will scream for the police. And trust and believe, this is not the time to get to know me now, because I will do it.

She holds the worst threat to a young Black boy with a determined stare. He backs off... and she walks off, disappearing in the crowd.

Justin gets a **TEXT NOTIFICATION** from Darius.

DARIUS

You did it, huh?

JUSTIN

Did what?

DARIUS

Don't be coy with the boy. My dude confirmed that taking boys to the back of the theater is her thing.

He sends a **VIDEO**: Justin presses play to see Keisha performing oral sex on someone in a darkly lit theater (STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON can be heard in the background). Justin stops it as she looks right into camera.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

Way to knock out that New Year's resolution, day one.

(then)

Proud of you, young chap.

(then)

Hit me later so I can whup you in some Madden.

Back on Justin's face, he stands in the middle of the bustling outdoor mall, stupefied, then angry at the spiral of his day.

JUSTIN
Fuuuckkk!!!!

The outburst of a young Black boy alarms everyone. He hears judgmental reactions and sees an Asian Mother shielding her children. He charges off, disappearing into the crowd.

EXT. THE GROVE - BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS

Keisha walks outside the mall along Fairfax. She stops at the bus stop with an eclectic group of folks who ride public transportation.

She pays by metro card and gets a seat by the window. We watch her pull out her phone and **BLOCK** Justin on her phone and on every social media app they're connected on. The **WOMAN** sitting next to her, all up in her business:

WOMAN ON BUS
Somebody's real mad at Justin.

Keisha ignores the comment, turns to look out the window. A tear escapes. She wipes it away. More tears flood her face. She hides her face in her sweatshirt and has a guttural **CRY** on the city bus home.

EXT. SLAUSON AVE - WINDSOR HILLS - DUSK

The city bus arrives at the stop, and Keisha is the only passenger who exits. She walks in one direction, pauses, then walks the opposite way... eventually pauses again, then about faces to her original direction. A car with two **YOUNG BLACK MEN** [20s or so] in it pulls up alongside her.

YOUNG BLACK MAN
You lost?

KEISHA
I'm fine, thank you.

YOUNG BLACK MAN
We know you fine, just wondering if you in need of some personal navigation.

Keisha turns around in the opposite direction, making it hard for them to continue to follow her. She crosses the crosswalk and heads toward the restaurant with all of the Cadillacs crammed in the parking lot.

She pulls out her phone to capture the iconic neon sign reflected in the newly washed cars on her **Snapchat story**.

CHYRON: NEW YEAR NEW ME SAME HOOD

The image changes as she swipes through to pick a filter. She lands on high-contrast and then another CHYRON labels it: **Reflections of Black Beverly Hills**

INT. LA LOUISANNE - CONTINUOUS

It's immediately a different world upon entry. This popular creole spot is one part bar, one part restaurant and one part jazz club. A local cover band performs for the lively clientele, which is mostly Baby Boomers, mixed with Gen X, sprinkled with old souls in Millennial bodies. Though it's still early in the evening, it looks like they all been drinking and having a good time since church let out. Keisha is met with love right at the door by the HOSTESS [50s and still dressing like she did when she got the job at 30].

HOSTESS

Keisha. Happy New Year, girl.
Oooh, you look just like your mama.

On cue, SHELLY [37, petite and powerful and no stranger to hard work and hard knocks] rounds the corner with plates of food. She's one of two waitresses in this packed establishment.

SHELLY

Hey baby, how was the Grove?

KEISHA

Fun.

Mother holds her cheek out to be kissed.

SHELLY

They getting turnt up in here.
Let's get you a plate so you can
get home.

INT. LA LOUISANNE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

They enter the short-staffed, busy kitchen.

KEISHA

Hey, Freddie.

FREDDIE [60s, owner and chef, harried but with a lot of heart] waves his spatula in the air to say hi. Shelly picks up the next order.

SHELLY

It's already dark outside. Call
him and make him a plate too.

Keisha makes two plates from the available food.

FREDDIE

(kissing Keisha on the
temple)

Coming in here messing up my
orders.

KEISHA

Happy New Year.

FREDDIE

Happy New Year, baby girl.

Shelly, loaded up with plates again, breezes by her daughter.

SHELLY

Homework and bed on time. Please
and thank you. We are back to
school tomorrow.

(kissing her on the cheek)

I'll see you in the morning.

(then detecting a mood on
her daughter)

What?

KEISHA

What?

SHELLY

You good?

She's not, but this isn't the time.

KEISHA

I'm good and hungry.

(then, re: phone)

He's here.

SHELLY

Okay, call me when you get home.

EXT. LA LOUISANNE - MOMENTS LATER

Keisha walks out with a plastic bag, heading to the Prius
Lyft waiting out front. The LYFT DRIVER [60s, older
gentleman with a kind face] asks:

LYFT DRIVER

Keisha?

KEISHA

George?

INT. PRIUS - MOMENTS LATER

Keisha is settled in the back.

GEORGE

Your payment didn't go through.
May have to kick you out at the
light.

KEISHA

I got a plate of smothered chicken,
green beans and greens.

GEORGE

Say less.

They share a laugh.

EXT. CLARK DUPLEX - LATER

The Prius pulls up in front of one of the modest duplexes on
the block. The porch light is not on like the other ones.

GEORGE

Hurry up, I got a real ride.

Keisha scoots out quickly and yells back:

KEISHA

Good night.

INT. CLARK DUPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Keisha enters her home. Alone. She washes her hands.

She warms up her plate in the microwave. As she waits for
the plate to warm, she wipes her eyes like her tears are more
of a nuisance than meant to be felt.

She sits at the table. Says her prayers. Then takes her
first bite.

DING DONG. She immediately tenses up. A **TEXT** from George:

GEORGE

It's me.

She relaxes and goes to the door.

KEISHA

(calling out)

Coming.

She opens the door to George holding his plate.

GEORGE

I like my greens hot.

KEISHA

Me, too.

They share a laugh.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARK DUPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

Keisha and George are eating at the table together.

GEORGE

I can tell something's wrong. A boy?

KEISHA

No.

GEORGE

A girl?

KEISHA

No.

GEORGE

Is it your new school?

KEISHA

School's fine.

GEORGE

You making any friends yet?

Keisha shrugs.

KEISHA

I just want to get to Howard.

GEORGE
What if you get hit by a car?

KEISHA
Terrorize me much?

GEORGE
Gotta find the Howard in your life
today.

They stare at each other a bit, until she cracks a smile.

KEISHA
Well, it ain't baseball or roller
skating.

GEORGE
Too bad, you coming with me.

KEISHA
I have homework to do.

GEORGE
Nope. Not leaving you suicidal.
Not on my watch.

KEISHA
We start school in the morning.

GEORGE
Put toothpicks in your eyes.
You'll be fine.

CUT TO:

INT. WORLD ON WHEELS - TICKET BOOTH - LATER

George, skates in hand, stands next to Keisha on the patron
side of the foggy plexiglass.

GEORGE
She's twenty one. Black don't
crack.

WORKER
George, you throw her birthday
parties here.

GEORGE
Sure have, for the last twenty one
years. So she's finally old enough
to skate on Sundays. Let her in.

INT. WORLD ON WHEELS - RINK - MOMENTS LATER

George happily couple-skates around the rink with one of those old soul millennials. Keisha sits on the sidelines and watches him and all the other happy Boomers and Xers and Millennials go round and round to the 90s R&B music.

A TEXT NOTIFICATION gets Keisha's attention.

CHLOE
Guess who just DM'ed me?

Then a SCREENSHOT of DM exchange: "can you tell Keisha to unblock me please."

CHLOE (CONT'D)
What's going on? I thought you liked him?

KEISHA
He took me to the theater to try and get what Christian got.

CHLOE
I'm blocking him in solidarity.

KEISHA
Thank you.

CHLOE
GIF of Sally Field as Norma Rae holding a Union Sign.

KEISHA
GIF of Beyonce and Kelly Rowland dancing in sync.

CHLOE
I'm here if you need/want to talk.
emoji of two wine glasses

As soon as Keisha puts her phone away, she's sad again. But no time for that because her gaggle of cousins-- TIFFANY, BRITTANY and HEATHER [22-27, beautiful, body-positive and Blasian, could pass for a girl group with their snatched waistlines, braids, baby hair, lashes and long nails]-- approaches. You can imagine that they were the ones who gave Keisha her transformative make over.

BRITTANY
What your little fast ass doing here? It's grown folks night.

She bends down to kiss and hug Keisha, followed by the other two.

TIFFANY
You here with George?

KEISHA
Yes. He's out there.

They wave to him; he waves back.

BRITTANY
Looking all cute in my track suit--
that I been lookin' for.

KEISHA
You gave it to me.

BRITTANY
No, I did not. But you do look
cute. You can hold onto this a
little while longer, but I'mma need
my Air Jordans back. Pronto.

Heather, accompanied by her boyfriend, TODD [28, foine],
pipes up:

HEATHER
Oh shoot, I'm leaking.

Everyone turns their attention to her leak-stained shirt.

TODD
I can help you with that.

HEATHER
Todd, stop being all nasty in front
of my baby cousin.

TODD
You like it.

HEATHER
(laughs)
Obviously I do, that's why I'm
leaking. Be right back.

She grabs her breast pump and sashays off to the restroom.

TIFFANY
Urkel, this is Todd, Todd this is
Keisha.

TODD

We met at Heather's skate party--
you were with that ball player--
ranked sixth in the state now from
Pomona but transferred--

TIFFANY

Ha-- how you gone have all the
facts but not his name?

TODD

She know who I'm talking about.

KEISHA

Christian.

TODD

That's right. Christian Boykin.

Keisha tries to hold it together.

BRITTANY

Girl, I saw your eye twitch, I hope
y'all still together. I'm trying
to be about that court side NBA
life. Ayee!

Tiffany jumps in to a protect a quiet Keisha.

TIFFANY

Don't matter whether they together
or not, Urkel gone take us
somewhere with all these brains and
chutzpah she got.

BRITTANY

Why you limiting her full
potential? They can be a power
couple.

A YOUNG MAN eyeballs Keisha as he passes by.

YOUNG MAN

Hey, what's up?

KEISHA

Hi.

TIFFANY

Keep it moving, she is not 21.

CUT TO:

INT. KEISHA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Keisha is up late, laid across her bed, **FACETIMING** Chloe.

KEISHA

It's like he's stalking me-- his name just keeps coming up everywhere I turn.

A long pause, then:

CHLOE

Why did you let him film you? I mean we've all done it. But I wouldn't--

KEISHA

He promised to erase it.

CHLOE

You can't--

KEISHA

I know that now.

Another long pause, then:

CHLOE

I heard that he has ten D1 schools heavily recruiting him. You could actually take him down. Tell TMZ he's slut shaming you. And do it the same day he announces. My friend's Dad is their CMO. Just a thought. He's ruining your life, ruin his.

As a way to process this info, Keisha scrolls through the pictures in her phone. She looks at all the cute pics she took from Fairfax to The Grove to the ramen spot at the Farmer's Market during her date with Justin earlier that day.

CUT TO:

INT. KEISHA'S BEDROOM - LATER - WEE HOURS

Keisha is up studying old pictures of her and CHRISTIAN. They make a cute couple. But you can tell he was all about himself, and she was all about him. She hears the front door and shoves her phone under her pillow, pretends to be asleep.

From her bed, she can see her mother, now dressed in work jeans, boots and an Amazon safety vest. She's tired and throws her thermos, lunch pail and purse on the counter.

She walks toward Keisha's door, peeks in on her, then kneels by her bed to pray for Keisha, their protection, their family and their dreams. She then leans over to kiss her daughter and sees the illuminated phone.

SHELLY

Girl, you ain't sleep.

She tickles her daughter into an admission and collapses next to her in her queen-sized bed to share a laugh.

SHELLY (CONT'D)

I'm not taking your butt to school.
You better get up.

CUT TO:

INT. KEISHA'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Shelly is SNORING with everything on but her boots. Keisha jolts awake in a panic. She overslept. She looks closely at the clock to make sure it says late. Reluctantly:

KEISHA

Mom. Mommy.

Shelly pops up asleep, as if she fell asleep on guard duty.

SHELLY

Hey-- yeah. What?
(then seeing the shame in
Keisha's eyes)
You overslept?

KEISHA

Yeah.

SHELLY

Fuck. Are you serious? I can't do
this alone, Keisha.
(getting up)
Damn. I ask you to do one thing.
Get to bed on time. Get yourself
up. Feed yourself. You're
seventeen and you can't do that?
You want to be like your cousins--
or hell, me?

KEISHA
I'm not pregnant. I'm just late.

SHELLY
And I'm tired. And really fucking
tired of paying these stupid fines
I can't afford because you can't
get up on time.
(then)
Can you skip a shower and still
catch the bus?

KEISHA
No. It's already gone. I'll get a
babysitting gig to pay the fine--

SHELLY
I just need you to be great at this
school-- that's your job.

Shelly exits the room. Keisha, deflated, gets dressed into her school uniform. Then from the hall she hears needed advice from a Self Help Podcast, which PRELAPS:

INT. SHELLY'S HONDA - LATER

The Self Help continues to play as mother and daughter ride in silence.

KEISHA
I'm sorry, Mommy.

Shelly lets out a SIGH. Then:

SHELLY
I'll sleep when I'm dead.

Keisha looks out the window, guilty and trying not to cry.

CHYRON: BACK TO SCHOOL BACK AT IT

A **Snapchat story** of the bottom of the desk, littered with old wads of gum with a **CHYRON: Still Stuck Here.**

INT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - ALGEBRA - LATER

Keisha sits in the middle of the class. Hand under chin, she falls asleep. The TEACHER [40s and already planning her retirement] stops mid-lecture and looks at Keisha. The class all turns to look at her too. SNICKERING wakes Keisha up one eye at a time.

KEISHA (PRELAP)
But I'm getting an A+ in my sleep.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - ALGEBRA - LATER

It's after class, just Keisha and her teacher left in the classroom. The Teacher gives Keisha a long stare before responding:

TEACHER
You know what I like about people who are assured to the point of arrogance? Life is ready to test them. I'mma let her deal with you. Close my door on your way out.

Keisha knows she has made an enemy for life, but her pride won't apologize. Instead she closes the door on her way out.

INT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Keisha changes into her track gear. There is a distance -- both physical and in camaraderie-- with her TEAMMATES, who gossip about the holidays as they get changed, too. The leader, TAMMY [17, confident, cute and loves to confront] turns her attention to Keisha.

TAMMY
What you do, Keisha? Go see your white friends?

Keisha looks up but doesn't bother to respond.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
Is that how you have a white Christmas?

KEISHA
That was corny.

TAMMY
But it made my point.

Keisha turns back to lace up her shoes.

EXT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - TRACK - LATER

They are running relay drills. Keisha and Tammy are lined up for the final leg of the race. Tammy gets her baton first.

Keisha takes off right behind her... it looks like she is going to catch Tammy... and she does! COACH [30s, former track star, favorite student is whoever runs the fastest] gives Keisha a high-five.

COACH

Tammy, you got to get your knees up. Knees go up, arms go up. Arms go up, the faster we go.

Tammy rolls her eyes as she heads to the water cooler where Keisha is already filling up a cone of water.

TAMMY

Good race.

KEISHA

(skeptical)

Thanks.

TAMMY

Oh, I met your boy Christian Boykin over the break. You used to date him, right?

KEISHA

How do you know him?

TAMMY

He's starting to train with my trainer. He ran the dunes with us over the weekend, told me to tell you, "Hi."

KEISHA

What else he tell you?

TAMMY

That I was cute.

KEISHA

Was he wearing his glasses?

A pause in the action, then the two girls lunge at each other. Teammates and Coach run to break it up. Keisha's anger allows her to dominate. She pulls back Tammy's hair, prepared to wallop her...

TAMMY

I just got this hair-- stooppp!

...just as Coach grabs Keisha and pulls her away.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - PRINCIPALS OFFICE - LATER

Keisha sits humbly in the chair next to a pissed-off Shelly and across from an annoyed PRINCIPAL [60s, old school Black woman who orders her life: church, dog, whiskey].

PRINCIPAL

So... because our board just did away with detention you now have to serve forty hours of approved volunteer work.

Shelly calculates the hardship that will add and bites her bottom lip.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

And this is your last warning.

CUT TO:

INT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Shelly walks way ahead of Keisha. So much so that Shelly makes it to the car and starts it up before Keisha even gets close to the passenger door. She takes off, leaving Keisha befuddled in the parking lot. Though hurt, Keisha is not shocked. She just waits until her mother pulls back up in the parking lot, and she gets in the car and they drive off.

INT. CLARK DUPLEX - LATER

Mother and daughter enter the house and head to their respective corners.

INT. KEISHA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Keisha, laid across her bed, looks at her IG DMs, and they are flooded with **MESSAGES**. We can see a lot of her **WHITE PEERS** are asking her to "unblock Justin." Each message is punctuated by **#UnblockJustin**. Some say **#FreeMyGuyJustin**. She sits up in disbelief. Keisha scurries to her closet, tucks inside and **FACETIMES**:

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. CHLOE'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Chloe is lying back on her bed.

CHLOE
Hey, what's up?

KEISHA
Do you know about this Unblock
Justin campaign?

CHLOE
I need some context clues.

KEISHA
All the kids I went to elementary
school with are sending me messages
to unblock Justin. It's like a
hashtag and shit.

CHLOE
Are you serious?

KEISHA
Yeah.

CHLOE
That is so sweet. Maybe you were
wrong about him.

KEISHA
No, it's not. I don't want my
business out there.

CHLOE
I see your point, but I have to go.
I just took an edible to get
through my cramps.

KEISHA
Oh, sorry. Call me back.

Keisha hangs up then exits her closet to find her mother
sitting on her bed. She looks more defeated than mad.

SHELLY
What are you hiding?

KEISHA
Nothing.

SHELLY
Why you in the closet?

KEISHA
I didn't want you to hear me on the
phone.

SHELLY
Cause you hiding something?

KEISHA
No.

SHELLY
What is wrong with you, Keisha?

KEISHA
(shrugs)
Nothing.

SHELLY
Are you pregnant?

KEISHA
What?! No.

SHELLY
Are you doing drugs with Chloe?

KEISHA
Mom, what is this?

SHELLY
Shit, smoke a little weed-- I can handle that. Just please don't tell me you're pregnant.

KEISHA
I'm not pregnant.

Shelly looks deeply into her daughter's eyes.

SHELLY
Then why you living your life like The Real Housewives of Atlanta?

KEISHA
(laughs a little)
Mom, I can't have one fight in my life?

SHELLY
Not when I'm stressed the fuck out-- No, you can't. You fighting and always late like they are-- all y'all just ratchet representations of a Black Woman.

They each take a needed SIGH.

KEISHA

I think I made a mistake by
transferring to this school.

Shelly pulls her into a mommy hug and a kiss on the head.

SHELLY

I'm sorry, but you have to stick it
out.

CUT TO:

INT. CLARK KITCHEN - LATER

Alone, Keisha microwaves her dinner. And while she waits,
she checks her phone to find more #UnblockJustin **MESSAGES**.
She closes her phone and puts her attention on her dinner.

INT. KEISHA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Keisha does her homework on her bed. She nods asleep... then
jolts awake, back into her studies.

EXT. SLAUSON AVE - DAY

Keisha, in her school uniform, walks up to the city bus stop.

CHYRON: ANOTHER DAY ANOTHER HOLLER

A truck full of GARDENERS cat calls her. She takes a
stylized selfie on her **Snapchat story** that features her
school uniform next to the back of the gardeners' truck that
only says YO [Toyota]. Another CHYRON tags it: **YO Shorty**.

INT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - HALLS - LATER

Keisha walks alone between classes.

INT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - OUTDOOR CAFETERIA - LATER

Keisha eats alone at lunch under the jacaranda tree. Purple
flowers keep falling onto her tray.

INT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - ALGEBRA - LATER

Keisha sits in the back of her math class, awake.

EXT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - LATER

At the end of school, the girls pour out of the doors. Some head to the school buses. Others to the parking lot. Some into their parent's waiting cars. And a few like Keisha begin walking home or to the city bus.

A bright blue and orange car with PRIMO spelled across the driver and passenger doors pulls up alongside the street. It's clearly a STUDENT DRIVER car. Upon closer inspection, it's Justin and his DRIVING INSTRUCTOR [late 20s, Latino]. Justin kinda parallel parks, then gets out to meet Keisha, who, by the way, is miffed. He walks up directly to her, serious.

JUSTIN

Look, I came here to say I was genuinely enjoying getting to know you. But I also came here to say that I'm not going to take this disrespect you're giving me. You don't get to decide who I am and what I value. I'm sorry if I offended you because I didn't want to do all that in the back of the theater. You shouldn't judge me for it, just like I'm not judging you. And look, I empathize with what you're going through. It's fucked up... But I'm not him. And that has nothing to do with me, quite frankly. Discover you don't like me because I'm weird. I can handle that. I've gotten through it before. But please don't mix other people's personalities with mine. Speaking of my personality-- I'm sorry if I rubbed you the wrong way because I didn't see you in the past, but I see you now. And I think we got something good going on if we give it a chance. In fact, I think I may have strong feelings for you because I've never felt like this before, and I'd like to keep it going. But we can't do that if you got me blocked. So, I'm going to need you to unblock me. Okay?

KEISHA

(stunned but likes it)
Okay.

JUSTIN

Okay. I hope I hear from you,
Keisha. And if I don't, God bless,
good luck at Howard. I gotta go
beat the traffic.

He walks backwards to hold her gaze, then turns around and jogs back to the car. She watches him drive off a little awkwardly, which triggers a memory of the sixth grade:

EXT. PRIVATE PRIMARY SCHOOL - DAY (MEMORY)

It's May Day activities for the sixth graders. Justin in a blue t-shirt is in a three-legged race with a WHITE BOY who's also in a blue shirt. They are horrible because Justin is utterly uncoordinated for this activity. He laughs hysterically at himself. Keisha, in an orange shirt and standing a bit apart from the girls also in orange t-shirts, laughs along.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. ST. MARY'S SCHOOL - PRESENT

Keisha has that same sweet smile on her face as she watches the blue and orange car disappear into traffic.

EXT. JOHNSON HOUSE - LATER

The Student Driver car pulls up in the driveway. As Justin is getting out of the car:

DRIVING INSTRUCTOR

Great job today. And good luck with
the girl.

JUSTIN

Thank you. I accept all prayers.

DRIVING INSTRUCTOR

(driving off)

I appreciate the tip. See you next
week.

Justin checks his phone-- nothing from Keisha. Disappointed, he regroups and walks into his house.

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Justin sees his mother's purse and shoes by the door.

JUSTIN
Hello? I'm home.

He can hear someone nearby, so he follows the sound into the--

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

His mother, still in her work clothes, intensely stirs a pot of black beans on the stove. He braces for what is to come.

DAWN
This is a yes or no question, okay?

JUSTIN
Okay.

DAWN
Did you forge an email from my email account to your school, excusing you for an important driving lesson today?

A long beat, then:

JUSTIN
Yes.

DAWN
Thank you. Hand over your phone.

JUSTIN
Are you serious?

Off her dead look, he hands his phone to her and walks out of the kitchen.

We follow him past his brother, Jaden, who is doing homework in the loft area and into--

INT. JOHNSON HOUSE - JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Behind the door, he rushes to pull out his computer to access his text messages. And just as he opens it, the **NOTIFICATION** he has been advocating for comes through. A **MESSAGE FROM KEISHA**. But before he can even find out what it says, the wicked witch called his mother opens the door.

DAWN
And your computer too. If you need to do homework, come downstairs and do it in the kitchen, then hand the computer back to me.

JUSTIN

Mom.

DAWN

If you want to act like a child, I
will treat you like one, until we
get this shit right.

She holds out her hand, and he gives her his computer. She
walks out of the door with the last way he knows how to
immediately get in touch with Keisha.

END OF PILOT