

SCRIPTS AND A BALL

Written By

Ralph M. Chery

55 East 21st Street apt. 3e
Brooklyn, NY, 11226
ralph.chery011@gmail.com
(347) 338-7517

FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

A look at the full moon.

The empty cemetery.

EXT. STREETS, PARTON AND 11TH AV. CORNER - NIGHT

The street name signs of "Parton and 11th av."

LOW INCOME PLACE. Under the street name signs, SAALIM(17), Somali, AF, short dreads, scar on his face, and GOGO (17), Nigerian, AF, are juggling a very used soccer ball.

AF, gang of African immigrants. They wear the same red sweater (Ghanaians), green (Nigerians), blue (others), with the same matching African sweatpants. Black gloves, black shoes, black winter cap.

Their hands are usually in their pocket holding their weapons, hoodie on, messed up clothes.

Five other afs are next to them, chatting, passing two joints around.

Gogo does a trick.

SAALIM

Ahh, look at my young Nigerian star.

Gogo smiles, passes Saalim the ball.

SAALIM (CONT'D)

I can do better, though. Watch me, kid.

Saalim does a much better trick.

GOGO

Okay, you want a competition, pass the ball.

Back and forth, they amaze us with their skills.

Saalim checks his phone while juggling, "12:18", stops.

SAALIM

Let's be out, it's time.

GOGO

Nah, not that early, he's always late.

Gogo tries to take the ball from Saalim who shields it.

SAALIM

It's been passed time, we're late now.
Let's go! I need my food money for
tomorrow.

Gogo laughs.

GOGO

Alright, let's go.

SAALIM

(to the other afs)

We'll be back, we're about to go sell
to this man real quick.

BEAST, 18, tall, Ghanaian.

BEAST

Alright, go make that green.

ETOR, 16, not so tough, Nigerian, unlike the others his
accent is weak.

ETOR

Yea, go get shot by the GBs.

GB, African American gang, wears black.

They all laugh at that one, some barely.

Gogo and Saalim walk, kicking the ball.

EXT. BEHIND A MARKET - MOMENTS LATER

Saalim and Gogo leans against the GRATTIFIED WALL.

GOGO

This motherfucker is always late, af.

SAALIM

Relax, he's coming.

An old jeep is coming.

SAALIM (CONT'D)

See.

The car stops, Saalim approaches it. Gogo calmly scans the street.

SAALIM

What's up man, same shit?

MAN, African American, 30s, tough.

MAN

Yeah.

INT. COP CAR - CONTINUOUS

We see a pocket size statue of Jesus.

Two cops, Johnny (22), Dereck (30), hide inside, watching them.

COP'S POV (100 yrds), Saalim takes a substance out of the fold of his winter hat. We don't see it; he hides it between his fingers.

JOHNNY

Jackpot.

Dereck grins.

Saalim transfers the Man the substance through a handshake. Saalim receives his "food money".

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Try to see their faces, champ.

Dereck nods.

EXT. BEHIND THE MARKET - CONTINUOUS

The cop car races to the afs who immediately pull their winter hat down, masked, they run. The Man drives away.

Where they run is very narrow. The car can only chase them, at their pace.

JOHNNY

You kids are not going to get very far!
They arrive to a fence (a bit tall). The car smashes the fence; nearly hit their legs as they jump on it.

Saalim easily climbs the fence, jumps on the other side. Unlike Gogo whose jacket gets stuck.

Johnny climbs after Gogo, wraps his arm around his neck.

JOHNNY

You stupid African!

WHOOSH! Saalim leaves his knife inside Johnny's hand.

(OFF Saalim quickly climbed on their opposite side of the fence to help Gogo).

Johnny looks at his knifed hand, looks at Saalim's terrifying look, his eyes.

SAALIM (Arabic)

You stupid American!

(translates)

You stupid American!

Johnny falls on the cop car. Gogo climbs. Johnny is looking at Saalim, smiling. Saalim jumps off the fence.

POBB! Dereck punches the back of Saalim's head.

(While everything was going on, OFF Dereck was going after Saalim).

Saalim turns, smashes his fist on Dereck's face, bust his nose. Dereck tries sending his second punch but Saalim ducks.

WHOOSH! Gogo stabs Dereck's back. We HEAR his pain.

Saalim puts Dereck on the floor, Gogo keeps stabbing him.

Johnny watches them walk away, closes his eyes.

INT. COP CAR - CONTINUOUS

The pocket size statue of Jesus, a spectator.

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The moon.

EXT. HILL - MOMENTS LATER

Saalim, Gogo and Beast stand on the edge.

A train comes below the hill (20 ft), stops.

TRAIN (V. O.)

*This is Washington Heights, next stop,
Ralph Avenue.*

The boys jump on the train, gets inside the

TRAIN:

The few people inside are staring at them.

BEAST

Fuck y'all looking at?!

They roll their eyes away.

EXT. IN FRONT OF BUILDING APT. - LATER THAT NIGHT

Beast stops his walk to an open cracked window.

BEAST

They always leave the fucking window
open!

Beast climbs, enters the window, we see him close it with
rage from outside.

GOGO

He "always" leaves without saying bye.

Saalim and Gogo laugh together, walk in the

BUILDING:

They attempt to walk to the elevator but the "BROKEN" sign
stop them. They take the stairs, stop in front of "5k".

Gogo closes his fist to Saalim who pounds it.

Deep look, Gogo hugs Saalim.

SAALIM

Tomorrow, Go.

GOGO

Tomorrow, Peace (Saalim= Peace in
Arabic).

Saalim watches him walk upstairs, gets inside

5K:

Saalim doesn't turn the light on, walks to the LIVING ROOM, ball at his feet.

We hear SNORING, COUGHING.

SAALIM'S AUNT (O. S.) (Arabic)
This cursed child always coming late.

An old man is on the couch, COUGHING, very sick.

Saalim lies on sheets spread on the floor, uses his winter hat as a pillow. He stares at the ceiling, kicking the ball between his feet. We watch him fall asleep.

INT. JOHNNY'S ROOM - DAY

Gun, police badge on the night table. Chicago Police Department logo on the wall. Crucifix next to "woman in bikini" on the wall.

Johnny lies on his bed, holds Saalim's knife, hand wrapped of a bandage.

INT. IN FRONT OF JOHNNY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

CANDLE, 17, blonde, stands.

She's anxious, holds a full plate. She hesitates, knocks. No answer, she enters

JOHNNY'S ROOM:

Johnny acts like he doesn't see her. He put the knife away, before she came.

CANDLE
(at the full plate on the floor)
You didn't eat your food from last night, I can't keep on throwing away mommie's cooking, Johnny please eat.

Johnny glances at Candle. Candle puts the food on the night table, takes the plate from last night. She starts walking out the room, sends him a sad look.

INT. CANDLE'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Movie posters, piles of DVDs, mini-library, crucifix.

Candle sits on her bed, typing on her laptop. She pauses. A look at the screen reveals a screenplay.

She's staring at Channing Tatum on the wall, thinks.

MS. SCOTT (O. S.)

Honey?

MS. SCOTT, late 40s.

CANDLE

Coming.

INT. ADAMS HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

CAUCASIAN STUDENTS. Candle is doing her locker combination.

JUSTIN, 17, stops his walk behind her, he's not happy.

CANDLE

Oh, hey baby.

She attempts to kiss him, gets denied.

CANDLE

What?

Justin doesn't say a word.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Justin...

JUSTIN

You didn't reply my text this morning.
You're pretending you don't know.

CANDLE

What, what text?

She searches for her phone in her bag.

JUSTIN

You did see the text, stop pretending
you didn't!

CANDLE

No, I did not see your text. If I did,
why would I not reply?!

JUSTIN

I don't know, you should know!

CANDLE

Oh my God, why do you always make the biggest deal about the smallest thing?! And you always think I'm lying! If I said I didn't see it yet, I didn't see yet! I'm sorry, I was busy this morning, my mind was somewhere else.

JUSTIN

Your mind was somewhere else?! That's even worse! You know I text you every morning, you couldn't check your phone for three seconds! My mind is always on you---

CANDLE

I'm so sorry, Justin. When I said somewhere else... I'm talking about Johnny. I'm really sorry, baby.

She takes her phone out, "Good morning, I love u (heart)". She smiles, text back.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Somebody just texted you, something tells me it's a girl who think of you as the man of her life.

"GM MY prince, I love you 2", Justin smirks.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

(whispers in his ear)

I'm sorry; I promise it will never happen again.

She kisses him softly; Justin has his eyes open for a second. She wraps Justin's arms around her waist. They slowly build passion.

Justin tries ending the kiss, she doesn't let him, Justin himself grabs her tighter.

She moves her waist, humps him slowly, once. They finally unlock lips like they just ate a good meal.

CANDLE

God, I love kissing you. Promise you'll never get so mad at me again, I'm not the perfect girlfriend but I try.

JUSTIN

I won't if you keep your promise.

CANDLE

Justin, I said sorry and made my promise, your turn.

JUSTIN

Okay, I promise I will never get mad at you again.

She kisses him, hands him her bag.

They walk holding hands.

CANDLE

We're so late to class..

INT. SAALIM'S APT, BATHROOM - DAY

Saalim has his head inside a bucket full of water.

We hear the SOUND of a man peeing.

Saalim takes his head out, sees AXMED's (20s), penis. Axmed glares at him.

Saalim laughs.

SAALIM (Arabic)

A big man like you (flexes) got a small penis like this (shows his pinkie)!

Saalim walks out the bathroom.

AXMED (Arabic)

Fuck you, you fucking bum!

Saalim walks in the LIVING ROOM.

Two ladies (30s) are cleaning, they glare at Saalim.

SAALIM (Arabic)

Good morning my beautiful aunts.

More glares.

In the b. g. "Taken" plays on a small TV, OLD MAN (70s) is watching. Saalim folds his sheets. He puts his messed up shoes on. He takes his ball, presses his pocket, no knife, he's surprised.

VISION, of when he left his knife in Johnny's hand.

He calms down, laughs (it happens every morning). He puts his gloves, winter hat on. He puts his 20 \$ inside his left glove. He's walking out; sound of COUGHING stops him.

SAALIM (Arabic)

I'm going to bring you something for that cold, alright uncle?

OLD MAN (Arabic)

Okay son, thank you. Don't come home too late (coughs) go to school.

SAALIM (Arabic)

I got kicked out; I'll try to come early... try.

INT. IN FRONT 6E - MOMENTS LATER

Saalim knocks on the door.

INT. 6E BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

ABEO (15), Nigerian, short towel on, walks to the door, sees Saalim through the view hole, smiles, opens the door.

ABEO (cute accent)

Hiii, Somali.

SAALIM

Woow! Hi, Nigerian Goddess.

Saalim enters 6E.

ABEO

Yo, hook me up today. You know how dry the streets be on Mondays.

SAALIM

No, I don't know, I don't do what you do.

Abeo hits his arm.

ABEO

Do you make money on Mondays?! No!
Fucking, selling weed, robbing, same
shit, the streets be dried on Mondays.

SAALIM

There's no such thing as the streets is
dry for you. You know how many afs are
dying for pussy?! Open them legs and
money will come to you.

He gets a playful mean look from her.

SAALIM (CONT'D)

I'll make some call for you.

ABEO

Thanks, babe. My day is not going to be
so bad...

TIME CUT:

Saalim is watching soccer in the LIVING ROOM, he gets up
walks to the

BATHROOM:

He grins at Abeo's matching underwear on the floor. He
pees while Abeo is in the shower. Abeo opens the curtain.
Her eyes meet Saalim's penis, Saalim's meet her wet naked
body. Saalim takes his clothes off, enters the bathtub.
Curtain closes.

The water is falling on them. They're kissing furiously,
tongues show, in each other's arm. Abeo has one leg around
him, Saalim is pressing her butt.

Saalim cups her breast, sucks, Abeo caresses his back.

INT. 6E, LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Saalim is watching TV. We hear FOOTSTEPS. He walks to the

BATHROOM:

Gogo is peeing, pounds Saalim while doing so.

SAALIM

Good morning, Mr. Ayemoke, how are you today?

GOGO

Good morning, Mr. Peace, I'm good, about you?

SAALIM

I'm great, so what are we doing today, sir?

They look at each other, Gogo holds a toothbrush.

GOGO/ SAALIM

Making money, play soccer, that's how you stay alive in America!

INT. IN FRONT OF 1C - MOMENTS LATER

Saalim knocks on 1c. No answer. Saalim and Gogo knocks with rage.

BEAST'S MOM (O. S.) (Ghana language)
Kweku your friends are here!

GOGO

(mocks her Ghana words) Open the door!

Saalim laughs. We hear Beast getting cursed by her in his mother language. Beast comes out.

BEAST

Why y'all getting my mama mad?!

GOGO

Tell her to open the door for us when we come!

SAALIM

Leaving two afs standing...

They walk.

BEAST'S MOTHER (O. S.)

Lock the door!

Beast sucks his teeth, keeps walking. Saalim and Gogo laughs. They walk to the

STREETS:

An African American lady (20s), waits for the bus, holds a newspaper, "Protection For Cops" with PICTURE of injured cops, including Johnny with the knife in his hand.

SAALIM

They still remember that shit?!

GOGO

Americans never forget. You think you killed that cop? I know I murdered mine.

Saalim shrugs.

BEAST

No, he didn't kill him, stupid.

GOGO

Why, you had a knife inside your hand before?

BEAST

Me?! Nobody can stab me! People don't die like that by a knife planted in their hand. He's still alive, looking for Somali.

SAALIM

Why, to give me my knife back?

Beast and Gogo laughs. As they walk, people are trying to pass as far from them as possible, they check out every girl they see. They stop in front a DELI.

GOGO

Whose turn is it?

SAALIM

Yours, af!

Beast pushes Gogo who laughs and walks inside the

DELI:

GOGO

Let me get eight chicken sandwiches.

DELI MAN, 30s, Arabic.

DELI MAN
Eight?! Big stomach, huh?

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE DELI - CONTINUOUS

BEAST
You pop him; I fucked up my fist (shows
it), beating that guy yesterday.

Saalim nods, Beast lights up a joint.

INT. DELI - CONTINUOUS

The Deli Man bags the load of food and drinks.

DELI MAN
Eighteen dollars.

Gogo takes his money out; Saalim's ball flies and hits his
back. Masked Saalim runs inside, puts Gogo on the floor
hits him then robs him.

DELI MAN
Aye, let him pay first!

Masked Beast points his knife at the Deli Man. Beast
inhales, takes the bag, exhales.

BEAST
Pay for what?!

Saalim and Beast runs out, Gogo runs after them.

Deli Man stares in space.

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

The afs are running, Saalim kicking his ball, Beast
smoking.

They stop, look around, unmask, sit on the sidewalk.
Saalim shares the food. People are trying not to stare,
walks as far as possible.

TWO AFRICAN AMERICAN GIRLS (16). Girl #1 shakes her head.

GIRL #1
Look at these afs...

The girls laugh.

SAALIM

(mouth full)

Look at these bitches, stop sucking
dick, go to school.

The afs laugh.

SAALIM

(mouth full)

Y'all know my cousin Axmed, right?

They nod.

SAALIM (CONT'D)

He big as fuck, his dick is like this
(shows his pinkie). Gogo's shit bigger
than his.

Beast and Gogo laugh.

BEAST

What the fuck! What the fuck is wrong
with Somali's af?! Hold on, Gogo you
showed him your dick?!

GOGO

(mouth full)

Nah, nah, it... it wasn't like that.

They laugh.

INT. MCDONALD'S - DAY

Ten afs (14-18) sit inside. Saalim spots JAMAL (16)
African American, walking outside. He gestures him to come.

Jamal comes to Saalim, nervous.

SAALIM

You're going to walk straight pass me
like you don't see me, my brother.

Jamal hands him money. Saalim gives him a handshake,
transfers the substance that was already in his hand.

SAALIM

It's always nice doing business with
you. Later.

Jamal exits.

SIX, killed six, 18, Nigerian, scar on face.

SIX (heavy accent)
 Why he looked so shaky?! Y'all saw him?!
 He was shaking!

They laugh, except for Saalim.

ETOR
 I'll be scared too, if I didn't know us
 and walked in front of us.

They laugh, except for Saalim.

AFS' POV, five GB members (16-18) are walking on the street across. The GBs shoots gang's sign.

The afs get up, take their weapons out, Six has a gun, other's knives. They rush to the

STREETS:

Green light, cars are passing by, they can't cross the street nor see the GBs. After the light the GBs are gone.

SIX
 What the fuck is wrong with these GBs?!
 I'm shooting one of them.

SAALIM
 One of them?! Say all. We're like magicians, we make them GBs disappear.
 (BEAT) Yo, me and Go gotta go.

ETOR
 You and Gogo always have to go. What y'all be doing, sucking each other's ass?

BEAST
 Where y'all going?

GOGO
 Game.

KOJO, 14, Ghanaian.

KOJO

Good luck. Each of y'all score two goals for me, alright?

SAALIM

Thank you, we got you. Come with us, y'all.

BEAST

Nah, we're good.

Saalim and Gogo pound each afs, leave.

SIX

(to Beast)

I told you to tell them to stop that soccer shit.

No words from Beast, they walk back inside the McDonald's.

INT. ADAMS HIGH, AUDITORIUM - DAY

Candle sits, reading her script, she thinks. She crosses out part of the script, writes new lines.

Justin comes.

CANDLE

Hey, Jus.

They kiss, he sits next to her. Justin hands her a water bottle (nearly empty).

CANDLE

Thank you. I changed the beginning of the play; I hope they'll get it quick. I'm thinking of starting Saturday rehearsals---

JUSTIN

Saturday rehearsals, why?! Candle, it's just a play!

CANDLE

What, just a play?!

JUSTIN

Yea, you always do too much! Candle it's only a play!

CANDLE

You have basketball practice on Saturdays---

JUSTIN

Yea, but basketball is different---

CANDLE

Different?! Different, how!?

JUSTIN

People like basketball more than plays.

CANDLE

I don't care if people like basketball more than plays. I love my play and will do everything I can to put it at its best. I'm starting Saturday rehearsals and my actors will be more than happy to come on Saturdays! Yes, I know I do too much!

Justin looks at her, walks out.

JUMP CUT TO:

The student-actors are here, Candle stands on the stage.

CANDLE

Can you guys be quiet? Thank you. Before we start, I have a few words to say. I was reading the script and thought I could make it better. I changed the beginning of the play---

ACTOR #1, boy (16).

ACTOR #1

You did what?!

ACTOR #2, girl (17).

ACTOR #2

We're not even ready with this beginning and you changed it.

ACTOR #3, boy (17).

ACTOR #3

Play is in two weeks, don't change things now.

CANDLE

I only changed the beginning---

ACTOR #1

We don't know that with you and your changes; today you change the beginning, tomorrow middle, after tomorrow---

CANDLE

Shut up, Jason. I know you guys will pick it up very fast, I have great actors. I think starting it this new way will make it much better. (BEAT) Okay, I don't want to be a dictator... if you're against the new beginning put your hands up.

The students look amongst themselves, none raise their hands.

CANDLE

Should I read the new beginning?

ACTOR #2

No, Candle, let's start rehearsing it.

CANDLE

Thank you, I love you guys.

Actor #1 raises his hand. They laugh.

CANDLE

Okay, I have something else to say. Don't worry I didn't change the middle. I want to start Saturday rehearsals, if you don't mind coming here on Saturdays raise your hand.

All hands go up, Candle smiles.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - LATE AFTERNOON

Chicago Inferno vs Michigan Bucks 1-1. PLAYERS (late 20s)

Saalim tackles, dribbles a player, passes to Gogo. Gogo passes back to Saalim who shoots, goalie saves it.

TIME CUT:

Saalim passes to Gogo. Gogo gets tackled hard by JOSH, Caucasian, 20s.

Gogo, on the floor, trips Josh. Josh falls. Gogo gets up.

COACH of Chicago Inferno, 40s, gets frustrated.

GOGO

Don't fuck with me, white boy!

Josh gets up, pushes Gogo.

POBB! Gogo punches Josh.

Saalim pulls Gogo away, holds him. Gogo tries to get out.

SAALIM

I told you not in the games!

Gogo calms down; the referee shows him the red card. Gogo looks at Josh (swollen eye). Saalim lets go of Gogo.

Gogo takes his jersey off, walking off the field. He throws his jersey, sits on the highest seat on the benches.

Coach looks at him disappointed, picks the jersey up.

The game continues, Josh gets next to Saalim.

JOSH

You're the next stupid Inferno player to get a red card.

Saalim only looks at him.

TIME CUT:

Josh runs with the ball.

SAALIM

(to teammate)

I got ball, cover!

Saalim defends Josh nervously, he gets played. He runs back to Josh, slide tackles him.

Josh tries to tackle Saalim back but gets fooled. Saalim takes on two more players, shoots, scores. His teammates

celebrate with him, Coach is happy, Gogo is less frustrated, and everyone is amazed.

The referee blows the final whistle.

Saalim leaves his teammates to go to

THE BENCHES:

Gogo sits, holds a knife.

SAALIM

Come on, Go, get that shit out of here.
I got him back for you and we won.
(licks his lip) You know if you stab him,
you'll be the only suspect.

Gogo thinks, puts the knife back in his shorts. They walk down from the benches.

COACH

Saalim.

Gogo continues his walk to the locker room.

COACH (CONT'D)

Good game today. You have the talent to play for any college team you want, any team. Go back to high school---

SAALIM

Why you're always stressing with that "go back to high school" shit, man?!

COACH

Because you're a talented player and you will waste it if you don't go back to playing high school and keep doing these nonsense af's shit!

SAALIM

Go back to high school?! They kicked me out; I'm not looking for another school and go to the same shit I went through. If I'm not an af, how you want to make money, have protection, stay alive?! If I wasn't an af, I would've died by now, die. Stop stressing me with that shit. I'm good how I am.

Saalim walks away.

COACH

Saalim.

Saalim keeps walking.

EXT. STREETS BY ADAMS HIGH - LATE AFTERNOON

NICE PLACE. Candle is walking. Justin follows her driving.

JUSTIN

I'm sorry, I'm having a bad day, I
didn't mean a word I said.

She ignores him, keeps walking.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Candle, I'm sorry, come inside... I said
sorry, Candle! It's that you always
talking about your play!

Candle glares at him.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Fuck, walk home!

He drives away. Candle pauses her walk, surprised,
resumes her walk.

INT. APARTMENT - LATE AFTERNOON

A smiling African lady (70s) is looking out the window,
she's looking at the

STREETS OF WASHINGTON HEIGHTS:

Etor is walking, headphones on, eating chips.

The group of GBs, we saw earlier, see him, walk to him.

ETOR

Watch where y'all walking!

He notices that he's in of front GBs, runs. They catch
him, beat him.

INT. APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

His grandmother, the African lady, watches him getting beat. Fear and shock unable her to move; only tears come out her eyes.

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

They beat Etor, rob him, walk away. Blooded Etor passes out next to chips on the floor.

EXT. PARTON AND 11TH AV. CORNER - NIGHT

Eight afs stand, passing joints around, sad.

Saalim and Gogo walk to them.

SAALIM

What happened?!

SIX

(to the other afs)

While these two were playing soccer,
Etor was getting jumped!

SAALIM/ GOGO

Etor got jumped?!

BEAST

Yea, right in front of his building.

SAALIM

Don't say we was playing soccer, af!

SIX

What the fuck was you doing?!

SAALIM

What was YOU doing when he was getting
jumped?!

SIX

I wasn't playing soccer!

SAALIM

Does it matter if you was playing soccer
or not?! You wasn't with him! Don't
blame me because I was playing soccer!
If I wasn't playing soccer, I would've
be with him?! No! Don't say I was
playing soccer!

SIX

It wasn't your fault, it was nobody's fault. But y'all got to choose between being an af or a soccer player, y'all can't be both.

GOGO

You can't tell us that!

SIX

I fucking just did, that shit is holding y'all!

SAALIM

Holding us?! So we got to be with y'all 24-7?!

SIX

Yes---

KOJO

Can y'all chill?! Talk about that shit some other time! Etor got jumped! Let's go see him in the hospital.

BEAST

If we go see him, he's going to get better?!

KOJO

(sucks his teeth) Who's coming with me?

They start walking, Beast and Six stay.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The afs are staring at Etor through the door. He's asleep; his jaw is wrapped of a bandage, on IV fluids.

GOGO

Let's go get these motherfuckers back!
Looking at him ain't going to do shit!

Etor's grandmother sits by the door.

GRANDMOTHER (Nigerian language)

Thanks for coming, you guys are great friends. He has surgery for his jaw later today, tomorrow his ribs. (sobs) I watched them beat him---

SLIM AF, 15, Nigerian, is TRANSLATING everything to the non Nigerian.

GOGO (Nigerian language)
You watched them?! (puts his arm on her shoulder) Please don't cry.

GRANDMOTHER (Nigerian language)
(crying)
My grandson almost died in front of me. And I couldn't do anything to help him. Broken jaw, broken ribs, missing teeth... that will scar him. I can't even pay for his surgeries---

GOGO (Nigerian language)
How much?

GRANDMOTHER (Nigerian language)
Fifty thousands.

GOGO (Nigerian language)
We'll be back with the money.

She looks at Gogo surprised.

SAALIM (broken Nigerian language)
(to Grandmother)
We'll be back with the money.

Saalim hugs her.

EXT. BY WENDY'S - NIGHT

AFS' POV, two African American males, late teens, are enjoying their meal inside Wendy's. They're done eating walk in the

STREETS:

Slim Af, alone, follows them, one hand behind him.

SLIM AF
Yo, y'all GBs?

They turn around, laugh at Slim Af.

A-A #1

Yeah, we're GBs. What the fuck is your little African ass going to do about it?!

SLIM AF

This!

Slim Af hits A-A #1, A-A #2 with a piece of concrete, both fall.

The other afs come to beat them. Saalim stands, faces the other way as the beat them.

They stop; Beast and Six hold their knives.

BEAST/ SIX (Mother language)

That's for beating Etor.

(translates)

That's for beating Etor.

A-A #1

I didn't beat him... I... I don't even know him.

BEAST

He's the af y'all GBs beat today.

WHOOSH! Beast stabs A-A #1, Six stabs A-A #2. We HEAR their pain.

SIX

Seven.

TIME CUT:

The afs walk away. A-A #1 has a Ghana flag tied around his neck, A-A #2, Nigeria flag, their eyes remain open.

INT. ADAMS HIGH, AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

The crowd applauds as the curtain closes. CYRUS, 17, looks like Nick Cannon, gets on stage.

CYRUS

(as the curtain opens)

Ladies and gentlemen, give it up for our students of Adams High on, "Doing Homework On a Tree".

Applauds, the actors bow, then Candle.

Candle walks to MR. SCOTT, (40s), Ms. Scott and Justin, they hug her.

MS. CRAWFORD, (30s), African-American, interrupts them.

MS. CRAWFORD

Hi Candle, great play. My name is Ms. Crawford, Dean of Jefferson High, I would like to talk to you, please. Sorry for interrupting.

CANDLE

It's okay.

MS. SCOTT

We'll wait for you in the car.

Her family exit.

MS. CRAWFORD

Let us go straight to the point, can we?

CANDLE

Sure, I'm dying to hear the point.

MS. CRAWFORD

I would like to know if you'll be interested in writing and directing a play for Jefferson High. It could be an opportunity for you to work in a different place, different kind of people and a new play from you to be seen. I want you to write on the conflict between the African-Americans and the Africans... reunite them with peace. Don't write anything offensive, no gang signs. Don't worry, you'll do find. I'm hoping your play will appease the conflict, even by a little bit. We also need the income. Jefferson is the perfect place for you, you will love it there.

CANDLE

I'm flattered and will be more than happy to. When do you need it by?

MS. CRAWFORD

In two weeks. Thank you, it will do a lot for us and for you too.

CANDLE

My pleasure, thanks for choosing me.

MS. CRAWFORD

You were on top of my list, here's my card. Bye Candle.

She takes the card.

CANDLE

Bye, Ms. Crawford.

As Candle is walking out of the auditorium, she sees Justin sitting. She speeds up. Justin runs after her.

JUSTIN

Candle, I'm sorry about last time. I was having a really bad day. Everything I said was bullshit. Your play is something big; now that I watched it I can say that, I liked it. I'm sorry I'm not into plays but I'm really into you. I missed you like crazy, you have to forgive me.

CANDLE

I have to?! It was kind of my fault too. I talk too much about plays---

JUSTIN

No, it was all my fault. I'm so sorry, please forgive me. (pauses) Hold on, does that mean you forgive me?

Candle laughs.

CANDLE

I missed you like crazy you too.

They kiss.

EXT. WHASINGTON HEIGHTS STREETS - DAY

Masked Saalim, Gogo and Beast (smoking) hide behind a car, each one holds a gun. Saalim is cleaning his.

Red light. Each of spots a sublime car, walks to it.

Saalim, walking, takes the detachable from his pocket... locks and loads.

As Beast and Gogo do their similar auto theft in the b. g. Saalim walks from behind the car, moves against the car (a way for the people inside not to see him).

He opens the driver's door, throws the DRIVER, 20s, African-American, out. He gets inside the

CAR:

PASSENGER, Driver's son, (12), looks at him.

The frightened boy builds guilt inside Saalim. After a bit, the boy runs out, trips on his way.

Saalim unmask, drives, follows the others, he sees Gogo who sends him a nod that he sends back.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Gogo checks his phone, "11:39". Masked Saalim, Gogo, Beast and Seven walk inside the

DELI:

The Deli Man SCREAMS, Seven hits him with his gun, he passes out.

Beast takes a bag of chip, eats.

Saalim opens the cash register, like he works here, empties it. Gogo throws a rock on the camera then on the TV.

Each af walks out unmasked, eating. Gogo checks his phone "11:41".

EXT. IN FRONT A SOCCER FIELD - DAY

The six afs stand against a fence.

FAR VIEW, an African-American male, 20s, parks a sublime car.

The afs share nods amongst them. Kojo (holding a hanger) and Slim Af cross the street.

Car passes by; the sublime car comes with Kojo and Slim Af inside. The afs get in, proud, Saalim a bit guilty.

INT. JOHNNY'S ROOM - DAY

UNIFORMED Johnny is on his knees, eyes on the crucifix.

JOHNNY

... today is a big day, I'm getting back on duty, please continue protecting me from the criminals. Help me get back up if I fall again. I want to put the criminals in jail, protect, help. Please help me be the best cop I can be. Protect my family, give them a blessed day, I love them so much. I know you're not going to let anything happen to Candle at Jefferson High. Give me a good day and let me catch the af who did this to me. Thank you.

We SEE the scar on his hand. He gets up, looks at himself in the mirror, puts his hat on, takes Saalim's knife.

INT. COP CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Candle is looking at the streets of Washington Heights, GBs standing in their streets corner, little girls jumping ropes, teenage girls arguing, graffiti...

The looks she gets are not welcoming.

The car stops IN FRONT OF JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL.

JOHNNY

Be careful, don't make eye contact with strangers, don't smoke---

They laugh, MIKE (30s), cop, is in the driver's seat.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Don't get too bossy---

CANDLE

I'm not bossy.

JOHNNY

Just be careful, stay alert.

CANDLE

Okay, thank you, brave men.

MIKE

Bye, good luck.

INT. JEFFERSON HGH, AUDITORIUM - LATER

Candle stands on the stage in front of her ACTORS, African-Americans and Africans (16-18), KARL, African-American (30s) security guard and Ms. Crawford.

CANDLE

I'm really excited to work here at Jefferson High, flattered. I thank God and Ms. Crawford. I can't wait to start rehearsals, that's why I'm ending my speech. Together we will perform one of the greatest high school plays of Illinois. Let's make it happen...

CHEERS.

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH - LATE AFTERNOON

Karl locks the auditorium's door. He looks relieved that his job is done for today.

CANDLE

Thank you, Karl, we feel so safe around you.

KARL

Oh, don't mention it, it's my job.

Candle smiles.

TIME CUT:

She sits by the EXIT DOOR.

JACKIE, 17, African but very American, in Candle's play.

JALEN, 17, in Candle's play.

Jalen and Jackie walk, holding hands, Candle smiles at them.

Jackie pushes Jalen's arm.

JACKIE

(whispers)

Ask her if she want a ride home.

JALEN

You want a ride home?

CANDLE

No, thank you, somebody is coming for me.
I appreciate it.

JACKIE

Oh, you're waiting on your man, okay.

CANDLE

No, not my boyfriend, my brother.

They laugh.

JACKIE

Bye, Candle.

CANDLE

Bye.

JALEN

(to Candle)

Call me Will Smith, you see how I act.

JACKIE

Oh, shut up Jalen.

CANDLE

Bye, Will Smith.

They laugh. Jackie and Jalen exit the school.

SECURITY GUARD (30S), female, stops in front of Candle.

SECURITY GUARD

You can't wait here.

CANDLE

I'm waiting for my ride.

SECURITY GUARD

I know, you got to wait outside.

Candle walks

IN FRONT OF THE SCHOOL:

She leans on the wall, reads a text from Johnny, "I'm coming".

Masked Saalim and Beast walk to her from behind, knives in their hands. Fear freezes her. Saalim grabs her from the back, wraps his arm around her neck. She drops her phone.

BEAST

Don't break my phone.

Beast picks it up.

Saalim and Candle are reading eyes. The fear in her eyes makes him nervous, scared, guilty. Candle looks up to the sky, Saalim keeps his eyes on her.

BEAST

Take her fucking bag!

Saalim doesn't do it, Beast takes the bag himself.

BEAST (CONT'D)

Run her pocket! I know she got more.

Saalim stays frozen.

BEAST (CONT'D)

I said run her pocket, af!

Saalim nervously checks her pocket.

SAALIM

Not... Nothing.

Beast starts walking away, he notices Saalim is still holding her.

BEAST

Let her go! What the fuck is wrong with you today?!

Saalim lets her go; as he walks he looks back at her.

The afs turn, they're gone. Candle sits on the floor.

CANDLE

(looking up)

Why... did you let... this happen to me?
Why?

She grabs her rosary from inside her coat, holds it.

INT. COP CAR (MOVING) - CONTINUOUS

Johnny and Mike are laughing. They see Candle, stop laughing.

JOHNNY

Drive faster!

The car speeds up.

Johnny runs to Candle who sticks her arms out. They hug on the floor.

JOHNNY

What happened?

Candle swallows.

CANDLE

Two masked men, they took my bag and my phone.

JOHNNY

Which way did they go? How long ago?

CANDLE

That way (points), it just happened.

JOHNNY

Let's go get them.

CANDLE

They had knives!

JOHNNY

(hand on his gun)

Let's go get them.

Candle gets more scared and worried. They get inside the

COP CAR:

Johnny drives.

They see masked Saalim and Beast walking. Candle gets more scared at the view of their back. The afs hear the car, turns, run.

The car is rolling next to them at their pace. Mike from the window of the passenger seat, grabs Beast. The car keeps going as Mike is holding Beast.

Beast drops Candle's bag, he's fighting to escape, in vain. In the b. g. Saalim takes his gun as he runs.

The car stops.

JOHNNY

Duck!

Johnny and Candle duck. Beast doesn't let Mike duck.

POWW! Saalim shoots Mike. Candle SCREAMS.

POWW! Johnny shoots Beast. Candle SCREAMS.

Saalim runs to the barrier (at the extremity of the road, there's a barrier because train tracks are underneath). Johnny is after him, thinks of shooting.

CHIKITIK, CHIKITAK, a train is coming.

Saalim jumps down on the moving train. Johnny attempts to jump to.

CANDLE

Noooooo!

Johnny watches the train leaves.

EXT. TOP OF TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

Saalim is holding on his life, cries under his mask.

The train stops, Saalim gets down, everybody is staring. He runs inside the

TRAINSTATION:

He rushes inside the bathroom, comes back, unmasked. He walks to the

STREETS:

He's pace walking to his destination.

INT. COP CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Johnny and OFFICER RIVERA (40s) spot an af, NUNU, 16, wearing the same clothes Saalim wears.

OFFICER RIVERA
Can't be him, he's not five ten.

JOHNNY
Stop the car.

OFFICER RIVERA
He's not---

JOHNNY
Stop the car!

Johnny rushes OUT, grabs Nunu.

JOHNNY
Do you know the one who shot the cop?

NUNU
(trying to escape)
No, white boy, let me go!

Johnny pushes him on the ground. Nunu trips him with his feet, jumps on top of him, punches him.

Officer Rivera leans on the car, watches.

Johnny puts himself on top, starts punching. His fist hurts, beats him with his stick, not enough, gets up, starts kicking him.

JOHNNY
Don't call me white boy! (kicks him)
One of your "brothers" killed Mike,
robbed my sister (kicks him). I know
you know him. Where is he?!

NUNU
I don't... know.

OFFICER RIVERA (O. S.)
They're interviewing other afs, you're
not going to get anything from him...
Scott, that's enough!

Johnny stop, looks at the af, kicks him one last time.

INT. CANDLE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Candle lies on her bed, bible, rosary, next to her.

Johnny enters.

JOHNNY

We're going to catch him; the whole department is after him.

CANDLE

Daddy is going to find out.

JOHNNY

Only me, you and him know you're the victim. I'm sorry that we have to hide it---

CANDLE

It's okay; I don't want anybody to know.

Johnny sits on the bed, puts one arm on her shoulder.

JOHNNY

I'm sorry this happened to you. If I---

CANDLE

No, it wasn't your fault, I'll be okay.

JOHNNY

I will get him; he's the same af who stabbed me.

CANDLE

How do you know, aren't they masked, and dressed very similar?

JOHNNY

His look. I will catch him.

CANDLE

Please be careful. Thank you for everything. (deep look) I want to go back over there tomorrow---

JOHNNY

Why, after what happened?!

CANDLE

I want to do this play. It will kill me if I don't. Not a thing will happen to me again, I prayed. It happened because I was outside. I will stay inside and keep a security guard with me. Johnny, I want to do this play. You get to still be a cop, do what you love after what happened, even though I'm scared to death for you. I want to do the same. Let me finish the play, I guarantee you, not a thing will happen to me again.

JOHNNY

Candle...

CANDLE

Please.

JOHNNY

Okay, but if something hap---

CANDLE

(hugs him)

Nothing will happen. (sighs) Johnny I'm so scared for you---

JOHNNY

(holds her head)

Nothing will happen to me either. I'll be okay, we'll be okay.

They hug.

INT. GOGO'S APT. - NIGHT

The afs sit in the LIVING ROOM, Kojo and Slim Af are in tears. Gogo walks in, he's been crying.

GOGO

Cops (clears his throat) are taking afs and interviewing them... us. We don't know shit.

SEVEN

I want to pop the cop who killed Beast!
We got to kill him!

GOGO

We will. Saalim said he's the same cop he stabbed. Scott. He didn't die that day, he will die soon.

KOJO

Let's not forget about Etor, we still got twenty thousand left for the surgeries.

GOGO

We never forgot about Etor. The streets is too hot right now, we got to chill for a bit.

Seven looks at him like " Whatchu mean the streets too hot?!".

Saalim is looking Slim Af who's crying.

SEVEN (O. S.)

I'm going to kill this cop! I'm fucking going to kill him!

GOGO (O. S.)

I wished he had two lives; I want to kill him too.

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH - DAY

Johnny and Candle (no bag) stand by the auditorium.

JOHNNY

Make sure the security guard is always around. Don't use the bathroom. Don't talk to anyone who's not in your play, don't even look at them. I'll be here early this time. Be careful, stay alert.

CANDLE

I am, thank you. Bye.

JOHNNY

Do you want me to talk to the guard?

CANDLE

No, it's okay.

JOHNNY

Okay, good luck.

CANDLE

Don't say good luck... it gives bad luck.

Johnny does the cross sign, watches her enter the

AUDITORIUM:

The stage is set for rehearsals, students are waiting,
Candle smiles.

JALEN

Aye, look, Candle is here!

They say HI to her.

CANDLE

Hi... we have a busy day in front of us.

EXT. PARTON AND 11TH AV. CORNER - DAY

Afs stand, smoking, chatting.

Saalim is walking to them, ball at his feet.

GOGO

Why you're outside?! I told you to stay
inside.

SAALIM

I got to play for a little bit.

GOGO

(points at Nunu's messed up face)
You see what Scott did to Nunu?

SAALIM

Scott again?! Why?

SEVEN

Scott grabbed him, asked him if he knows
the af who killed the cop... you. Nunu
said no, Scott hit him, they fought. He
fucked him up with his stick. All them
shits are happening and you're going to
kick a ball.

SAALIM

I got to play for a little bit. (looks
at Gogo) Ain't nothing going to happen

SAALIM (CONT'D)

to me. I'll go back home after. I'll catch y'all later.

Saalim walks away.

SEVEN

(shouts)

You should've killed that Scott when you had the chance to.

Saalim gestures "I'm sorry".

SEVEN

I'll do it.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - DAY

WHOOP, WHOOP, police sirens.

Yet Saalim is practicing on his shots on the empty field.

His phone rings, "Gogo".

SAALIM

Yo.

GOGO (V. O.)

The GBs fucked with Kojo, we're about to go press them at the high school, come through.

SAALIM

I'm coming right now.

He hangs up, sighs, stares at space, gets his ball, speed walks.

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH, AUDITORIUM - LATE AFTERNOON

The students just finished rehearsal.

CANDLE

Okay, that's it for today. Today was great; every day I get to work with you guys is a blessing. We'll pick it up from here tomorrow, so don't get sick.

They laugh.

TIME CUT:

HALLWAY:

Candle is walking alongside Jackie and Jalen.

JACKIE

Oh my God, I remember I chocked on stage when I was in eighth grade.

CANDLE

It happens... even to the best.

JALEN

I remember that day, I peed on myself laughing.

Jalen has a good laugh at his words.

CANDLE

You peed on yourself in eighth grade?!

Jackie laughs.

JACKIE

Candle, you ever tried acting?

Candle doesn't answer, looks in front of her, startled.

Crowded. Slim Af, Kojo (swollen eye) are arguing with the GB (3) members.

KOJO

(to DEVONTE)

I'm going to get my brother to fuck you up! Don't step foot outside!

DEVONTE, 17, GB tattoo, small gun tattoo on his face.

DEVONTE

(imitates Kojo)

I'm going to get my brother to fuck you up! Don't step foot outside.

(stops imitating)

Tell them to come fuck me up; I'll be outside waiting on them.

Candle is looking at them in shock, Jackie and Jalen ashamed; they're stuck in the crowd.

Saalim, Gogo and Seven come. Candle looks at Saalim scared but can't take her eyes of him, reminiscing.

GB #1

Yo what up?! If it ain't about GB gang,
it ain't about shit! What up?!

GB #2

He called his brothers. Pussy ass af!
Fuck y'all af! GB for life!

Saalim smiles, puts his hand in his pocket, stops everybody's heart, Candle's.

GIRL

Oh shit, he's about to shoot!

Saalim takes his hand out, points his finger like a gun at the GBs.

SAALIM

Pa! Pow! (laughs) Pussies.

DEVONTE

Who the fuck are you calling pussy?!
I'll take a real gun and blow your
fucking head off, African!

SAALIM

I doubt it; you can't even shoot people
in Call of Duty.

Crowd says, "Ohhhh!".

SEVEN

We're going to kill every single one of
y'all, mosquitoes!

GB #2

Fuck you, African!

SEVEN

Yea, I'm African, so what, American?!

As they're about to plunge on each other. TSSS, a loud blow of a whistle. Two security guards, man, African-American (30s) jump between them.

SECURITY GUARD #1
(glares at the gang members)
Ladies and gentlemen, it's a hallway,
make way for all.

Crowd gets moving. GBs walk away.

DEVONTE
(walking, points at Saalim)
I'm going to fuck you up.

Saalim smiles, blows him a kiss.

KOJO
(to Devonte)
Guess who's going to kill you?

Kojo points at himself.

SECURITY GUARD #2
Okay, who should I suspend first?

The GBs keep walking.

The afs start their walk; Candle, Jalen and Jackie are walking on the opposite side of the hallway. Candle is staring at Saalim.

Saalim's sees her. They read eyes, surprised, guilty Saalim, scared Candle.

Candle rolls her eyes away. Saalim keeps his on her.

Candle glances at him to catch him still staring, rolls her eyes, determined to keep them there.

They arrive to the exit door; Candle, Jalen and Jackie take a seat. The afs walk out, Saalim looking at Candle.

CANDLE'S POV, Saalim is still looking at her when he gets outside. Candle quickly turns her head.

EXT. IN FRONT OF JEFFERSON HIGH - MOMENTS LATER

Saalim hides behind a parked car; he watches Candle gets inside a cop car. The cop car gets going, he sees Johnny in the passenger seat.

Saalim is catching his breath, staring at space, licks his lips.

INT. HOSPITAL, ETOR'S ROOM - NIGHT

Grandmother has both eyes on sleeping Etor.

Gogo (holds a backpack) and Saalim come. Gogo gives Grandmother the backpack, she almost drop it (so heavy).

GOGO (Nigerian language)
Fifty thousands.

Grandmother opens the bag, her old heart almost stops at the money.

GRANDMOTHER (Nigerian language)
Thank you; you boys are God's son.

The boys look at Gogo for a bit, say BYE to Granmother, walk to

HALLWAY:

SAALIM
What did she say?

GOGO
Thank you, we're sons of God.

Saalim thinks, confused.

EXT. JEFFERSON HIGH - DAY

Saalim enters JEFFERSON HIGH through an open window. He scans the school, walks to stairs, sits.

He's looking at the closed door of the auditorium. After a little bit, Candle comes followed by Karl.

Saalim is guilty yet *amazed* by Candle. Karl opens the auditorium for Candle, walks away.

Saalim walks to the door of the auditorium, stares at Candle who sits inside on her phone. He stares.

KARL (O. S.)
What are you doing, are you in the play?!

SAALIM
Nah, I was just walking by, took a look inside.

KARL

Don't make that wrong decision. It'll be the worst one you'll ever make in your life. You will regret it. She's not a good choice, she's not from here.

SAALIM (Arabic)

I already made that decision.

Saalim walks away.

KARL

You were just speaking English.

Saalim sits back on the stairs, he watches Karl looks inside the auditorium then leave.

Saalim walks back to the door of the auditorium. Candle collides with him as she walks out. They stare at each other; Candle takes her eyes of his.

CANDLE

(low, looking down)

Sorry.

SAALIM

(searches for her eyes)

It's okay.

Candle quickly continues her walk, Saalim follows her.

SAALIM

What's your play about?

Candle stops walking, looks at him, surprised of his question. She quickly turns her head, walks at her highest speed. Saalim desperately watches her walk.

INT. COP CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Johnny and Rivera are patrolling the area. Johnny sees an AF, 12, wears all blue (like Saalim).

JOHNNY

(knows he's not)

It's him, stop the car!

Johnny rushes OUT to the af, grabs his neck. The af is scared, Johnny squeezes his neck tighter. People passing by are staring.

RIVERA (O. S.)

Scott, let him go!... Let him go, Scott!

Johnny feels bad, lets him go, the af runs.

INT. COP CAR (MOVING) - MINUTES LATER

RIVERA

You have to stop doing that! You can stop every single af you see!

JOHNNY

He's out there, I have to catch him!

RIVERA

Before you stop somebody, make sure he has all his characteristics, 5'11 and all those shits. If it's not him let him go right away! You're making me look bad; you're making us look bad! (BEAT) Look kid, I know this af hurt but you got to ease up or you're going to get us in trouble.

Johnny looks at the road, an af passes, he quickly looks back at the af then at Rivera who shakes his head.

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH, HALLWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Candle is depressingly walking. She stops by the exit door, sits. Suddenly her face lights up, she sees Saalim outside passing a soccer ball with a STUDENT- ATHLETE, (16), African.

She looks outside full of afs and GBs, looks at the spot where she was robbed, she SIGHS, walks to

IN FRONT OF JEFFERSON HIGH:

She arrives to Saalim's back.

CANDLE

It's about...

Saalim turns around.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

... two boys who meet in a pre-cell, become friends. They find out they're in opposite gang, turn to enemies. (MORE)

CANDLE (CONT'D)

In the end one of them dies but (smiles)
the other spread peace by getting with
his sister. After all no more gang.

SAALIM

That's good, you got a lot under them
nice well combed hair of yours.

(to Student-athlete)

I'll see you later, keep working on that
first touch.

STUDENT-ATHLETE (Ghana language)

Bitch.

Saalim understands, laughs at him.

CANDLE

Thank you.

SAALIM

When is it? I want to watch it.

CANDLE

We just started rehearsals; we don't
have a date yet, should be around...
late Februaries.

SAALIM

Hook me up with that free ticket. So,
you wrote a play for Jefferson High,
that's nice.

CANDLE

Ms. Crawford asked me to.

SAALIM

You could have said no. Sounds like a
good play, creative, perfect ending
except for the death. I hope the end of
your play will become real life one day.

Candle is amazed by his words.

CANDLE

It will, in heaven. (pauses) I'm sorry
about---

SAALIM

It's okay, don't worry about it.

CANDLE

You reminded of somebody who did something bad to me. You're surely not him, you're nice to me.

SAALIM

It's okay, I understand. It's impossible not to be nice to you. (smiles) You're nice to me too.

They stare at each other, it gets awkward. Saalim laughs a little, she does so too. Candle smiles a bit nervously, Saalim smiles back.

Candle gets a text from Johnny, "Where are you", she glances the cop car, replies. Saalim watches her, mouth opened.

CANDLE

Sorry, I have to go, (points at the cop car) my ride is here.

She waves at Saalim.

SAALIM

Alright, I'll see you around, nice talking to you, Candle.

Candle starts walking, stops, turns, confused.

CANDLE

How do you know my name?

SAALIM

Two people in your play told me... Jalen and his girl.

CANDLE

Oh, okay.

Candle walks, stops, turns again.

CANDLE

What's your name again?

SAALIM

Saalim.

CANDLE

(dreams)

Saalim. Bye Saalim, nice meeting you.

SAALIM

Me too, tomorrow Candle.

CANDLE

Tomorrow?!

They share their first laugh.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

How do you know you're going to see me tomorrow?

SAALIM

Because I want to see you tomorrow and make sure I will.

Candle sends him a flirty look. She finally walks to the cop car; she looks back at Saalim who's looking at her. They exchange smile.

Saalim walks to the STREETS, kicking, and juggling his ball. He dials Gogo's number.

SAALIM

Yo, I'm about to go kick, come through.

GOGO (V. O.)

Nah, I'm done with that shit.

SAALIM

Don't say you're done because Coach kicked you off the team. We can look for another team; I'll play there with you.

GOGO (V. O.)

No, I don't play soccer no more. (BEAT)
Peace, I'm an af---

SAALIM

Don't listen to fucking Seven, man! You can do both.

GOGO (V. O.)

No, if I want to make lots of money, I'm talking about lots of money, be there anytime my brothers need me, I can't do both. Kicking a ball will be a distraction for me to be what I want to be, an af. You got to quit soccer (MORE)

GOGO (CONT'D) (V. O.)

too. Imagine Peace, you'll make more money and what if you're at a game and we need you.

SAALIM

Nah, I can't quit soccer. If I'm in a game y'all need me, I'll leave my game for y'all.

GOGO

Alright. I respect your choice. I got to go.

SAALIM

I'll catch you later, af.

Saalim hangs up, keeps walking.

INT. JUSTIN'S CAR (PARKED) - DAY

Candle is on top of Justin on the driver's seat, they're kissing, Candle is caressing his biceps.

Kissing, Johnny runs his hand from her thigh to her back... goes under her shirt... caresses her back... undo her bra. He ends the kiss, or saves it, takes her bra off... cups her breast under her shirt.

Candle holds her shirt up giving Justin her breast to cup. He satisfies her.

Justin cups one, starts sucking the other one, Candle MOANS.

Candle pushes Justin's head, his hand off her breast.

CANDLE

Baby not now, not here. We have class in a few.

Justin tries to go back on her breast, Candle stops him.

JUSTIN

We can skip class and go somewhere else.

CANDLE

No, you have to go to English.
(caresses his face) Later, ok?

JUSTIN

Later, when?! You're always busy, never have time for me! I want to cut class to be with you, spend more time alone but you said no!

CANDLE

Aww, don't get mad Justin. You don't have to cut class; we spend plenty of time alone. I'll come to your house later. Sorry, I'll try to give you some more time alone with me, okay?

JUSTIN

Yeah, come to my house later, I haven't had sex in two weeks.

CANDLE

You're nasty, (laughs) you're mad because we don't have sex enough. I'll come to your house later to satisfy your hunger of me.

She's kissing him, Justin cups her breast again. She likes it but

BEEEP, she hits the car horn.

JUSTIN

What the fuck!

CANDLE

(laughs)

I told you later, be patient.

She's putting on her bra, Justin watches, smirks.

BEEEP, she hits the horn again.

Justin gets surprised, she laughs.

JUSTIN

I hate you.

Candle laughs, looks at him deeply.

CANDLE

I love you.

Justin is stunned by her words. Candle knows but kisses him.

CANDLE

It's time to go; we can't be late for class again.

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Saalim sits on the stairs looking at the auditorium door.

Candle comes, followed by Karl. Karl opens the door for her, leaves.

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH, AUDITORIUM - LATER

Saalim walks to Candle.

SAALIM

What up? I was waiting on you.

CANDLE

(excited)

Hi, you were waiting for me?

SAALIM

Yeah, told you I'll make sure I see you today. I want to read your script.

CANDLE

Oh, thanks.

Saalim sits next to her, she hands him the script.

SAALIM

I'm going to read (reads) "Jordan and Nduka" later.

CANDLE

Okay, thanks. Why not now?

SAALIM

I want to talk to you. (deep look) You finished with school and came straight here?

CANDLE

Yes. Aren't you supposed to be in class?

SAALIM
I don't got no class.

CANDLE
How come?

SAALIM
I got expelled.

CANDLE
Oh my God, when?

SAALIM
This year, in December.

CANDLE
Look for another school.

SAALIM
Nah, I'm good.

CANDLE
Are you sure?

SAALIM
Yeah, I'm sure. School is not for me,
you can make money without going to
school. Thank you for checking on me.

CANDLE
You welcome.

They gazed with something that staring to build in their eyes.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
Where are you from?

SAALIM
Somali.

CANDLE
Cool place, I like the thing the girls
put on their head.

SAALIM
The "hijab", yeah, it's cute.

CANDLE
Very.

SAALIM

Where you from?... Where's your ancestor from?

CANDLE

Why, I can't be born in a cool place too?

SAALIM

America is a cool place, with lots of stars, like you.

Candle smiles.

CANDLE

My mom has English descendants, my dad Italian's.

SAALIM

You be drinking that tea after eating that pizza.

Candle laughs.

CANDLE

Can I ask you a question?

SAALIM

Yeah.

CANDLE

Why do you want to read my script? I mean you're for... my script. When you can be somewhere else.

SAALIM

I want to read it to entertain myself. That's why people read, right? (pauses) That story catches attention, Candle.
(OFF Candle pleased to hear her name from him)
Two rival gang members become friends in a pre-cell, find out they're in opposite gang, so start fighting. One dies but in the end the other one "unrealistically" ends the rivalry, gets with the other's sister. People would want to read that, especially people like us in Washington Heights... Ralph Av., it's about us. You wrote us, for us.

CANDLE

"Wrote us, for us" " Catches attention".
That's the best things I heard anybody
said about my play. Thank you, Saalim.

SAALIM

No. Thank you. You wrote a lot of play?

Candle shows three fingers.

SAALIM

What else do you write about?

CANDLE

Romance in like high school setting.

SAALIM

Okay, you write about the viewers, I
feel you.

CANDLE

Exactly.

KARL (O. S.)

Excuse me; can I help you, sir?

CANDLE

No, it's okay Karl, Saalim is with me.

Karl glares at Saalim, Saalim glares back. Karl stands in
the back.

SAALIM

(whispers)

Thank you, he could have arrest me.

Candle laughs.

Jackie and Jalen, followed by two other members of the
play walk in. They're surprised, not happy to see Saalim
here.

CANDLE

I have to go start rehearsal.

SAALIM

I can stay and watch?

CANDLE

Sure, we'll talk later.

SAALIM

Alright, go do you.

INT. JEFERSSON HIGH, AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

Rehearsal: KAJOULOYE, 16, Nigerian, plays "Nduka" and Jalen plays "Jordan" are on stage in the made police office.

KAJOULOYE (as Nduka)
(on the phone)

Yea... Bye.

JALEN (as Jordan)
They're coming to pick you up?

KAJOULOYE
Yea, my dad is coming.

JALEN
Good, we're both good. We just wasted an hour of our life in there, but we're good, our folks are coming for us, that's why we got folks.

Kajouloye, or Nduka, laughs.

KAJOULOYE
That hour wasn't wasted; we met each other, no homo.

JALEN
True. You never told me your name, what's your name?

KAJOULOYE
Nduka, you?

JALEN
Nduka?! What the fuck! You're African?!

KAJOULOYE
Yeah, I'm African; you got a problem with that?!

JALEN
You better not be a "soldier", I'm a B-99, homie!

KAJOULOYE

(fake punches him)

Pobb!

JALEN

You hit like my mother, come on Nduka!

CANDLE

Jalen, that's not in the script.

KAJOULOYE (as himself)

You want me to hit you for real?

JALEN

Yea, show me that African strength.

CANDLE

Stop fooling around boys. (checks her phone) Oh, look at the time, that's enough for today, we'll pick it up from here tomorrow.

Students are emptying the stage. Jackie gestures Candle to come to her.

JACKIE

Candle, why is he here?

CANDLE

Who, Saalim?

JACKIE

You know his name?!

CANDLE

Yea, he's my friend.

JACKIE

Your friend?! Candle, he's an af.

CANDLE

I know. He has interest in my play; he wants to read the script and wanted to watch the rehearsal. Why wouldn't I let him?

Saalim is looking at them, knows he's the topic.

JACKIE

Because he's an af. He has no interest in your play, he wants something from you, wants to rob you, or do worse.

CANDLE

Just because he's an af that doesn't mean he can't be interested in my play, only wants to rob me.

JACKIE

Candle... Yes, it does, all they do is rob people. Please don't talk to him, he's dangerous.

CANDLE

He probably is. I don't care, he's my friend, I don't think he wants to hurt me. I can't say I'm not going to talk to somebody, who wants to read my script, because he's in a gang, it wouldn't feel right. Thanks for caring about me; I'll keep both eyes on him.

JACKIE

Okay, fine. But be careful. (looks at Saalim) I'll keep both my eyes on him too for you.

Candle walks to Saalim who smiles.

SAALIM

I liked the show. I can't wait to go home and read the rest. You direct good. I'm telling you that play is going to be something.

CANDLE

Thanks, you really think so?

SAALIM

I don't think so. I know so and you do too.

CANDLE

Thank you, Saalim. Heaven must be missing an angel.

SAALIM

Make that two angels.

KARL (O. S.)

It's time to leave.

INT. HALLWAY - LATER

Candle and Saalim walks with everybody staring.

SAALIM

After reading "Jordan and Nduka", I want to read your other works.

CANDLE

Okay, I'll bring the scripts for you tomorrow. That's really sweet but my other scripts are not about...

SAALIM

Gangs. I don't care, I like one of your script, I'm sure I will like the other ones too. You said they're romance, I'm a romantic man.

CANDLE

(sarcastic)

I'm sure you are.

SAALIM

I am. Ask my exes, they're all over the school. (points at one girl) That's my ex.

CANDLE

(knows she's not)

Oh, really?

SAALIM

Yea. What else do you do beside plays?

CANDLE

Umm. (laughs) Nothing really, hang out with friends, watch movies.

SAALIM

What's your favorite movie?

CANDLE

I don't know, I have a few...

SAALIM

I'm listening.

CANDLE
Titanic, you would guess, "The
Notebook"---

SAALIM
I would guess.

Candle laughs.

CANDLE
50 First Dates---

SAALIM
Never seen that one.

CANDLE
You should watch it, very creative. I
like Pursuit of Happiness and, oh,
Casablanca would be my favorite. You've
see it?

SAALIM
Nah, I don't speak Spanish.

Candle laughs. They stop their walk by the exit door.

CANDLE
It's old but it's very good. What's
your favorite movie?

SAALIM
City of God.

CANDLE
Yea, that's a great movie with a chain
of actions. The writer knows how to
glue the viewer's eyes to the screen.

SAALIM
Yea, I held my pee the whole movie.

Candle laughs.

SAALIM (CONT'D)
I like how laugh.

She smiles.

SAALIM (CONT'D)
Your smile too.

She blushes. The VIEW of the cop car coming kills the moment.

CANDLE

I have to go, my brother is here. The cop car, yea, he's a cop, so be careful.

Saalim fakes a laugh.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Are you going to make sure you see me tomorrow?

SAALIM

You can bet I will. Tomorrow, Angel.
(BEAT) Don't forget the scripts.

CANDLE

I won't. Tomorrow, Angel.

SAALIM

Hold on. (points at a girl) You see that shwaty?

She nods.

SAALIM

That's my ex.

Candle cracks up.

CANDLE

You're something else.

Saalim watches exit, enter the car, he sees Johnny.

INT. JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Naked Justin and Candle are kissing under the covers.

CANDLE

You're happy? You have what you wanted.
Me.

Justin takes her lips back.

CANDLE

(lips locked to his)

Mhmmm.

INT. JUSTIN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Justin lies on his back; Candle rests her head on him.
Candle kisses his cheek.

CANDLE

Remember what I told you in the car?

JUSTIN

(he does remember)

No. What did you tell me?

CANDLE

Look me in the eyes.

Justin looks into her eyes.

CANDLE

Now, say you love me back.

JUSTIN

Can... Candle...

CANDLE

It's okay, it's okay.

She kisses him, rests her head back on his chest,
caresses it.

INT. SAALIM'S APT, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Saalim lies on the sheets spread on the floor, reads the
script, lighted by his phone. The Old Man on the couch is
no longer sick.

Knock on the door.

Saalim goes open the door, Gogo.

GOGO

They're in the McDonald's, waiting on us.

SAALIM

Waiting on us for what?

GOGO

Put your shoes on and let's go.

SAALIM

Nah, I can't, I'm doing something.

GOGO

Doing what?!

SAALIM

I'm reading something.

GOGO

Reading something?! Peace, let's go.

SAALIM

I told you I can't go. I'm busy and I'm tired.

GOGO

Your brothers are calling you and you're saying you can't go.

SAALIM

It's not like y'all need me, y'all just going to chill at the McDonald's then go make money, there's enough af over there to do that. What difference is it going to make if I'm not there? Look, if it was a fight I would go. (BEAT) My bad, I'm not feeling it today.

GOGO

Alright, they're not going to be happy with you not being there.

SAALIM

They'll deal with it. Be careful, alright?

Gogo shows his gun. Saalim forces a smile.

INT. COP CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Rivera STOPS the car at a McDonald's parking lot.

RIVERA

What do you want?

JOHNNY

No, thank you.

RIVERA

What do you want, Scott?

JOHNNY

Get me a cheeseburger, no pickles,
please.

Rivera walks out. Johnny stares at the small crucifix.

INT. MCDONALD'S - CONTINUOUS

Gogo, Seven, Kojo, Slim Af, Nunu and three PLUS AF (16)
eat inside.

Rivera walks pass the afs, avoids eye contacts.

KOJO

(fake coughing)

I hate cops.

Some of the afs laugh. Rivera ignores, orders.

NUNU

That's the cop who was with Scott the
other day.

The afs look at the view of Rivera's back as he waits for
his food, Seven nods.

INT. COP CAR (PARKED) - CONTINUOUS

Johnny is asleep.

INT. MCDONALD'S - CONTINUOUS

Rivera walks out, Nunu finds his eyes.

Rivera walks in the PARKING LOT to the cop car (a bit far).

The nine afs circle him.

Rivera drops the food, reaches for his gun.

Nunu stabs him from behind!

Rivera turns to Nunu.

WHOOSH, WHOOSH! Nunu stabs him again, he falls.

Nunu ties the Nigerian flag around Rivera's neck.

INT. COP CAR (PARKED) - MINUTES LATER

Johnny wakes up, shakes himself, looks to his left at Rivera's body.

JOHNNY

Shit!

No keys, he can't drive.

JOHNNY

Fuck!

Johnny rushes to the

PARKING LOT:

JOHNNY (to talkie walkie)

(running)

My partner was just murdered in my absence, by afs. I'm going after the afs... or af. No vehicle, back up needed.

TALKIE- WALKIE (V. O.)

Stay in place Officer, no idea of the number of afs. I repeat stay in place, Officer. Back up on way.

Johnny gets to the

STREETS:

Johnny sees the afs walking, runs after them, gunned.

POWW! He shoots a PLUS af.

The afs run.

POWW, POWW! Running Gogo and Seven fire back, misses. (Hoodie on, hard to see their face in the dark).

Johnny keeps running.

POWW! He shoots Nunu.

Intersection, Gogo and Seven run left, Kojo and Slim Af run right. PLUS af #2 (wears all blue) and PLUS af #3 keep running straight.

Johnny follows the PLUS afs.

POWW, POWW! He shoots the PLUS afs, they go down.

We HEAR their pain.

Johnny runs to PLUS af #2, looks into his eyes, reminisces,
SAALIM'S EYES.

JOHNNY

Danm!

He runs in search of the other afs. They're nowhere to be
found, stops running.

WHOOP, WHOOP! Police sirens.

TALKIE-WALKIE (V. O.)

Officer Scott?

Johnny ignores.

TALKIE- WALKIE (V. O.) (CONT'D)

Officer Scott?...

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH, AUDIROTIIUM - DAY

Candle hands Saalim her scripts.

CANDLE

(points to one script)

I think that's my best one.

SAALIM

(reads) "Doing Homework On a Tree",
nice title. I thought "Jordan and Nduka"
was your best one.

CANDLE

Okay, that's best second best one.

They laugh.

SAALIM

What is it about?

CANDLE

A cool kid who falls for a disable girl.

SAALIM

Oh, I'm reading that first. Then (reads)
"The Party", then (reads) "First Day".
I enjoyed "Jordan and Nduka" last night.
You just got yourself a new fan.

Candle blushes.

CANDLE

How good are you in soccer? I can be your new fan.

SAALIM

I'm alright.

CANDLE

Alright? Did you play for Jefferson?

Saalim nods.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Sucks that you're expelled.

SAALIM

It's alright.

(jokes)

High school soccer sucks. I play for a club.

CANDLE

What club? You're reading my scripts. I want to know about you and soccer.

SAALIM

Chicago Inferno, they're in the third division. We're in fifth place right now, soon to be first, because you know.

(jokingly brags)

I play for them.

(unsatisfied)

I scored seven goals, three assists.

CANDLE

Third division?! So you play with the big boys and you're scoring, giving assists. That's good for your age. I don't even know your age. How old are you?

SAALIM

Seventeen. You?

CANDLE

Seventeen too. I'm your number one fan, youth superstar. I'm going to need your autograph.

SAALIM

Right after I get yours.

They exchange smiles.

Few students walk in.

CANDLE

Rehearsal time. Are you staying to watch again?

SAALIM

I'm your number one fan, wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH, AUDITORIUM - LATER

Saalim, sits next to Candle, watches the rehearsal. Candle gazes him, gets her eyes back on the rehearsal.

REHEARSAL:

KAJOULOYE (as his character "Nduka")
Yea, I've seen you around, you work at Wendy's.

JACKIE (as her character)
Yes, I do.

KAJOULOYE

I always wanted to talk to you at Wendy's but you always busy working. So I just watch you... you look good in that uniform.

SAALIM

(whispers to Candle)
Shouldn't she look more...?

CANDLE

(whispers)
More what?

SAALIM

You said Desire is a shy girl.
Shouldn't she look shyer?

CANDLE

"Desire", you're a shy girl, a hot guy like Nduka is flirting with you, (MORE)

CANDLE (CONT'D)

Look nervous. You're into him but uncomfortable, you understand?

JACKIE

I got you.

SAALIM

(whispers)

Just like how you be uncomfortable around me.

CANDLE

(whispers)

Oh please.

(to Kajouloye)

Start from "Yea, I've seen you around...".

KAJOULOYE (as his character "Nduka")
Yea, I've seen you around, you work at Wendy's.

JACKIE (as her character)

Yes, I do.

KAJOULOYE

I always wanted to talk to you at Wendy's but you always busy working. So I just watch you... you look good in that uniform.

CANDLE

Perfect, that was perfect. It's time; we'll pick it up from here tomorrow. Great job today, guys.

INT. JEFERSSON HIGH, HALLWAY - LATER

Saalim walks with Candle.

CANDLE

Thanks for your little inputs.

SAALIM

No problem. It's my job, I'm the assistant director.

CANDLE

Assistant director? That's nice, I have an assistant director. (BEAT) I think it's really sweet that you come to the rehearsals and help. But do you really want to do this?

SAALIM

Yea, I want to do this. If I didn't want to do it, I wouldn't do it. Why are you asking me that?

CANDLE

They said---

SAALIM

Who's "they"?

CANDLE

The students in the play keep telling me... that you're bad; you want something from me, that's why you come to the rehearsals.

Saalim stops walking.

SAALIM

And you believe them.

CANDLE

No.

SAALIM

You don't? Why did you ask me if I really want to come to the rehearsals?

CANDLE

I don't know. I'm sorry; they keep talking in my head. I know that you don't want anything from me. It's that, they keep confusing me.

SAALIM

You're confused about what? An af wanting to read your scripts.

CANDLE

I'm so sorry, Saalim. I know there's nothing else behind you asking for my scripts, coming to the rehearsals. (MORE)

CANDLE (CONT'D)

You wouldn't do anything bad to me. I'm sorry for the little doubt I had.

SAALIM

It's okay; I understand your little doubt.

CANDLE

Really?

SAALIM

Yea, really. I feel you; your first impression of me was me beefing with some GBs.

CANDLE

No, I feel bad because I had doubt that you would do something to me.

SAALIM

It's okay, Candle. Don't worry about it.

They walk.

CANDLE

"Don't worry about it". You're nice.

SAALIM

Me?! Not really.

CANDLE

You are. Why do you say you're not?

SAALIM

I've done bad things.

CANDLE

You're nice to me.

SAALIM

You don't mind being friends with an af?

CANDLE

Of course not. You're nice to me, you're a good friend, we have fun talking.

SAALIM

I've done really messed up things.

CANDLE

I don't care and you sound guilty for doing them that means you're a good boy. It's okay; forget about what you've done.

They stop by the exit door.

SAALIM

I killed.

CANDLE

Why, was it anger... self-defense?

SAALIM

For my friend. I was put in a situation where I had to kill or my friend would get hurt. I grabbed the gun thinking, if I end his life, it would feel bad. But if I let them take my friend without doing everything I can, it would feel worse. So I killed. Life is fucked up, you know, I killed to help him, a split second after, he's killed. (sighs) I've done so many more wrong things, Candle. I stabbed to help, robbed to help or take care of myself... eat. All my life I've been hurting people for my needs or my brother's. I get what I need but it hurts because the reason why I get it's because I hurt somebody.

CANDLE

Saalim you're not bad, you're a good boy put into a tough life. You've done bad things because you're trying to survive or help a friend, help yourself. Some people don't do bad things because they want but because they have to, forced to, some... you.

SAALIM

Thank you for saying that.

CANDLE

You don't have to continue living like this.

SAALIM

What other choice I got?

CANDLE

Stop being an af, look for a job, go back to school.

SAALIM

It's not that easy to get a job but as soon as I get one I'm done with selling weed. I'm already done with robbing. I'll stop being an af. But the GBs, they want me.

CANDLE

Ignore them, avoid them, say sorry and if you're not an af, I'm sure they'll leave you. Life can be tough, if you try to survive the right way, do the right things, God will help you, protect you.

Saalim grabs the rosary under her coat.

SAALIM

I hope so. I'll try, hope He'll help me.

CANDLE

He will. Come here.

Candle hugs him. His perfume brings her back to the robbery, she steps back.

SAALIM

What happened, I'm that bad of a hugger?

CANDLE

No, you're great.

Candle gets back in his arms, long, tight hug.

CANDLE'S POV, the cop car arrives.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

My brother is here.

SAALIM

Alright, tomorrow, Candle.

CANDLE

Tomorrow, Saalim.

INT. CANDLE'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Candle lies on her back, dreaming. Her phone RINGS, "My love".

JUSTIN (V. O.)

This is the fifth time I call you! Why didn't you pick the phone up?!

CANDLE

Jus, don't get mad. You know I was at rehearsal.

JUSTIN (V. O.)

Was at rehearsal! Where are you now!?

CANDLE

Home.

JUSTIN (V. O.)

When you were done with rehearsal, why didn't you check your phone to see if you have any missed calls from me?! Or actually call me.

CANDLE

Justin, I'm sorry. Please calm down.

JUSTIN

Get ready; I'm coming to pick you up for my game. Hurry up!

She hangs up.

INT. ADAMS HIGH, BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

Candle is watching Justin who's in the middle of a game. She's looking at him, confused.

She rolls her eyes to the Jefferson players on the bench.

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH, AUDITORIUM - DAY

Saalim enters, smiles at the view of Candle's back, walks to her.

CANDLE

Hi, Saalim!

SAALIM

Hi, Candle. You want to see a magic trick?

CANDLE

Sure, from who?

SAALIM

From who? From me, I'm a magician,
watch this.

Saalim opens his empty hand, smiles. He closes his hand,
opens it, a pack of weed is on his palm.

CANDLE

Nice, don't show that trick to my
brother.

Saalim laughs, closes his hand, opens it, money is in his
palm.

Candle claps.

CANDLE

Nice trick but you said you were going
to stop.

SAALIM

Stop what? Oh, I said as soon as I get a
job. Listen, I applied for some places
today.

CANDLE

That's good to hear. About school, are
you going back to school next year?

SAALIM

Yea, I'm going to look for a new school
next year. Thank you for helping me open
my eyes.

CANDLE

You're welcome.

SAALIM

It feels... I don't know... odd, me
changing.

CANDLE

For now it does but remember you're
living the right way now.

Saalim nods.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

I have to tell you something.

SAALIM

What?

CANDLE

I have a boyfriend.

SAALIM

Alright. What's your man's name?

CANDLE

Justin.

SAALIM

Who? Saalim? Yea, he's a good man, cute too.

Candle laughs.

SAALIM

You're stupid.

They stare at each other, it gets awkward. Saalim smiles, she smiles back.

SAALIM

I read "Doing Homework On a Tree" last night.

CANDLE

Oh, really?!

SAALIM

Yeah...

EXT. PARTON AND 11TH AVE. CORNER - DAY

The afs are standing, quiet, smoking.

After a bit, the GB (4) members are walking towards them.

DEVONTE

(shouting)

Yo, what up?! Y'all Africans want to handle that beef right now?!

Afs and GBs run to each other.

Clashes.

Gogo punches Devonte. Devonte strikes back.

Seven grabs GB #1, drops him on the concrete.

Kojo is on the floor, getting pounded by GB #2.

GB #3 tries to punch Slim Af. Slim Af tilts his head, punches him twice. GB #3 grabs him, they wrestle standing up.

Gogo is now kicking Devonte on the floor.

Slim Af is on top of GB #3 hammering his face. From the corner of his eyes he sees Kojo losing his fight to GB #2.

Slim Af stops his beating, attempts to help Kojo. His opponent (GB#3) pulls him.

WHOOSH! Slim Af stabs GB #3.

GB #3

HAAWwww!

Slim Af gets to GB #2 who's beating Kojo.

WHOOSH! Slim Af stabs GB #2.

WHHOOP! Ambulance sirens.

Everything stops, the boys look at their gang mates. GBs and afs run in opposite directions.

Devonte, as he runs, glances at the dead GBs on the concrete.

INT. JEFFERSON HIGH - DAY

We catch Saalim and Candle in the middle of a conversation, standing by the exit door.

CANDLE

I'm going to watch it tonight.

SAALIM

Oh, yea, it comes out today. Tell me if it's good or not. If it's not I don't want to watch it no more.

Candle laughs.

CANDLE

So I taste the cake to see if it's
poison for you.

SAALIM

(imitates Candle)

Exactly.

SAALIM

No, you're coming to watch it with me.

Saalim laughs.

CANDLE

I'm serious, come watch it with me.

SAALIM

I don't know. Let me think... am I busy
tonight?

CANDLE

I'll meet you at the theater at 7:30.

SAALIM

Alright, 7:30.

They see the cop car come outside.

Candle hugs Saalim, exits the school. As usual Saalim
watches her enter the cop car, looks at Johnny.

Saalim's phone RINGS, "GOGO".

GOGO (V. O.)

We were just fighting the GBS! Where the
fuck was you?!

SAALIM

Y'all good?!

GOGO (V. O.)

Yea, we're good. Slim Af stabbed two of
them. I was fucking Devonte up! Where
was you?! You should have been with us!

SAALIM

I was chilling with a friend.

GOGO (V. O.)

Next time, you got to be with us.

SAALIM

Y'all still going to see Etor today?

GOGO (V. O.)

Yea. We're in my house, come through.

SAALIM

I'm coming right now.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

The afs enter Etor's room.

GOGO

What up, warrior?

ETOR

(weak voice)

Alive. Still holding.

SAALIM

That's it. Nice to see you. You're better than last time I saw you. Keep holding, you'll be good in a little bit.

Etor nods. He looks at their faces.

ETOR

Y'all was fighting?

GOGO

Yea, we were just fighting the GBs, Slim Af stabbed two of them.

Etor glances at Slim Af.

ETOR

Y'all got to stop with them shits.

GOGO

Whatcu mean? You see what they did to you?! And all the other shits they did to us, you saying we got to stop!

SEVEN

Ain't nobody going to stop! Only a pussy boy will stop! We're not pussy! (MORE)

SEVEN (CONT'D)

My first day of school in America, them motherfuckers jumped me, robbed me in the bathroom! I want to kill every single one of them! They've done fucked up shits to us, Etor! We'll never stop fighting them! (BEAT) What the fuck is wrong with this af?! They hit him in the head or something?!

ETOR

Don't call me, af!

SEVEN

If I can't call you af, don't talk to me no more! You're weak, because you got hit, you don't want to be an af, no more.

Seven exits. The other afs follow him, not Saalim.

Etor holds his jaw, in pain.

SAALIM

Get your rest, man. (deep look) That's two afs out.

ETOR

You're out?! I'm proud of you... happy for you. You're out, Somali?! (closes his fist) Put it there.

Saalim pounds him.

ETOR (CONT'D)

You're making the right decision. Them af's shit ain't good. Try talking to the others.

SAALIM

Yea, I'll try. Don't listen to Seven, you're not weak.

Gogo is looking at them from outside the room, hears everything, walks away.

ETOR

Stay and chill with me.

Saalim sits on the bed.

ETOR (CONT'D)

How's the bitches out there, still bad?

Saalim laughs.

SAALIM

Hell yea, they get more bad every day.

ETOR

Danm! My dick needs to get fixed up soon.

They laugh.

INT. MOVIE THEATER - NIGHT

Candle and Saalim are watching the MOVIE, they glance at each other from time to time.

They caught themselves eying each other, smile, laugh.

TIME CUT:

Movie is done.

SAALIM

It was good, good fights. I didn't think the Albanian man would trade them, though.

CANDLE

I saw it coming.

SAALIM

Yea, right. What was your favorite part?

CANDLE

When the Albanian traded them, shot the boss. Didn't see that coming.

They laugh.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

You?

SAALIM

When Jason did Chan-Juan. That Chinese girl is bad!

CANDLE

Of course...

SAALIM

You know what made the movie good,
though?

CANDLE

I'm listening.

SAALIM

Watching it with you.

She smiles, bits her lip.

CANDLE

(pulls Saalim's arm)
Let's go watch "Received".

SAALIM

Like sneak in?

Candle pulls him of his seat.

They pace walk to another movie room. A THEATER
STAFF, 22, caught them.

THEATER STAFF

Aye, weren't you two just inside that
room?!

Candle stops, tries turning her head.

SAALIM

(holds her head)
Don't let her see your face.

Saalim pulls her arm. They run to the room, holding hands.
They get

INSIDE OTHER THEATER ROOM:

They're laughing.

THEATER STAFF #2, man, 22.

THEATER STAFF #2

Tickets, please?

Saalim is like, "Oh no, they got us".

CANDLE

We just gave them to you, we walked out.
Remember?

THEATER STAFF #2

Yea, my bad.

They sit, laughs under their breath.

The BIG SCREEN shows the movie starting.

GUY (O. S.)

Everybody, shut up, the movie is
starting!

The BIG SCREEN reads "Princess Rachelle".

SAALIM/ CANDLE

Princess Rachelle?!

GUY (O. S.)

Oh, duh.

CANDLE

Waaaw, that's good for us outlaws, wrong
movie.

SAALIM

I thought you were a pro at this, Candle.
Wrong movie room!?

SAALIM

Shut up. So what do we do?

Saalim smirks at her.

TIME CUT:

They're in the last row, leg on other's leg. Candle is
touching the scar on his face.

CANDLE

What happened?

SAALIM

Something stupid. It was back in Somali.
I was playing soccer, I tackled some boy,
hard. He didn't like it. Maansur was his
name. We fought, I beat him up. (MORE)

SAALIM (CONT'D)

When I was walking home, I felt something hot slicing my face. Maansur cut my face with a piece of broken glass. After I left the hospital, he said sorry, I beat him up again. I felt bad for beating him and not forgiving him. One day, I went to go look for him to forgive him, say sorry, they told me he moved. I never had the chance to forgive him for this (points to the scar), I wanted to. Listen to me, Candle, if somebody say sorry to you for whatever what he did, forgive him. If he says sorry it means he feels bad, wish he could go back in time and erase his mistake.

CANDLE

Okay, you're right, forgive and forget. You forgave Maansur, he just doesn't know yet.

Saalim admires her, rolls his eyes, changes expression.

Candle notices there's something wrong with him.

CANDLE

What's wrong?

SAALIM

Nothing. What do you want to do when you grow up?

CANDLE

I want to be a teacher, teach elementary school. I want to get really good at writing, write drama.

SAALIM

You're already good. You'll be your elementary boy's first crush.

She laughs.

CANDLE

You?

SAALIM

I have no idea.

CANDLE

You'll find something, you're a great guy. (pauses) Since we're getting to know each other, I want to tell you about something that happened to me. The first day of rehearsals, I was waiting outside the school for my brother. Two afs, masked, they had knives, took my phone and my bag. One of them held me... he was scared. My brother came, we went after them, I didn't want to, I was scared. The one who held me killed my brother's partner. I saw my brother kill the other one. I saw my brother kill somebody!

Saalim finds his words.

SAALIM

I'm sorry that happened to you, really sorry. Sometimes we're forced to do certain things and hurt others. I'm really sorry, Candle.

CANDLE

Don't say sorry, it wasn't you.

SAALIM

You're okay now, right?

CANDLE

I'm better but it will never stop hurting me. (BEAT) Johnny, my brother, was stabbed before that by an af. He still wants to be a cop after killing, getting stabbed! I'm so scared for him.

SAALIM

... Life is scary. Can we please talk about something nice now?

CANDLE

Sorry. Something nice like what?

SAALIM

You.

CANDLE

Me?! What's so nice about me?

SAALIM

You. Your scripts, the things you say,
you like to laugh, you're funny, you're
nice... you didn't mind talking to an
af---

CANDLE

Ex af.

SAALIM

True... You're pretty, your hair... eyes...
lips... smile. I love being with you for
some reason, you're something else,
Candle.

Candle slowly approaches him, Saalim meets her half way.

They stop when their lips are an inch apart; Saalim
gently pushes her hair back.

They kiss, the BIG SCREEN in the b.g.

Suddenly, Candle unlocks her lips, avoids his eyes.

CANDLE

I'm sorry. Justin.

She gets up.

SAALIM

(grabs her arm)

Candle.

CANDLE

Let me go, please.

Saalim lets her go, she rushes out.

INT. SAALIM'S APT - NIGHT

Saalim lies on the sheets spread on the floor.

KNOCK on the door.

He goes open, sees Gogo from the view hole.

He opens the door.

POBB! Gogo punches him.

SAALIM

Why the fuck you hit me for?!

POBB! Gogo punches Saalim again.

GOGO

For fucking my sister!

SAALIM

My fault, Go.

GOGO

Nah, you're my boy and you're fucking my sister behind back! Hypocrite! I understand the other afs, but not you.

SAALIM

My bad.

GOGO

No, fuck Abeo, she's a bitch. Why you don't want to be an af no more?

SAALIM

Because we're killing people, robbing people, fighting with them GBs over nothing. I can't do this shits no more. You got to stop too, them things ain't right---

GOGO

How you're going to make money?!

SAALIM

Go, there's other way to make money.

GOGO

That's my way, our way. Peace, you're going to leave me?

SAALIM

I'm not leaving you, I'm just not doing af shit no more. Do the same---

GOGO

You're quitting being an af?! You're an hypocrite, a quitter! (shakes his head)
An af is who I am, I don't mind taking shit from people, I don't give a fuck if I take somebody's life, I fight (MORE)

GOGO (CONT'D)

Who I don't like. I don't care! What happened to you, you want to be good all of a sudden?

SAALIM

Every time I did something bad, that voice in my head made me want to kill myself! When you rob somebody, that face he gives you. They're scared of you. I realized I don't have to see that face to take care of myself. (cries) I killed somebody! I don't want to have to do that again.

GOGO

So, you had a heart this whole time, af don't got no heart.

SAALIM

You got one.

GOGO

Nah, not me. Thanks for stabbing Scott for me. I'm sorry about punching you.

SAALIM

We're straight. Gogo---

GOGO

Stop! I respect your decision, respect mine. I'll see you around, Peace.
(forces a laugh) That's why your name is Peace.

Gogo closes his fist, Saalim pounds him.

Saalim rushes to the

LIVING ROOM:

He takes his ball, he's rushing out.

OLD MAN (Arabic)

Where you're going?!

TIME CUT:

Saalim running down the STARIRS, gets to the STREETS. He runs kicking his ball.

INT. TRAIN - LATER

Saalim sits down, staring at the ball at his feet.

GIRL, black, 19.

GIRL

What the fuck is wrong with these afs?
(shakes her head) These afs...

He glances at her.

INT. SOCCER FIELD - LATER THAT NIGHT

Saalim is running down the field, step-overs, scissors, cuts left, right, shoots, misses by an inch.

He drops on his knees.

EXT. IN FRONT A BAR - MORNING

Saalim sits on the sidewalk, ball at his feet. He's watching a soccer game from a TV inside the BAR.

INT. CANDLE'S ROOM - DAY

Candle lies on her bed, holds her phone. She hesitates before calling "My Love".

CANDLE

Good morning, baby.

JUSTIN (V. O.)

(annoyed)

Good morning.

CANDLE

It's nice to hear your voice. What are you doing?

JUSTIN (V. O.)

Good question, I'm playing games, we'll talk later.

CANDLE

Can you stop for a little bit? I want to talk to you.

JUSTIN (V. O.)

No, I'm not going to stop! I told you we'll talk later!

CANDLE

Okay, bye.

Candle calls "Saalim".

Her heart beats faster after each tone.

VOICEMAIL.

The drops her phone then her face on the pillow.

EXT. SOCCER FIELD - AFTERNOON

Chicago Inferno vs Toronto Lynx 0-0

Saalim stands by the corner flag, focused. Yet he hits the ball over everybody's head, out.

Immobile, he looks at the ball he just kicked.

COACH

Saalim, what are you staring at?! Get back in the game!

Saalim remains standing.

He looks up the sky. He jogs to his position.

His teammates CHEERS for him. He gives them a thumb up.

The Toronto goalie hits the goal kick. The ball flies to a Toronto player.

Saalim intercepts the ball, runs, takes on three players.

He shoots from far.

SLOW MOTION, the ball finds the corner of the net.

Saalim runs to his teammates, SCREAMS to rip his lung apart. His teammates get on top of him.

TIME CUT:

The game ended.

Saalim walks to Coach.

SAALIM
I'm going back to high school next year.
I'm done being and af.

Coach pulls him, hugs him.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Saalim finishes dressing up. He checks his phone, "2 missed calls Candle".

He calls her.

SAALIM
Hello, hi Candle. How's your day going?

CANDLE (V. O.)
Okay. Yours?

SAALIM
Alright. You called, I was in a game.

CANDLE (V. O.)
Yeah, I wanted to talk to you.

SAALIM
You can talk to me now.

CANDLE (V. O.)
Face to face.

INT. GAS STATION - AFTERNOON

Masked Gogo and Seven point their gun at the GAS STATION GUY, 40s, who's emptying the cash register.

Gogo checks outside, empty.

GOGO
Hurry up!

The guy speeds up.

He presses a button that's under the counter.

SEVEN
What the fuck is he doing?! Hurry up!

The Gas Station guy is done. Gogo grabs the backpack.
Seven keeps his gun pointed at the guy.

GOGO

Yo, let's go!

SEVEN

(gun pointed at the guy)
Right after I shoot him. Po! Pow!

The guy leans under the counter. Seven and Gogo laughs,
exit.

The guy keeps pressing the button that's under the
counter.

The two afs walk in the STREETS, look around before
rolling their winter hat up.

INT. COP CAR - CONTINUOUS

RADIO (V. O.)

Attention Officers, a robbery was just
alarmed on "Refuel". Attention Officers
a ...

JOE, Johnny's partner, 30s.

JOE

Refuel. That's right around the corner.

Joe speeds the car up.

INT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Gogo hears the SOUND of a moving car behind him. He looks
at his phone for the reflection of behind him.

He sees the cop car, pulls his winter hat down, runs.
Seven does the same.

The cops get out the car, runs after the afs.

Joe jumps on Seven's back, hits his head twice on the
concrete, handcuffs him.

Johnny tackles Gogo on the ground.

Gogo reaches for his knife.

POWW! Johnny shoots Gogo.

JOHNNY

Not this time.

EXT. PARK - LATE AFTERNOON

Candle sits on the grass. She smiles at the VIEW of Saalim coming.

SAALIM

Hi, I wasn't expecting to see you here.

CANDLE

(laughs)

I told you to come.

Saalim sits next to her. They stare. Saalim takes his eyes of her, looks at the park.

SAALIM

That's a nice park.

Candle kisses his lips.

CANDLE

I'm sorry about last night.

SAALIM

It's okay. Justin.

CANDLE

No, forget about Justin. I love being with you. I never had so much fun talking, being with anybody. I never stop thinking about you. Nobody make me smile, laugh the way you do. After I ran away from you, you welcomed me. Nobody has never been so nice to me, ever had so much interest in my scripts... The way you say my name, that smile you always give me. When I'm with you it's something... special. I love it.

Saalim kisses her lips.

SAALIM

(jokes)

You're going to have to dump Justin.

CANDLE

(laughs)

I will after you ask me out.

SAALIM

I'm going to do it quick; I can't wait to kiss you again.

CANDLE

Okay.

SAALIM

Candle Scott... I didn't think somebody like you even existed, what I feel for you... it's like I'm crazy for you but it feels good. That look you be giving me, what you say, you made feel like an angel when I thought of myself as... wicked. When I'm with you I can't stop smiling. Every time I'm with you, I like you more. Now that I met you I don't think I can live without you. You don't know how sad I be getting when your brother comes, when you leave me. I really like you Candle, don't think I will ever stop. You're... I have no words for you. Do you want to be my girl, Candle Scott? You better not say no.

CANDLE

Yes.

They kiss, long, with passion.

TIME CUT:

SUNSET, Candle sits on Saalim.

CANDLE

I told you, I had flat hair when I was young.

SAALIM

What does flat hair even look like?

CANDLE

Your hair is... flat. It doesn't look good.

SAALIM

So, you wore a hat the first day of school in eighth grade. Your hair looks good now. That's my favorite part about you.

CANDLE

I thought you said my lips.

She shows her lips.

SAALIM

Yea, your lips too... everything.

Saalim pushes her hair back. They kiss.

She plays with his hair.

CANLDE

What's wrong?

SAALIM

I got to tell you something. Listen, I like you a lot---

CANDLE

I know you do, I like you a lot too.

SAALIM

I messed up---

CANDLE

It's okay, it's the past.

SAALIM

I liked you since that moment my eyes met yours. From then I was willing to change because of you, for you. I never want to end what we started. Tell me nothing will make you stop liking me, Candle.

CANDLE

Not a thing will make me stop liking you, Saalim.

SAALIM

I'm the one who robbed you. The one who was scared because of guilt and started liking you since then. Your (MORE)

SAALIM (CONT'D)

brother's partner was the one I killed. I'm sorry for robbing you, I needed the money. I'm sorry for killing him ,

(sobs)

I wanted to help Beast. I'm sorry Candle; these things were things I've done when I was blind. Things I thought I had to do. (pauses) Johnny is the one I stabbed. I'm sorry he was going to take Gogo, I couldn't let him. Candle, I feel really bad for doing all this. It was before I met you, I changed now... I changed. I messed up a lot because of how life is; I was forced to do certain things.

CANDLE

(sobs)

It was... you.

SAALIM

(sobs harder)

Candle, please forgive me. It was the past; you know from now on I won't do nothing like that again. I'm really sorry about Johnny... I had to, didn't know what else to do. Please forgive me. Candle, please...

CANDLE

I know you changed, didn't want to do what you've done, it's the past, but (sobs) I don't know (sobs) my brother.

SAALIM

(sobs)

Candle, I'm sorry. I love you.

She looks at Saalim crying.

She hugs him.

CANDLE

(whispers in his ears)

I forgive you. (holds his head) I love you too, Saalim.

They hug again.

SAALIM

(hugging)

Thank you, I knew you would. (stops hugging) You changed my life, Candle, you changed my life. I love you, I will never stop. I'm living for you; I want to make you the happiest person on earth.

CANDLE

By loving me you're making me the happiest person on earth. I love you too.

They're kissing; Saalim gets on top of her.

The passion grows as they suck neck, suck ears...

They start undressing each other with pace.

CANDLE

(as Saalim takes her bra off)

Say you love me again.

SAALIM

I love you, crazy for you, Candle Sarah Scott.

Saalim puts his lip on her breast.

CANDLE

(moans) I love you too, Saalim Fuaad Ciise (moans).

TIME CUT:

Lighted by a streetlight, they're making love, HEAVY BREATHING, MOANING, eyes on eyes.

Saalim slowly speeds up as Candle tries to find her breath. They arrive to the orgasm.

Saalim pushes her hair back.

CANDLE

God, I love you.

SAALIM

You do?

Candle hits his arm, laughs, kisses him.

EXT. BEHIND THE DELI - NIGHT

Kojo leans on the wall, holds a knife.

He looks in front the Deli at five GB members; Devonte.

KOJO (Ghana language)
5, 4... 3... 2... 1.

He runs to the GBs.

WHOOSH! Kojo stabs Devonte.

KOJO
Told you, I'll kill you.

Devonte falls on the concrete, dies.

Kojo runs to the STREETS, the GBs run after him.

BEEP, BEEP! Car horns as Kojo crosses the street.

Kojo stops on the sidewalk.

RAHEEM, one of the GB member, (16), grabs Kojo.

Kojo stabs Raheem!

Another GB tries to get Kojo. WHOOSH! Kojo stabs him too.

POWW! DEANDRE, GB member (17) shoots Kojo.

MARIO, (15) GB member, goes to dead Raheem on the concrete.

MARIO
(holds Raheem's head)
No, no, NO. Ra... Raheem, (sobs) RAHEEM.

DEANDRE
(shouts)
Let's go! Let him go!

MARIO
(sobs)
That's my brother, man!

DEANDRE
I know. He's dead now. Let's go!

WHOOOP, WHOOOP! Police sirens.

DEANDRE

Mario, let's go!

DeAndre runs without Mario.

INT. BUS - DAY

Candle sits on Saalim (no longer dressed as an af) in the back. Candle is playing with Saalim's hair.

Saalim is depressed, SCENES with Gogo, Seven and Kojo flashes in his head.

DARKNESS.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ADAMS HIGH SCHOOL SOCCER FIELD - DAY

We're looking at the back of an Adams player who stands on the touchline.

Saalim. His hair grew. We see his face.

The ball goes out. Saalim subs in, touches the turf, does the cross sign.

He looks in the crowd, smiles at Candle who smiles back.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

Candle is looking at Saalim who's devouring his food.

CANDLE

Do you always eat like that after games?

SAALIM

Don't judge, miss. I scored a goal for you.

He puts a smile on her face.

CANDLE

(at Saalim devouring the burger)
Saalim, I finally found something I don't like about you.

SAALIM

Oh, yea? (eats)
(mouth full) (MORE)

SAALIM (CONT'D)

I'm still looking for you.

Candle gazes him eat.

CANDLE

You know I'm playing. I love how eat...
wish I was that food.

SAALIM

I do eat you like this.

They smile, Saalim's smile is foodie.

SAALIM (CONT'D)

Come here.

Candle approaches him. Saalim pushes her hair back. They
kiss.

CANDLE

Salty. These fries are too salty.

SAALIM

Word. And your lips too sweet. (eats)
You're trying to watch "Received 2"
today or tomorrow?

CANDLE

Tomorrow. I only want to watch you today.

SAALIM

You got to buy ticket first.

CANDLE

(laughs)

Shut up.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

We're looking at the statue of Jesus.

JOHNNY (O. S.)

I'm sorry for killing.

Empty church, only Johnny prays inside, gun, Saalim's
knife next to him.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for that hate I have for them
but I thank you for that hate, that's
what drives me. I'm sorry.

(a bit frustrated)

God, I ask you for this every day. Let
me catch him, please. I know he's out
there, I want him. There's nothing I
want more in this world... I want him.
I want to kill him. After I kill him, I
will not kill anymore, I'll retire. I
want him to be the last person I kill.
God, I ask you for this everyday...
please let me kill him.

He does the cross sign, walks out.

INT. COP CAR (MOVING) - LATER

Joe is driving. Johnny is scanning the streets.

JOHNNY'S POV, Saalim is inside the FAST FOOD RESTAURANT
with Candle. They're laughing. They kiss.

Johnny sees Saalim's eyes.

JOHNNY

No, can't be.

(to crucifix)

Please, don't let that be.

(to Joe)

Drive back to that restaurant!

JOE

Why, you're hungry?

JOHNNY

Just drive to it, hurry!

Johnny, followed by Joe, rushes inside the

FAST FOOD RESTAURANT:

Sitting Saalim has his back faced to Johnny who's coming
to him.

CANDLE

Oh my God, Johnny is coming. Stay calm,
we'll be okay. He saw me, when he was
patrolling, comes to say hi.

They hold hands.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
God please helps us.

Johnny arrives to them.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
Oh, hey Johnny---

Johnny turns Saalim's head, holds it to him, for his eyes.

CANDLE (CONT'D)
Johnny what are you doing?! He's my
friend.

JOHNNY
(looking at Saalim's eyes)
It is you.

Saalim quickly turns his head away from Johnny.

Johnny points his gun on the back of Saalim's head.

We hear SCREAMS from people inside, they run out.

JOHNNY
No, he's not your friend. That's the af
who robbed you, stabbed me, killed Mike.
(to Saalim)
I've been looking for you.

Saalim remains immobile, gun on the back of his head.

Candle rushes to Johnny, holds his hand.

CANDLE
Please don't do it. I know it's him, he
apologized, I forgive him. He changed.
Johnny, please forgive him. I love him.

Joe watches, hand on the gun by his waist.

Johnny looks at Candle.

CADNLE (CONT'D)
(tries to take the gun)
Put the gun away, let's talk.

Johnny pushes Candle with one hand, other hand still holding the gun.

JOHNNY

You know it's him and you love him?!

Saalim faces Johnny; the gun is now on his forehead.

SAALIM

And I love her too. Johnny, I'm sorry for what I did.

Candle gets back to Johnny.

CANDLE

Put the gun away; please forgive him, for me.

Johnny, eyes on Saalim, shakes his head.

POWW! Johnny shoots Saalim.

CANDLE

(holds Saalim)

Oh, no. Saalim? Saalim!

(sobs)

No. Saalim, please don't leave me.

(hugs him, sobs)

Please don't leave, baby. Saalim, you can't die.

(looks at his eyes)

Noo. Saalim? Nooo.

Johnny looks at his sister in pain because of him.

CANDLE (CONT'D)

(to Johnny)

Why? I asked you to forgive him.

Johnny points the gun at the side of his head.

CANDLE

Johnny, noooo!

JOE

Johnny...

Joe tries to stop him but

POWWW! Johnny shoots himself.

We leave Candle in shock.

DARKNESS.

FADE IN:

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Rain.

Funeral is going on, very few people: Saalim's family (of course), five afs (including Slim Af), Abeo.

Candle, hat on, is in the back next to Joe. She's the only one who's not crying.

Saalim's coffin goes down as they throw the flowers.

SCENES with Saalim flashes in Candle's head.

The people make way for Candle who walks to the coffin.

She takes Saalim's ball and her scripts out of her purse, throws them on top of the coffin.

The people start leaving. The CEMETERY MEN are burying the coffin, Candle stands and watches.

ABEO (O. S.)

He was a good man, like to help.

Candle turns to her, nods, cries, sobs.

Abeo hugs her as the camera SHOWS Candle sobbing.

She stops crying, lets go of Abeo.

ABEO

You'll be okay?

CANDLE

Yeah, I'll be okay.

Abeo pushes Candle's hair back.

FADE OUT.