PARIAH

Written by

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SUPER:
"WHEREVER THE BIRD WITH NO FEET FLEW, SHE FOUND TREES WITH NO
LIMBS." --- AUDRE LORDE

FADE IN:

1 EXT/INT. NIGHTCLUB- EVENING

A disembodied gaggle of jersey clad shoulders, jeans, and
hats crosses a narrow street. Lights flare, hands are
stamped, torsos are patted down. Money exchanges hands. We
descend into a black, throbbing tunnel.

Explicit music booms from bassy club speakers. Hips, legs
feet dancing.

A GO-GO DANCER struts and wiggles around a brass pole. Hoots
and cheers.

The dancer marches in place, rolling her thonged bottom.
More cheers, greedy hands stuff dollars into her waistband.

FEMALE DJ (O.S.)

Let's go! Where all my sexy
Sagittarian ladies at?

Arms go up. A collection of whoops ripple the crowd.

The dancer wraps her legs around the pole and oozes upward
headfirst. The CAMERA ROTATES as she stretches her booted
heels into the crowd. We realize that she has been dancing
on the ceiling.

FEMALE DJ (O.S.)

Oh my God!

ALIKE (pronounced AH-LEE-KAY), 17, covers her mouth, laughing
and wide-eyed. She tries to back away from the stage, but is
pushed forward by a torrent of eager arms waving dollar
bills. Among them is LAURA, 18, worldly and smooth.

LAURA
Where your singles at?!! Where your singles at?!! Yeah, baby!

Laura strains over Alike's shoulder to tuck a bill into the dancer's boot. Alike drops her beer in all the jostling.

**FEMALE DJ**

Goddamn I love my job!

Laura stuffs a bill into Alike's now empty hand and forcibly waves Alike's wrist in the air.

Alike pulls free just as the dancer takes notice and begins to direct her attention at her.

**ALIKE**

Stop! Chill!!

**LAURA**

Whatchu' come here for?!

Alike shoves the dollar bill into Laura's chest and shoulders her way past the wall of onlookers surrounding the stage. Laura shrugs, puts the bill in her teeth and lays her head at the edge of the stage. Alike looks away and breaks through a snarl of clubgoers just as the dancer begins to descend.

**ALIKE**


Finally free of the throng, Alike takes a breath and looks at the clock on her cell phone.

**ALIKE (CONT'D)**

Shit!

She rolls her eyes back to the stage where Laura is no longer visible. Not daring to risk another plunge into the throbbing crowd, she retreats for the bar.

**FEMALE DJ**

Let's go!

**2 INT. NIGHTCLUB BAR - NIGHT**

Alike beaches at an empty spot at the bar. Her gaze settles on a CUTE GIRL a little ways down, staring out at the dance floor. Alike jerks her eyes away and smooths the front of her
shirt and adjusts her hat as she edges toward the girl.

ALIKE

Hi.

The girl ignores her. Alike clears her throat and speaks a little too loudly.

ALIKE (CONT'D)

Umm... Hey! How are you?!

The girl jerks around and frowns at Alike, looking her up and down.

CUTE GIRL

What?!

ALIKE

Umm...sorry. I was just sayin'

Umm...hi.

CUTE GIRL

Oh.

The girl dismisses Alike and turns back toward the floor.

ALIKE

Oh. You wanna drink or something?

Hey! Hey! Over here!

Alike strains, snapping at the bartender. A CONFIDENT WOMAN swaggers up close to the girl and extends her hand. The cute girl takes it and allows herself to be lead to the dance floor. Alike looks around just in time to see her leaving. The bartender finally materializes, and Alike slinks away.

3  INT. NIGHTCLUB BATHROOM - NIGHT

Alike slumps into a long line of women waiting to squeeze the cramped, 2 stall bathroom. A COUPLE in front of her makes out vigorously, and she folds her arms and looks away.

A buff 30-SOMETHING WOMAN with locs smiles and winks at Alike. Alike smiles and fidgets with her eyebrows and looks away. The line inches forward. Alike glances around searching for the woman. The 30-something has already lost interest, her attention now fully directed at a much more FEMININE WOMAN strutting out of the rest room. Embarrassed, Alike faces front again. Two androgynous gangsters (AGs) who
have witnessed the whole thing nudge each other and sneer. Alike squares her shoulders and widens her stance. One of the AG's breaks out in laughter and they turn around as the line inches forward again. Alike pretends not to notice and slumps out of line and retreats for a lonely oasis of couch along the wall.

4   INT. NIGHTCLUB COUCH - LATER

Alike dozes on the couch.

FEMALE DJ
Give it up for Sin-A-Min ladies!!

Alike wakes with a start. She checks the time on her cell phone. Cursing, she scrambles up from the couch.

5   INT. NIGHTCLUB BAR - EVENING

Laura dances with a cute SHORT HAIR GIRL.

Alike spots the pair from afar and heads in their direction.

ALIKE
C'mon, we're late.

LAURA
Huh?

ALIKE
I gotta go!

LAURA
Hold on a minute.

ALIKE
C'mon, why you trippin'?

LAURA
What?

ALIKE
Why are you trippin', you know I gotta go!

LAURA
What?

ALIKE
You know I gotta go. I'ma get in trouble.

**LAURA**

Lemme dance with shortie first, then I'll be ready.

**ALIKE**

What?

Laura spins the short haired on the dance floor and the pair continue their wobbling, uneven groove. Alike endures several moments of invisibility as a sea of women, both "feminine" and "butch" push past her without a second glance. Alike tugs at Laura's jersey. Laura, happily tangled in her dance partner's embrace rolls her eyes.

**LAURA**

Stop pulling on my clothes!

**EXT. BUS STOP - NIGHT**

Laura sulks, frowning out at the night. Alike extends the olive branch.

**ALIKE**

How many numbers you get? One?

**LAURA**

I could've gotten more, but your moms was holding me up.

**ALIKE**

Oooh. That's jacked up.

**LAURA**

How many you get?

**ALIKE**

Tonya, Denise, Shelley. No wait that's old, I can delete that one. Tonya...

Laura snatches the phone from Alike. Alike swipes at it but misses. Laura fends her off with one hand and scrolls through the numbers with the other.

**LAURA**

Ain't Shelley that chick from your math class?! Denise... What?
These are your damn study group numbers! Why you frontin'?! Alike snatches the phone and wipes the screen with her sleeve.

ALIKE
I don't see you with no list of numbers.

LAURA
I'm not the one looking for a girlfriend, man. You the one still a virgin!

ALIKE
Shut up!

LAURA
Trying to help your ass. I'm sayin', whatchu waitin' for?!

Alike shrugs it off, her smile fading a little. Laura elbows her and sneers.

LAURA
Kickin' that same 'ol quiet shit since 6th grade. I don't need to press, I gets plenty. Shit.

ALIKE
Wah-wah.

LAURA
I get more pussy than your daddy, nigga, what?!

ALIKE
Oh shit!! Yeah, you got me with that one.

INT. BUS - NIGHT
Alike becomes more quiet and less playful as the ride wears on. A middle-class Bronx landscape, well-lit with a newly constructed Starbucks and renovated condos flits by the window. Alike reaches over and presses the tape. Laura elbows Alike.
LAURA
Quit playing.

ALIKE
Your stop.

LAURA
Huh?

ALIKE
Your stop-- you're getting off here, right?

LAURA
Nah, I'll roll with you a few more stops.

ALIKE
Why you gon' walk all the way back down for? That's stupid.

LAURA
Make sure you get home okay.

The bus pulls to the curb. The light flicks on over the back door.

ALIKE
You ain't big, nigga. Trying to protect somebody. Hurry up, man, get off!

LAURA
(to bus driver)
That's alright man--next stop. Next stop!

Alike elbows Laura sharply. The bus driver frowns in the rear view.

LAURA
You ain't gotta push me, why're you beastin'?

ALIKE
I'm not beastin'.

Laura climbs over Alike and swings toward the door.

LAURA
You got a problem. Call me.

ALIKE
I'ma call you.

Alike turns and watches Laura stroll away. Laura drums a little beat on Alike's window as the bus pulls off. Alike waves and faces forward again. An OLD LADY sitting nearby shoots her a disapproving look. Alike rolls her eyes and moves to a seat farther away.

8 INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Alike studies her reflection in the window, and takes a breath. She unbuttons her bulky men's shirt to reveal a fitting baby doll shirt that reads "Princess." She stuffs her baseball cap and durag into her backpack and jabs a pair of small gold hoop earrings into her ears. She slumps back against the seat and stares into the night.

The bus stops at a lonely island of curb. Alike is a dark silhouette sprinting around the corner and into the night.

9 INT. ALIKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alike cracks open the front door just wide enough to slip through. The house is dark except for the flashing microwave clock.

Alike takes off her sneakers and pads down the hallway. Her younger sister, SHARONDA's door cracks open as she passes.

SHARONDA
You late.

ALIKE
(whispering)
Be quiet.

SHARONDA
Where you been this late?

ALIKE
(whispering)
Movies.

SHARONDA
Movie ended at midnight.
ALIKE
(whispering)
Shhh. Shut up.

Alike shoves her sister and tries to close the door. Sharonda yanks the door open wider.

SHARONDA
(whispering)
Don't push me.

ALIKE
(whispering)
Go to bed.

SHARONDA
I know what stays open past midnight.

Sharonda puts a hand to her head and does a little dance.

ALIKE
Shut up!

Alike eases Sharonda's door shut. Sharonda swings the door open wide.

SHARONDA
Good night Lee!

Sharonda slams her door. The light clicks on underneath Alike's parent's door.

9.

AUDREY (O.S.)
Lee? Lee?!

Alike rolls her eyes at her sister's closed door and shrugs into her room.

10 INT. ALIKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alike rushes to shove her stuffed backpack under the bed. She tosses her shoes in the closet just as her mother, AUDREY appears in the doorway.

AUDREY
Nice to know you still live here.
Alike peels off her socks and slumps on the bed.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
What're you doing home so late, anyway?

ALIKE
Lost track of time.

AUDREY
You know what time your curfew is. Where were you?

ALIKE
Movies.

AUDREY
The show ended at midnight. And your curfew is twelve thirty.

ALIKE
I lost track of time.

Audrey gets cozy in the doorjamb. Alike turns her back on her and slumps into pajamas.

AUDREY
At least you were cute. Where'd you get that shirt? 'Princess'. I like that.

Alike winds the princess shirt around her fist and launches to the top of the closet.

ALIKE
It's old.

AUDREY
Compliments your figure. I saw something just like it on sale, maybe we could go shopping--

ALIKE
Goodnight.

Audrey stiffens and pulls her robe tighter. Vinegar replaces honey in her demeanor as the warmth drains out of her voice.

AUDREY
I really don't care for that young lady you run around with anyway.

**ALIKE**
Yeah, okay!

**AUDREY**
And tie your head up.

Alike snags a satin headscarf from the nightstand and slaps it around her head.

**AUDREY (CONT'D)**
It's your head. And you really should wash your face, too.

**ALIKE**
I don't have on make-up.

**AUDREY**
Wash your face anyway.

**ALIKE**
Mom. I'm seventeen years old, please don't talk to me like--

**AUDREY**
Watch your tone.
(Beat)
Well, it's your skin.

Audrey leaves. Alike is still. She listens for the door to her parent's room to shut before snatching off the scarf and storming to the bathroom.

**INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Alike turns on the faucet, wets the soap and puts it back in the dish, wets her wash cloth and puts it back on the rack. She plops down on the toilet and looks up. A crucifix frowns down at her from the wall.

She averts her eyes and stands to leave.

**AUDREY (O.S.)**
Did you brush your teeth?

Alike wets her toothbrush and throws it back into the holder.
AUDREY (O.S.)
Lee?

Alike squeezes out a dollop of toothpaste and smears a little around the sink. She stares at her reflection.

AUDREY (O.S.)
Lee?

Alike flicks water droplets at the mirror for good measure.

ALIKE
Yes, mom.

12 EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Alike, bundled in an oversized hoodie edges up to the perimeter of campus and waits against a bus shelter. STUDENTS horseplay and mill about the entrance in groups, chugging their morning Fantas and munching on snack cakes. The school bell rings and the lawn slowly empties into the building. Alike shifts her weight and checks her watch as the last STRAGGLERS finally trickle in. She yanks her hoodie tighter and launches across the lawn and into the building.

13 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

A second school bell sounds and the din of slamming lockers and jubilant chatter dies to a hush as students shuffle into classrooms. Alike cracks the back stairwell door and peeks out into the mostly empty hallway before tearing for the bathroom. One last straggler BINA, a 17 year-old girl with mature, but down-to-earth good looks rushes past Alike. The two exchange a brief, confused look then mutually dismiss each other as they hurry in opposite directions.

14 INT. SCHOOL BATHROOM - MORNING

Alike hurtles into the handicapped stall and snaps it shut behind her. She rips off her hoodie and the "girly" shirt beneath and flings them to the floor. She pulls out a pair of wife-beaters from her bag and pulls them over her head. She unwads a polo shirt and yanks it over her head.

She stares at her reflection in the window and tries unsuccessfully to smooth her shirt. Her eyes scour her reflection again and again for any imperfections. She spots
the earrings and yanks them out of her ears. The late bell beckons and Alike stuffs her "feminine" clothes into her backpack and bolts.

15 INT. MATH CLASSROOM - DAY

The MATH TEACHER glides up and down the aisles passing out graded tests. A chorus of groans follows in her wake.

MATHEACHER
As promised, I will be grading these on a curve.

Alike is folded into the backmost corner of the classroom. The desks in front her and beside her are empty. She is ignored as the rest of the class chatters and passes notes.

MATHEACHER (CONT'D)
But the highest grade on the test was a 98.

The math teacher puts Alike's test on her desk and gives her a little smile. Alike doesn't smile back.

The lunch bell rings and the class is a tornado, clearing the room in a rush of limbs, shouts, and backpacks. Alike jabs her headphones into her ears and packs her bag very deliberately, letting the eye of the storm pass over her before heading toward the door.

16 INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

The cafeteria is a whirl of activity and social jockeying. Clusters of girls and boys loud-talk, flirt, fight and horseplay at tables and in tight little groups against the walls. Alike walks alone, staying at the fringes of the crowd and shrugs through the cafeteria line.

17 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Alike flees the cafeteria, tray laden with rubbery cuisine of dubious nutritional value. She raps on the door of a classroom and slips in.

MRS. ALVARADO (O.S.)
Hey there!
ALIKE

Hey!

MRS. ALVARADO, a middle aged Californian ex-hippie type reclines with her feet on her desk, munching on celery sticks and sunflower seed paste. Her small desk radio plays alternative rock. Sun beams into the empty classroom and Alike squints as she yanks the headphones out of her ears and pulls up a chair next to her desk.

MRS. ALVARADO

Whaddja bring me?

ALIKE

Nothin' you can eat.

MRS. ALVARADO

You shouldn't be eatin' that crap, either.

ALIKE

(over a mouthful of pizza)

I know.

MRS. ALVARADO

Sooo, where's the new stuff?

Alike hands over her purple and white composition book. Mrs. Alvarado thumbs the pages, reading silently.

MRS. ALVARADO

Hmmmm.

ALIKE

Did you see the one in the back?

Mrs. Alvarado flips to the back of the book and her mouth moves silently as she reads.

ALIKE (CONT'D)

I'll probably do it in class.

Mrs. Alvarado hands the book back to Alike and digs in to another celery stick.

ALIKE

So?

MRS. ALVARADO

So what?
ALIKE
What do you think?

MRS. ALVARADO
They're okay.

ALIKE
Okay?

MRS. ALVARADO
They're lovely. Of course your descriptiveness and use of alliteration is beautiful and all, you know that. But...I don't know. Is it your best? No.

Alike frowns through the pages of the composition book.

ALIKE
I thought it was good.

MRS. ALVARADO
It's good. Not great.

Alike slumps back into her seat and considers the book's cover.

MRS. ALVARADO
I believe you can go deeper.

19 INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR – AFTERNOON

Audrey is a heat-seeking missile, whipping through the sparse hallways of the trauma wing, her clipboard and pen in constant motion. NURSES and AIDES scatter in her wake, suddenly busying themselves with little bits of chore work to avoid her caustic gaze. She barks at a cluster of CLERKS chit-chatting in the elevator bank and all but one manage to escape. Audrey drills her.

AUDREY
Oh, so your log is all up to date?

CLERK
No I--

AUDREY
And you've checked the round for
any calls?

CLERK
Well I --

AUDREY
Do you even know which doctors are on the floor?

CLERK
No ma'am I--

AUDREY
Then I suggest you get busy.

The clerk skitters off red-faced, and Audrey looks daggers into her back before storming the break room.

INT. HOSPITAL BREAK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Audrey whisks her lunch bag out of the fridge and heads toward a table. A few lounging AIDES wad up their garbage and flee the break room. Audrey settles down at the table and pulls a fashion magazine from her work tote, pretending not to be hurt. She peels open a cup of vanilla yogurt and begins reading. A big red department store bag sits next to her work tote. The television suspended over the table mumbles corporate healthcare infomercials. MRS. SINGLETARY, one of Audrey's co-workers swoops in and plops a plastic grocery bag on the table across from her.

MRS. SINGLETARY
Hey girl! Mind if I sit here?

AUDREY
No, not at all. Help yourself.

MRS. SINGLETARY
Whatchu got there? You been shopping?

AUDREY
Oh, no. Just some yogurt. Some vanilla yogurt.

MRS. SINGLETARY
No I meant in the bag. What do you have in the shopping bag--the big red thing?
AUDREY
Oh I'm...I don't know where my mind is...Yeah, this is just uh--well let me get your opinion.

Audrey's steely exterior melts away and suddenly she is all butterflies and giggles. She rifles through the bag and hoists out a pink ribbed v-neck sweater. 16.

MRS. SINGLETARY
Oh that's nice.

AUDREY
Yeah see isn't this cute?

MRS. SINGLETARY
Umm-hmm. That's for your daughter?

AUDREY
Yeah, this is for Alike.

MRS. SINGLETARY
The youngest one.

AUDREY
No she's the oldest one.

MRS. SINGLETARY
Oh, the other one. Okay.

AUDREY
What, you think it's too young?

MRS. SINGLETARY
No, no. For whatever reason the youngest one popped in my mind first. But I think it should be fine. It's really cute.

AUDREY
Thank you.

MRS. SINGLETARY
It'll compliment her figure.

AUDREY
Now see that's what I thought... But Lee doesn't like anything I pick out for her anymore.
Mrs. Singletary takes a bite of her lunch and takes the sweater from Audrey.

**MRS. SINGLETARY**

Girl, please. My oldest, 17 going on 27 mind you, banned me from buying her any more clothes. We have two completely different tastes. I just give her gift cards now and trust me, we're both happier for it. Is it her birthday?

Mrs. Singletary hands the sweater back to Audrey who smooths it carefully back into the tissue paper.

**AUDREY**

No, no. I just wanted to get her something nice. You know.

Three ROWDY CO-WORKERS burst into the room chattering and finger popping.

**ROWDY CO-WORKER #1**

Hey, Brenda!

**ROWDY CO-WORKER #2**

Oooooh Audrey, you got me a present?

**ROWDY CO-WORKER #3**

What'chall in here talking about?

**AUDREY**

Well, no we--

**MRS. SINGLETARY**

None of yo' damn business!!

The co-workers hoot in unison and descend upon the various parts of the breakroom. Audrey shoves the sweater back in the bag and nestles it between her feet. Somebody cranks on a small radio and a frisky R&B beat invades the air. Mrs. Singletary pats Audrey on the arm.

**MRS. SINGLETARY**

Let me know how it goes.

**AUDREY**

Oh I will. I'll call you when--

**ROWDY CO-WORKER #3**

Hey Bren' this is what I was
telling you about!!

Co-worker #3 shoves a tabloid in Mrs. Singletary's face, tapping an angry orange fingernail in the middle of the page.

**MRS. SINGLETARY**

Is that her?!

**ROWDY CO-WORKER #3**

Told you!

**ROWDY CO-WORKER #2**

Look how big she done got!

The center of the room shifts and Audrey is once again alone at the fringes. She collects her shopping bag and looks around to say goodbye, but no one notices her leave.

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21 **INT. ALIKE'S KITCHEN - EVENING**

Audrey, Sharonda, Alike, and their father, ARTHUR, 40-something with a used-to-be athletic build, are all gathered around the dinner table for a rare family dinner. Everyone takes half-hearted nibbles at their food avoiding eye contact with each other. Sharonda picks at her food.

**SHARONDA**

I don't see why we can't just watch TV like usual.

Alike elbows Sharonda.

**SHARONDA**

Quit it!

**ALIKE**

Shut up.

**SHARONDA**

You don't tell me what to do!

**AUDREY**

Girls.

The phone rings and Arthur beats a path to bedroom to get it. Audrey wilts.

**ARTHUR**

I'm expecting a call.

Audrey stares after him then glares back at Alike and Sharonda.
AUDREY
This is your father's night off.

Alike casts a glance in the direction of the bedroom, where Arthur can be heard talking in hushed tones. She rolls her eyes and slinks down into her seat.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
So straighten up.

Arthur settles back into his chair, his mood a little brighter. Seeing an opportunity for brownie points, Sharonda pitches in.

SHARONDA
Homecoming got moved this year. It's gonna be in September instead of October.

AUDREY
Oh really?

SHARONDA
Yeah. Which means I'll be able to go to Autumn Ball and the Homecoming Dance.

AUDREY
Who are you going with?

SHARONDA
I don't know. Maybe Derek. If he asks me. Maybe Parrish. I haven't decided yet. But for homecoming, I definitely want to go with Craig.

AUDREY
Oooh, I see. Lee, who are you going with?

ALIKE
Umm. I'm not going.

Arthur gives Alike an approving Daddy's girl wink. Alike beams back.

AUDREY
Not going? This is your junior year. How can you not go?
ARTHUR
Leave her alone Audrey, if doesn't want to go, she doesn't have to go.

AUDREY
But it's her junior year, she's not gonna have any memories.

ARTHUR
I don't like all those boys buzzing around my daughters anyway.

SHARONDA
Nobody buzzes around Alike.

ARTHUR
That's right and it better stay that way. Matter of fact, I don't know if I'ma let you go.

SHARONDA
Daaa-aad?!

Alike smirks and takes her plate to the sink. Arthur jabs her on the arm as she walks by. Audrey tears into a dinner roll shooting daggers at anyone who dares to make eye contact.

22 INT. LAURA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT
Laura brings a steaming cup of Ramen noodles to a worn kitchen table splayed with bills. Her older sister CANDACE, a stout 30 something with pleasant but hard-working looks scribbles notes on the back of an envelope while soaking her feet. Laura takes a sip of her soup and starts sifting through a pile of envelopes.

LAURA
How much we paid him last time?

CANDACE
Six twenty-five.

LAURA
So that makes--we owe another two seventy-five for the rest of the month.

Candace pecks on a calculator and scribbles on the envelope. Laura flips through more bills.
Electric?

CANDACE
Half.

LAURA
Phone?

CANDACE
Let it ride.

Gas?

CANDACE
How much?

LAURA
Eighty-five.

CANDACE
Half. No let it ride.

Laura locks her hands on top of her head and leans back in her chair, surveying the financial carnage.

Candace reaches inside a CERAMIC HEN on the table and pulls out a wad of money. She counts out several hundred dollars into an envelope.

LAURA
I can get some more hours--

CANDACE
No. You know what you need to do.

LAURA
Nah Candy, I can't just dip out on you like that--

CANDACE
I was doing just fine before you moved in, remember? I can handle it.

Laura sucks her teeth.

CANDACE (CONT'D)
You working was only supposed to be temporary. Mom would've wanted--

**LAURA**
Who?! Man, don't even--

**CANDACE**
She would've--

**LAURA**
Stop.

Laura pushes up from the table and glares at Candace, a showdown. Candace stares back, unfazed. Laura caves first.

**LAURA (CONT'D)**
I'll get the money orders in the morning.

Laura tugs at the envelope but Candace doesn't let go right away.

**LAURA (CONT'D)**
I'll look into it alright?

Candace relinquishes the envelope and Laura stalks off down the hallway to her room.

**CANDACE**
The next test is coming up soon!

22.

**LAURA (O.S.)**
I said I'll look into it!

Candace smiles wanly and sips her soup. She takes a foot out of the water and kneads it.

23 **INT. SCHOOL BATHROOM - MORNING**

Alike slams into her usual stall and launches into her 'Superman' changing routine. She unrolls pulls a jersey from her backpack and yanks it over her head.

24 **EXT. SCHOOL LAWN - AFTERNOON**

Alike sits off to one side of the stairs, headphoned into oblivion and scribbling into her composition book. A group of FAST GIRLS strut by and encamp on the opposite wall, giggling
and yakking on cell phones. One of the girls, MIKA cuts a flirty smile at Alike. Alike turns away and buries herself in her book, but cranks down the volume on her iPod.

MIKA'S FRIEND
It was like seven of us--Me, Khalil, Misha, Tamara....

FAST GIRL #2
Tamara Marks?

MIKA'S FRIEND
Heeeell no--Fat Tamara.

MIKA
Oh I was about to say, Tamara Marks is a ughh--I can't stand her.

MIKA'S FRIEND
Anyway, it was all of us and oh Laura, you know that girl from the restaurant? She was there with one of her friends.

Alike's ears prick up.

MIKA
That gay chick? Ya'll be hanging like that?

MIKA'S FRIEND
Yeah, well it's a couple of them. She's mad cool though, so sometime she come out with us every now and then, anyway--

MIKA
Man, y'all be doin' it on it weekends, let me find out!

FAST GIRL #2
I told your butt to come.

MIKA'S FRIEND
But anyway--

MIKA
Some of them AG's are kinda cute--I'm not saying I would, but I would holla.
FAST GIRL #2
I don't know about all that.

MIKA
Isn't that one of them over there?
What's her name? Amika?--Alisha?

The pack directs their attention at Alike. Alike profiles and attempts to look casual.

MIKA'S FRIEND
Alike.

MIKA
Yeah, Alike--she's cute too.

FAST GIRL #2
Uugh. I don't be looking at them all like that.

Mika smiles as her eyes travel down Alike's physique. Alike, aware of the admiring gaze tugs and smooths at her shirt unnecessarily. She licks her lips and readjusts the book in her lap, fighting hard to keep the grin off her face.

MIKA
Look, I'm not gay--but if I was gay I might talk to her.

MIKA'S FRIEND
She's in the middle anyway.

MIKA
Yeah, but if she was just a little more harder--

Alike looks over and starts to nod when a CUTE BOY with locs swaggers up to the girls, drawing their rapt attention.

CUTE BOY
`Sup ladies?

MIKA
Heeeey.

FAST GIRL #2
What's up?

The girls erupt into titters, and they melt into conversation. Alike deflates, watching them over the top of her book. She observes every little moment between the girls and the boy, every wink. Another BOY joins the group and they
stroll off down the sidewalk.

Alike plucks the headphones out of her ears, watching them leave. Mika casts a parting glance over her shoulder at Alike. Remnant's of Alike's grin return reflexively. Mika's friend jerks her elbow around.

MIKA'S FRIEND

Oooh--let me find out, Mika. You act like you bi- or something.

MIKA

I like girls but I love boys.

FAST GIRL #2                      FAST GIRL #1

Umm hmm!                          I can't tell!

Alike waits for them to disappear from view before snatching up her bag and bolting in the opposite direction.

25   EXT./INT. - RESTAURANT STOCKROOM - DAY

Laura hoists a box of french fries onto her shoulder and moves inside the restaurant.

LAURA

Watch out, it's slippery.

ALIKE

So what do you think?

LAURA

I already told you what I think.

ALIKE

But you know her, right?

LAURA

I said I know of her, I don't know her know her.

Alike hefts up a box and follows Laura back into the restaurant.

25.

ALIKE

I'm saying, you know her friend, right? You gonna introduce us?

LAURA
Just put those on that stack right there. Yeah, thank you.

ALIKE
You listening?

LAURA
I'm listening--all I'm saying is--pass me that milkshake mix right there.

Alike tosses Laura a bladder of milkshake mix. Laura catches it.

LAURA
All I'm saying is that I don't think you should put yourself out there like that. Especially if you don't even know if she likes you like that.

ALIKE
She does.

LAURA
How do you know she does?

ALIKE
I just know she does.

LAURA
Hmmph. We'll see.

Laura holds out her hand as if checking for rain and scans the ceiling.

ALIKE
What're you doing?

LAURA
I thought I felt a drop of pig shit.

ALIKE
Shut up.

LAURA
All I know is I been trying to get you to holla at girls in the club for the longest.
ALIKE
I don't want to holla at girls in the club.

LAURA
Obviously. Why you pressed about this chick?

Alike shrugs.

ALIKE
I wanted to ask you about something else too.

LAURA
Oh God, what now?

ALIKE
I need you to get something for me.

LAURA
What?!

Alike cocks her head at Laura. Laura frowns back.

LAURA
What?!

ALIKE
Just for my image.

Alike raises her eyebrow. Laura shakes her head. The light bulb goes off. She roars in disbelief.

LAURA
WHAAAAAT??!! You trying to strap!!?? Whaaatt?!! Oh my God, what are you going through...

ALIKE
Please.

LAURA
What difference you think having a bulge in your pants gon' make?

ALIKE
Pleeeeease. By next Friday.
LAURA
Next Friday?! Okay-- Whatever. Oh my God I can't believe you!
Alright. Yeah. She better be cute for all of this...

26 INT. ALIKE'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Alike stares at herself in a floor length bedroom mirror in her underwear.

LAURA
I think it looks natural.

A peach-colored dildo dangles stiffly from Alike's waist. The harness bunches her boxers in clumsy tufts. Alike appraises the racially inappropriate apparatus and shoots Laura a look.

LAURA
I'm serious, I mean it doesn't look that bad.

ALIKE
I can't believe you.

Alike frowns at the dildo in profile.

LAURA
What?!

ALIKE
Laura, this doesn't look right. I'ma look stupid.

LAURA
Well, first of all-- I don't think its supposed to be on top of your underwear like that.

ALIKE
I'm not putting this thing next to my skin, it pinches already.

Alike yanks at the harness and her boxers trying to pull it out of her bottom.

LAURA
It's supposed to fit like that.

ALIKE
They didn't have any brown?

LAURA
I didn't have time for all of that. The brown ones were too big, anyway.

Alike struggling with the apparatus. Laura smiles.

ALIKE
Ugh! You gotta take it back.

LAURA
I can't take it back.

ALIKE
Here's the receipt!

LAURA
Unh-unh. I'm not going back in there. One time was embarrassing enough.

ALIKE
You grown!

LAURA
Still what if somebody would see me in there? I'm not going back, that's it.

ALIKE
Then where's my change?

Sharonda bursts into the room.

SHARONDA
Lee, where'd you put my make-up case...AHHH I'M GON' TELL. OOH LEE, I'MA TELL DADDY!

Laura leaps from the bed and blocks Sharonda's path to the doorway. Alike tackles Sharonda and wrestles her down to the floor. Laura slams the door, shuts and locks it.

SHARONDA
Eew get that thing, off a me! Get it off me it's nasty! I'm tellin'!

LAURA
Shhh!!

ALIKE
Shut up!!! Thought you locked the door?!

SHARONDA
Eew. Get it offa me!

LAURA
I did!

ALIKE
OK, look I'm offa you. Just be quiet and calm down.

SHARONDA
I'm tellin' that you got that thing.

LAURA
You can't tell.

SHARONDA
I'm telling.

ALIKE
Shut up.

SHARONDA
It looks nasty.

ALIKE
(to Laura)
See, I told you so.

SHARONDA
Where's my make up case? I know you got it.

ALIKE
I just borrowed it.

Alike pulls off the dildo and harness.

SHARONDA
Give it back.

Alike fishes the make-up case out of her backpack. She holds it out to Sharonda. Sharonda reaches for it. Alike jerks it
back.

ALIKE
Promise you won't tell.

SHARONDA
Give it back.

Alike flips open the make up case and jabs the dildo at it, stopping short of the surface of the make up. 30.

SHARONDA
LEE, STOP IT EEEW!!! I just got that one.

LAURA
Shhh!!

SHARONDA
Don't touch it with that... eeww that's so nasty. C'mon Lee give it back.

LAURA
Then promise you won't tell.

ALIKE
Promise...

SHARONDA
Ughh, I hate you.

Alike jabs the dildo closer to the make-up.

SHARONDA
OK, OK I won't tell. Daag!

Alike tosses the case at Sharonda who scrambles to catch it. Alike wraps the dildo back up in the bag and hides it behind her headboard. Sharonda saunters out into the hallway.

SHARONDA
I'm still tellin'

AUDREY
Tellin' what?

Audrey peers into the bedroom from the hallway, still dressed for work, shoulder stooped from the weight of her tote bag.
ALIKE
Noth--

SHARONDA
She took my makeup again.

AUDREY
Lee...
(notices Laura)
Oh. Hello Laura, I didn't see you standing there.

LAURA
Hi Mrs. Freeman.

AUDREY
How's your mother?

LAURA
I haven't spoken to her in awhile. She's fine.

AUDREY
Well I hope so. And I'm so glad to hear your sisters finally getting back on her feet. Wasn't she--

LAURA
She's good.

ALIKE
Mom?!

Audrey fixes Laura with another hard glance and shoos Sharonda down the hallway. Laura starts to shut the door, but Audrey stops it with her arm.

AUDREY
I think we'll just leave this open. Let some air circulate in here.

LAURA
I was just about to leave, anyway. So...

Audrey lingers, looking back and forth between Laura and Alike. Alike frowns at her mother.

Satisfied that the conversation is over, Audrey moves off toward her room. Laura checks to make sure she's gone and whispers to Alike.

LAURA
Just try it.

27 INT. NIGHTCLUB COUCH - EVENING

Alike squirms in her seat.

LAURA
Will you chill? You just gotta get used to it.

Alike tugs at her crotch and attempts to cross her legs.

ALIKE
Owwww!

Alike uncrosses her legs and yanks at her jeans. Laura bats her hand away.

LAURA
Sit still, people gon' think you got something.

ALIKE
This joint hurts, man. I'ma go take it off.

LAURA
You not gon' take it off.

ALIKE
I'm gonna take it off.

LAURA
Where you gonna take it off at?

ALIKE
In the bathroom.

LAURA
Then where you gon' put it? You gonna walk around the club with a dick in your hand? Chill. I knew we shouldn't have done this. You blowin' me right now.

ALIKE
Then I'm out.

LAURA
Nah, you're 'bout to stay and go through this. You're the one who wanted to meet her, not me.

**ALIKE**

Then you come on, too. Hurry up--

A group of girls approaches, one of them we recognize as Mika, the girl that likes Alike, from the bathroom. Laura stands to greet them. Nervous introductions all around. Laura shoots Alike a warning glance.

---

**28** INT. NIGHTCLUB COUCH - LATER** 28**

Laura is hugged up with two girls at the end of the couch. Alike fidgets in her seat and keeps pulling at the knees of her jeans. Mika hand in chin, stares into space. Alike does another pull-fidget combo. Mika rolls her eyes at her.

**MIKA**

You alright?

**ALIKE**

Yeah, no, yeah it's just--there's a spring in the cushion or something.

**MIKA**

You wanna switch seats?

**ALIKE**

No, I'm good.

**MIKA**

And you don't wanna dance?

**LAURA**

Hey ya'll we're about to go dance!

**ALIKE**

No, no not really. I'm not really feeling the music.

Mika sighs and looks around at the other dancing couples. Alike gives her jeans another tortured tug. Agonized minutes of awkward booming silence.

**MIKA**

Well you don't mind right? I mean you don't mind if I go dance with
somebody else?

ALIKE
No, do your thing.

MIKA
If you change your mind--

ALIKE
No, no it's cool.

Mika escapes the couch and disappears into the crowd.

29 INT. ALIKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alike slips off her shoes and eases through the kitchen. Audrey flicks on the light, blocking the hallway entrance.

AUDREY
I hope it was worth it.

ALIKE
Mom I lost--

AUDREY
Save it.

ALIKE
It won't happen--

AUDREY
Oh I know it won't.

30 INT. ALIKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alike peels off her jeans and lobbs them into the top of her closet. She unharnesses the dildo and wads the tangled mess up in an old t-shirt. She stuffs the wad in back of the closet and slams the closet door shut, staring at her reflection in the mirror.

Alike reconsiders and yanks the wad back from the closet.

31 EXT. ALIKE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alike stuffs the wad into a trash bag and plunges it deep into a neighbor's garbage can. She scurries back into her
building and doesn't look back.

32 INT. ALIKE'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Alike skulks on the couch in wrinkled khaki pants and a cotton button down shirt. An obnoxious R&B video plays on the TV. Sounds of bustling and the drone of a hair dryer fill the room.

AUDREY (O.S.)
Turn that mess off!!

Alike turns the television volume to low and continues watching.

AUDREY (O.S.)
Sharonda?! Sharonda are you ready?!
Stop lollygagging!

SHARONDA (O.S.)
I'm coming!

AUDREY
Lee are you ready?! Lee?!

Audrey hobbles out with one high heel on. She snatches the remote from Alike and snaps the TV off.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
I said off. Thought you were ready?

ALIKE
I am ready.

AUDREY
You're not going to church looking like that. Where's the blouse I bought you?

ALIKE
What's wrong with this?

The front door bursts open, and Arthur tromps in, his police uniform hanging open over a white undershirt. He slings a heavy F.O.P tote bag on the floor and strips off his shirt as he crosses to the kitchen. Audrey rushes over and buzzes around him.
AUDREY
Hey there, you're home early--well actually late. I thought you would have called--

ALIKE
Dad--

ARTHUR
Do what your mom says.

Audrey scuttles over to where Arthur is now digging through the open fridge. He pulls out a foil covered plate, tears open one corner, sniffs it.

AUDREY
Are you hungry? Let me heat it up for you.

Arthur heads toward the microwave with the plate. Audrey intercepts the plate from him and dumps the contents into a skillet.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
I'll heat it up on the stove for you. Tastes better.

ALIKE
Dad--

AUDREY
Lee!

ARTHUR
Leave me out of it.

AUDREY
Go get changed.

ALIKE
Dad, what's wrong with this outfit?

ARTHUR
Nothing.

ALIKE
See?
AUDREY
I'm not gonna argue with you.

ARTHUR
Do what she says.

ALIKE
Dad--

ARTHUR
(speaking bad Tarzan Swahili)
Umgowa!

AUDREY
And put on a skirt!

Alike stalks off to her bedroom. Sharonda bounces into the kitchen.

SHARONDA
Hey Dad!

AUDREY
Too much lipstick.

SHARONDA
It's lipgloss.

Audrey wheels on Sharonda with a death glare.

SHARONDA (CONT'D)
Okay, okay.

ARTHUR
Gimmie kiss.

Sharonda pecks dad on the cheek. Dad wipes his cheek and rubs his fingers together.

Sharonda giggles and bounds back into her bedroom. Audrey slides a steaming plate in front of Arthur.

AUDREY
Did you talk to her?

ARTHUR
Get me a beer, please. Sharonda's fine.
AUDREY
I'm talking about Lee.

ARTHUR
Alike. And I don't see that there's a problem.

AUDREY
I'm tired of this tomboy thing she's got going on. And Laura. You said you were going to handle it.

ARTHUR
Umm-hmm.

AUDREY
She needs a male point of view.

ARTHUR
I said okay, dammit! Now can I please have a beer please?

AUDREY
It's Sunday morning.

ARTHUR
It goes with the spaghetti.

Audrey lifts a beer out of the fridge and slides it in front of Arthur. She pulls up a chair as he plows through the meal, her expression softening as she caresses his forearm.

AUDREY
Do you have to work tonight?

ARTHUR
To put food on the table and clothes on our backs, no. To go out to restaurants and keep designer sneakers in the closet, yes.

AUDREY
Are you forever gonna be mad?

ARTHUR
Are you forever going to be happy?
(beat)
You made that decision a long time ago.
AUDREY
We both made sacrifices.

Alike stomps back into the kitchen wearing the pink v-neck that Audrey bought her and an unflattering pleat-front skirt. Arthur stifles a giggle behind his beer can.

ARTHUR
You look beautiful, baby.

AUDREY
Tuck your blouse in.

ALIKE
This isn't me.

AUDREY
Tuck your blouse in.

ARTHUR
Leave it out.

Audrey frowns at Arthur. Arthur stands his ground.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
I think it's fine out. What's the deal with you and Laura?

ALIKE
What deal?

AUDREY
Comin' in late...

ALIKE
Dad, I hardly ever---

ARTHUR
Why don't you give that a break for a little while?

ALIKE
Dad, come on...

AUDREY
(to Alike)
You heard him!

(MORE)

(to Sharonda)
Sharonda! You done?!

Alike spins into the living room defeated.

**SHARONDA (O.S.)**

Coming!

**AUDREY**

You coming with us?

**ARTHUR**

Nope. Sleep.

**AUDREY**

We could go to a later service. The one o'clock--

**ARTHUR**

I said NO!!

Arthur slams his fork on the plate. Audrey flinches. Alike looks up. Sharonda appears in the doorway, looking from Audrey to Arthur.

**SHARONDA**

I'm ready.

Arthur pushes up from the table.

**ARTHUR**

Alike, you look beautiful.

Everybody looks beautiful, okay?

Arthur disappears into the bedroom. Alike snatches up her bible and launches out the door, Sharonda follows. Audrey pulls on her sunglasses and hat and slams the door behind her.

---

**34 EXT. CHURCH - DAY**

Alike sits in the passenger seat of the car as Audrey chit chats with other churchgoers. Sharonda sits in the back seat, flipping through a CD case and occasionally passing CD's to Alike to play. Alike faces stonily forward except to cast impatient glances in Audrey's direction. Audrey raps on the window.

**AUDREY**

Lee! Lee! Here's someone I want you to meet.
Alike cracks the window an inch.

ALIKE

Huh?

Audrey motions to Bina standing by with her mother, Ms. Singletary. Alike cracks the window a little wider and acknowledges them with a half-hearted wave.

ALIKE (CONT'D)

Oh. Hey.

AUDREY

Get down out the car and come speak.

Laboriously, Alike rolls the window back up, turns off the car radio, and climbs down out of the car.

AUDREY (CONT'D)

What's wrong with you?

ALIKE

Alright, Mom.

AUDREY

You'll have to excuse her, she's been feeling rude lately.

MRS. SINGLETARY

Oh don't worry, Audrey, I understand how it is. Hormones. It's just a phase.

AUDREY

Alike, this is Mrs. Singletary, one of my co-workers and her daughter, Bina. Sylvia, Bina, this is my daughter Alike, we call her "Lee" for short.

Alike shakes both of their hands in turn.

ALIKE

Hi.

MRS. SINGLETARY

Hello.

ALIKE
Nice to meet you.

BINA
Hi.

AUDREY
And this is my youngest daughter, Sharonda.

SHARONDA
Hi.

BINA
Hi.

MRS. SINGLETARY
Hi there, nice to meet you.

AUDREY
Lee, Bina goes to the same school as you.

ALIKE
Cool.

BINA
Yeah, I think I've seen you around. Mrs. Alvarado's class right? AP English?

ALIKE
Yup.

Audrey looks pleased with herself. Alike squirms.

AUDREY
So. Now that we're all acquainted, don't be a stranger.

MRS. SINGLETARY
Oh no, we won't.

AUDREY
Bina I think you and Lee may even go to school the same way. Don't you live off of St. James Place?

MRS. SINGLETARY
There is something to be said for safety in numbers.
Bina nods. Alike squirms.

MRS. SINGLETARY (CONT'D)
Well, we need to be pushing off --
I'll call you about those VBS
workbooks.

Alike retreats into the car, Sharonda hops in behind her.
Alike reaches over and turns the key in the ignition.

AUDREY
Alrighty, I'll be around. Take
care.

Alike toots the horn. Audrey circles and gets in the driver's side.

35 INT. FAMILY CAR - CONTINUOUS

ALIKE
You're funny.

AUDREY
I don't know what your problem is.

SHARONDA
Can somebody put in this CD please?

Audrey cranks the ignition and starts to back out.

ALIKE
I don't know what you think is
going to change.

AUDREY
I know God doesn't make mistakes. I
know that much.

An invisible scab is ripped open in Alike and the fire dies
in her eyes. Satisfied, Audrey slips the car into gear.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
You may not like Bina, but you're
certainly gonna be spending much
less time with that Laura person, I
guarantee you that much.

SHARONDA
Moomom, can you--

AUDREY
Be quiet. Nobody's putting in anything. I'm gonna listen to what I want to listen to for a change.

Alike wilts against the window and tacky zydeco music leaks from the car as it jerks away from the curb and into traffic.

36  EXT. STREET - DAY
Alike strides down the sidewalk. Bina speedwalks to keep up.

BINA
Look, I don't like lying to my mother, that's all.

ALIKE
Then don't, she doesn't have to know.

BINA
She does. She asks me everyday.

ALIKE
So tell her yeah.

BINA
No, I'm sick of lying to cover for you.

ALIKE
So don't.

Bina stops short. Alike keeps walking.

BINA
Look Alike, Lee. Whatever it is you wanna be called. I'm not trying to hang out with you, either, but I'm not about to take an L for it. So stop dodging me, let's just go to school together and be done with it. We don't have to see each other any other time than that.

Alike doesn't miss a step. Bina yells after her.

BINA (CONT'D)
Whatever, my mother asks me again, I'm telling her. Then she can tell your mother, then it's whatever for you.

Alike stops short. Bina crosses the street and continues in the direction away from school. Alike spins around scanning the street, then catches sight of her on the opposite sidewalk.

**ALIKE**

Hey!

Bina keeps on pushing, the school now in sight.

**ALIKE (CONT'D)**

Hey!

Alike checks for traffic then dashes across the street to catch up with her.

**ALIKE (CONT'D)**

Hey look, I'm sorry.

**BINA**

Yeah, you sorry your mom is gonna bug out.

**ALIKE**

No for real, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be that way. It's just... OK, I am concerned that my, my mom will find out, but...

**BINA**

But?

**ALIKE**

It's not like that. It's just--she's just. If you knew her, you'd understand. She's like, I don't know.

The girls walk in silence for a moment.

**ALIKE (CONT'D)**

So what's your favorite class?

**BINA**

You don't have to make small talk.
Let's just walk.

ALIKE
I said I'm sorry. It's not you, it's just that my mom is like, she's like...

BINA
Overprotective?

Alike relaxes her shoulders, both relieved and surprised.

ALIKE
Yeah.

BINA
I can tell. I've seen--I mean, a lot of people's parents are like that.

ALIKE
Yeah?

BINA
Yeah.

ALIKE
Yeah. But probably not like mine. But anyway...

BINA
Anyway, like I said, we don't have to talk. Just walk.

Alike's cell phone chirps--it's Laura. Alike sighs and stuffs the phone back into her pocket.

37 INT. LAURA'S BEDROOM - DAY

ALIKE (V.O.)
Hi! This is Lee, I'm not able to answer my phone right now--

Laura snaps her cell phone shut. A GED study book still glossy and uncreased is propped open on the bed in front of her. She opens her cell phone again and pulls up Alike's number. Her thumb hovers over the 'talk' button. She snaps the phone shut and tosses it aside before turning the radio down and dragging the book closer. The cell phone rings and
she snatches it up. A picture of a girl making a kissy face with the name "Tasha" underneath blinks onto the screen and Laura snaps the phone shut and tosses it aside. She hoists the GED book into her lap and lets her head hit the wall. There is a knock at her bedroom door and Candace peeks in.

CANDACE
How's it comin'?

LAURA
It's good.

Candace smiles at Laura and hesitates before closing the door. Candace turns the radio off before ducking back out. Laura sighs and flips back to the beginning of the book.

38 INT. SPORTS CLUB BASKETBALL COURT - DAY

Alike and Arthur cavort in a sloppy half-court game in the fluorescent glare of the gym. Well-heeled clientele cross to and fro munching power bars and sipping Gatorade. Arthur has an awful shot, but Alike's is worse. Alike heaves a huge airball past the basket.

ARTHUR
Oh my God!!

Alike cracks up as Arthur chases down the ball.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
That's just embarrassing!

ALIKE
You ain't got no range, either.

ARTHUR
Yeah but at least I hit the backboard. Damn.

Alike rushes to guard Arthur who dribbles clumsily around the key. He tries a crossover move and lobs an ugly shot toward the basket.

ALIKE
Brick!!

Laughing, they tussle over the rebound. Arthur recovers.

ARTHUR
What's the score?

    ALIKE
    One up.

    ARTHUR
    One?

    ALIKE
    Yup!

    ARTHUR
    One? Nah, I definitely have like three. At least three.

Giggling, the pair rollick in another squeaky-shoed play.

39 INT. LIQUOR STORE - NIGHT

MACK, the store proprietor leans against the counter flipping through a newspaper. Arthur, in uniform mulls through the sports section. A ratty looking man, SOCK sips from a red plastic cup.

Mack cranks the volume on the tiny television above the counter.

MACK
It's on again... Check it out Free. Channel 5 and Channel 2.

Arthur appears on the TV screen, dressed in suit, tie, sunglasses and looking impressive. He is talking to a news reporter and a bad news graphic reading "East Side Drug Bust--Detective Arthur Freeman" blots out the bottom of the screen.

    SOCK
    Look who's big time.

    MACK
    Brother was looking clean though.
    Looked just like, look like...uh--
    Danny Glover!

Arthur and Mack laugh and slap hands. Sock sneers at their revelry.

The bell over the door tinkles and a heavyset BUTCH WOMAN strolls in. Her head is shaved and a thick wallet chain
clinks against her ample carpenter pants. All three men turn to stare.

**MACK (CONT'D)**

Been more of that since they opened up that new club 'cross the way.

Arthur grunts and returns to his paper.

**SOCK**

(to Butch Woman)

Excuse me Miss??!! Miisisssss??!!

**MACK**

Certain Friday nights they got, you know special parties going on.

**SOCK**

Or should I say Sir??!! Siiir??!! Hello?!!

**ARTHUR**

Chill out, Sock.

**SOCK**

Hey, my man! You hear me talkin' to you?!

Mack snatches Sock's cup. Sock pivots around to protest.

**SOCK**

Hey!!

**MACK**

Mind your business.

Sock yanks his cup back and turns to resume his taunts. He's caught off guard and stumbles backward as the woman pushes up to the counter with a case of liquor. Arthur steps out of the way and observes.

**BUTCH WOMAN**

And a pack of Kools.

Mack nods and fishes under the counter.

**SOCK**

Say, I been trying to get your attention. Do you go by Sir or Miss?
MACK
That'll be all ma'am?

BUTCH WOMAN
Yeah.

SOCK
Look I just had a simple question I
wanted to ask. See, I just want to
know how does pussy taste?

The woman directs her full attention at Sock for the first
time. Mack watches as he quickly punches in the sale. Arthur
stiffens.

SOCK (CONT'D)
You know, I just wanna know if you
go with women for the taste, or is
it just you're too big, black, and
ugly so don't no man want you?

Sock laughs at his own nasty joke and takes a sip from his
cup.

MACK
$65.07 ma'am.

The woman counts out the money and smiles at Sock.

BUTCH WOMAN
I can't lie, pussy do taste good.

SOCK
Oh yeah?

The woman takes her time putting away her change.

BUTCH WOMAN (CONT'D)
Maybe you should try it yourself
sometime. Or better yet--

The woman picks up her case.

BUTCH WOMAN (CONT'D)
--ask yo' wife how she likes me!

The woman winks at Sock. Arthur chokes back a guffaw. As soon
as the woman clears the door, Arthur and Mack explode in
laughter. Sock is livid and screams after her.
SOCK
Fuckin' Bulldagger! He-She! Dyke!

MACK
Ask your wife!

ARTHUR
She told you.

SOCK
She ain't tell me shit! I don't know what the fuck y'all niggas are laughing for!

MACK
Awww shut up. Your big mouth got you in trouble as usual.

SOCK
Thought you was my friend, Mack. But I guess I ain't expect you to defend me Free, the way your daughter is--

Arthur slams Sock against the counter before he can finish his sentence.

ARTHUR
Say what?!

MACK
He don't mean nothin'! He don't know what he's talking about!

Arthur grinds Sock's collar tighter around his trembling fist. Sock glares back, clearly punked.

MACK (CONT'D)
He ain't moved outside a two-mile radius of where he crawled out his mammy's pussy. He don't know shit.

SOCK
(to MACK)
I been to Poughkeepsie!

Arthur snorts and flings Sock loose.

50.

MACK
Carry your Poughkeepsie ass on out of my store!

Mack sweeps Sock's plastic cup off the counter and into a garbage can. Sock trots to the door.

**SOCK**

Fuck y'all!

**ARTHUR**

I should arrest your ass.

**SOCK**

Man, fuck y'all!!

**MACK**

Free, don't pay him no mind. Just talkin' trash.

Mack playfully jabs him in the shoulder and bustles underneath the counter. Arthur's eyes linger on the door and his jaw tightens.

40  **INT. LAURA'S KITCHEN - DAY**

Laura swings through the front door of her apartment, Alike close behind. She slides two twenty dollar bills underneath the ceramic hen on the table and breezes into her bedroom.

41  **INT. LAURA'S BEDROOM - LATER**

Alike is a paper doll in Laura's floor length mirror, dressed only in boxers and a wife beater. Laura holds a bright orange polo shirt up in front of Alike's torso. Alike cocks her head to the side and considers.

**LAURA**

Damn, this is your color. So what's the deal incog-negro?

**ALIKE**

Mom has me hemmed up.

**LAURA**

Your phone ain't broke. You coulda called a nigga. Put this on.

Laura pulls away the orange polo shirt and hands Alike a
turquoise one instead. Alike hoists the oversized shirt over her head.

**ALIKE**

My bad. She's making me hang out with this chick from church. It's crazy.

**LAURA**

Makin' you?! You a grown-ass woman, bruh!

Laura shakes her head as she plucks a brand new baseball cap from the wall rack and drops it onto Alike's head. Alike considers and takes it off. Laura puts another cap in its place. Before Alike can object, Laura tosses her a pair of denim shorts.

**LAURA (CONT'D)**

Try these with it. So I guess the piers is out for Saturday, huh?

**ALIKE**

I don't even know if that's me anymore.

Alike struggles into the jean shorts, widening her stance so they don't fall down. Laura tosses her a belt and admires Alike's reflection.

**LAURA**

Yeah, that's hot, yo. You should rock that.

**ALIKE (CONT'D)**

I was gonna see if you wanna do something different?

Alike strips off the baseball cap and hangs it back on the rack.

**LAURA**

Different like what?

Alike peels out of the polo shirt.

**ALIKE**

I don't know--maybe like a open mic or something.
LAURA
Open mic? Nah, man. It's plenty chicks at the piers, you just gotta be more confident.

Laura crosses to her closet and scans its inventory. The jeans are arranged crisply on hangers from light to dark and some still have store tags. Most of the shirts are still enclosed in protective plastic covers from the dry cleaners. Laura passes Alike a perfectly folded button down shirt.

LAURA (CONT'D)
You can rock this. I haven't even worn it yet. But I understand if you got better things to do.

Alike holds the shirt against her torso and stares at her reflection. She catches Laura's eager look in the mirror and wilts.

ALIKE
Nah, I'm down.

LAURA
You sure? I don't want you getting hemmed up.

ALIKE
Nah seriously, I'm down for whatever.

LAURA
Real?

ALIKE
Promise.

LAURA
That's what's up! I'ma take the whole day off. It's gonna be tight watch... we gon' do it up!

Laura holds a new pair of jeans against her body and does a little dance. Alike laughs wanly.

42 INT. ALIKE'S PARENT'S BEDROOM - EVENING 42

Audrey sits between Alike's knees as Alike oils her scalp. Alike takes her time, massaging each braid between her hands before moving to the next. Audrey reads an Essence magazine, the cover of which reads "101 Ways to Please Your Man."
ALIKE
You should wear your hair down sometimes.

AUDREY
Your father likes it up.

ALIKE
It looks nice down.

Alike catches her mother's eye in the mirror's reflection, they share a sad moment. Audrey closes the magazine and tosses it back onto the bed.

AUDREY
Maybe. Anyway give this back to Bina's mom when you go over tomorrow night.

ALIKE
Saturday night?!

AUDREY
We talked about this.

ALIKE
No we didn't.

AUDREY
Lee--

ALIKE
I had plans for this weekend.

AUDREY
Well, you don't have to go to Bina's on Saturday night, you can always stay home with me.

ALIKE
Oh my God!

43 INT. BINA'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Bina sits on the floor, flipping through CD's. Alike sits in a chair, head in hand, completely disinterested.

BINA
You like Destiny's Child?

ALIKE
Uhh-uhh.

BINA
Jay-Z?

ALIKE
Nope.

BINA
Fifty?

ALIKE
No, I don't really like any of that commercial bullshit.

Bina looks up, off balanced.

BINA
Oh. Who do you like?

Alike checks the time on her phone.

ALIKE
Shit!

Alike starts packing her backpack.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
Just more underground stuff. None of that crap they play on the radio.

BINA
Like who?

ALIKE
People you probably haven't heard of. Conscious stuff.

BINA
Like who?

ALIKE

BINA
Pharcyde? I heard of Pharcyde.

ALIKE
Ah--for real?

BINA

Alike perks up, looking genuinely interested for the first time.

ALIKE
Uh-oh, whatchu know about Bahamadia? Let me find out....

BINA
I'm not as generic as you think.

The phone rings. Mrs. Singletary answers from another room. Alike and Bina freeze, listening.

MRS. SINGLETARY (O.S.)
Hello? Hi Audrey. Yes. Yeah she's here. I understand--

Alike sulks. Bina flips to the back of the CD book.

BINA
Alright, how about Rock?

ALIKE
It's cool.

BINA
Whatchu know about Santogold? Since you all underground and stuff.

ALIKE
She's tight.

BINA
Tamar-kali?

ALIKE
I haven't heard of her, I heard of Res.

Alike hoists the backpack onto her shoulder and stands to leave.
BINA
Oh no this is way better, you gotta check her out.

Bina jams her iPod onto the stereo adapter. The thick, fierce guitar rhythms of Tamar-kali's "Boot" consume the room. Bina chants the lyrics along with the music.

BINA (CONT'D)
"Her hair is short. Her legs are brown. Her lips are full. Her head hangs down."

Alike plops back down in her chair.

ALIKE
Wow.

44 INT. ALIKE'S KITCHEN - SAME TIME INTERCUT
Audrey smooths a pink sticky note onto a foil covered plate and shoves it into the fridge. The doorbell rings and she rushes across the room and opens the door in her most sing-song voice.

AUDREY
He-llooo.

LAURA
Hello Mrs. Freeman. Is Lee home please?

AUDREY
She's out with her friend right now, Laura. You take care.

Audrey starts to close the door. Laura stops it with her hand.

LAURA
Oh. Umm do you know when she'll be back?

AUDREY
No, I believe she's out for the evening.

LAURA
Oh, because we had umm... alright
then... Thank you.

   AUDREY

Goodnight.

Audrey shuts the door harder than necessary. Laura checks her phone and shakes her head.

45   INT. BINA'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME INTERCUT

   BINA
   "Twist a virgin `round your dirty little finger!
   (MORE)

   Blood is gone but the memory lingers...twist a virgin `round your bloody little finger, love is gone, but the memory lingers!"

Alike is bobbing her head, backpack forgotten on her shoulder. Bina cranks the volume down.

   ALIKE
   Yo, this shit is hot!

   BINA
   Told you. Don't you have to go?
   I'll cover. It's cool.

   ALIKE
   Nah, I wanna stay.

Alike slings her backpack to the floor and pulls the CD book into her lap. Her cell phone rings and she ignores it.

46   EXT. THE PIERS - LATER

The pier is a parade of mohawks, curly weaves, tight jeans, and rainbow belts as groups of baby dykes, young queens, and gender queer youth of all shades of brown stroll cavort, and strut seeing and wanting to be seen. Equally bedecked observers hoot and yell from bench and rail perches on both sides. Laura jabs numbers into her cell phone. Competing threads of house music throb across the boardwalk in muffled bursts as groups of ballers vogue and prance behind her.

   ALIKE (V.O.)
Leave a message and I'll call you back. BEEP.

Laura yanks her phone away from her ear and looks at the screen. She starts to hang up but pulls it back to her ear.

**LAURA**
Where you at? Hit me up when you get here.

47 **INT. BINA'S BEDROOM - LATER**

Alike and Bina are sprawled in the floor. Bina DJ's from her laptop.

**ALIKE**
Mrs. Alvarado was trying to get me to check out this one place.

Alike hands her the flyer. Bina laughs and tosses it back.

**BINA**
Oh hell, no. That's for old people-- I'll write down some places you should check out. Maybe you could read some of my stuff, too.

**ALIKE**
Definitely.

48 **EXT. THE PIERS - SAME TIME INTERCUT**

Laura scowls at her cell phone screen. She shoves the phone in her pocket and pulls her hoodie up against the chill of the evening. Brake lights bathe Laura and her circle of AG's in red as late-night predators cruise the strip for fresh meat. Laura catches sight of shady sexual encounters in an alley across the street and looks away. One of the entourage passes Laura a joint and she inhales deeply. A few of the girls have backpacks and the group is pensive as they break off and scatter into the night one by one.

**PIER GIRL #1**
'Member when we used to stay out here all night?

**PIER GIRL #2**
Shit, used to?
PIER GIRL #1
You stay with your sister now, huh?

Laura nods and spits.

PIER GIRL #2
Lucky as hell.

49 INT. AP ENGLISH CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

AP English class is a safe haven. The desks are pulled together in a rough circle and are filled with heavily pierced, dyed hair, and vintage clothes types. Mrs. Alvarado sits cross-legged atop her desk taking notes. Alike stands at the center of the circle reciting an original poem.

ALIKE
A butterfly, briefly
Suffocated
On the mucous of its own change
Imprisoned

(MORE)

By the membranous chaff of its own
underdeveloped
Wings
And
Cramped
In the darkness of the too-tight
cocoon of its own creation
Pauses
Thinking death inevitable
Prepares to die in the absolute
solitude
Of Swollen Husk.
A c r a c k appears
A thin jagged light connecting
The inner to the outer world
A butterfly, briefly
Paralyzed by the imminence of death
Discovers life is possible.

The class claps.

MRS. ALVARADO
Comments? Critiques? Julie, tell me what you think.
A forest of hands go up as Alike winds her way back to her seat. A few classmates whisper brief encouragements. Bina nods and smiles at Alike. Unguarded, Alike smiles back.

50 EXT. STREET - DAY 50

Bina and Alike troop home at a more leisurely pace. Alike breaks the silence for once.

ALIKE
I liked your story, though. It was tight.

BINA
Yeah? Which one? The one about the--

ALIKE
The one about karma, how things come back to you. That one, I thought it was tight.

BINA
For real? Thanks. I wasn't gonna say anything, but I liked yours too.

ALIKE
Why?

BINA
Why did I like it or why wasn't I gonna say anything?

ALIKE
Why did you like it?

BINA
I don't know. I guess because it felt honest.

ALIKE
Oh.

BINA
Didn't you have on a different shirt earlier?

ALIKE
What?
BINA
Nothin'.

ALIKE
No, what'd you say?

BINA
Nothin'.

ALIKE
Yeah, I had on a different shirt.

BINA
Oh... Well, that's cool.

ALIKE
So why weren't you gonna say anything about it?

BINA
About your shirt?

ALIKE
About the poem.

BINA
Cause you're moody.

ALIKE
Moody?

BINA
And quiet.

ALIKE
Man, I'm not moody.

BINA
Yeah, right.

Bina stops.

ALIKE
What?

BINA
This is me.

Alike looks up at the stoop, surprised.
BINA (CONT'D)
It's not so bad when there's some conversation, huh?

Alike looks away.

BINA (CONT'D)
You wanna come up?

51 INT. BINA'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Alike sits on Bina's twin bed, looking around and really taking in the room for the first time. She reaches over and picks up a little molded soldier figure off of the shelf. Bina fishes around in a rack of CDs.

ALIKE
Who gave you this?

BINA
What the bear? My dad.

ALIKE
No, this.

Alike holds the figurine out, Bina looks at it over her shoulder.

BINA
Oh that. Girl, my stupid ex-boyfriend gave me that.

ALIKE
Oh. Cute.

Bina opens a CD case and pulls the booklet out.

BINA
Not really. I mean I guess it was at the time.

Bina lobs the little army man into a trash can across the room and hands Alike the booklet.

BINA (CONT'D)
Anyway, this is the other artist I was telling you about. Her stuff is like, bouncier.
A buoyant Afropunk beat wafts through the bedroom. Bina plops down on the bed next to Alike.

**ALIKE**
This is straight. You'll burn me a copy?

**BINA**
Yeah, I have a bunch of other stuff, too.
(beat)
So who do you hang out with? I don't really see you with anybody.

Alike shrugs and rifles through her backpack. She pulls out her composition book. Awkward silence.

**BINA (CONT'D)**
I didn't mean it like that. I was just asking because I was curious. I don't really like anybody that goes there either.

**ALIKE**
My friend Laura used to go there. Not now, but she's going back.

**BINA**
Oh because, I was just gonna say--I'm going to this house party and you can come if you want to.

Bina waves her hand at the radio.

**BINA (CONT'D)**
They play this kind of music.

**ALIKE**
Sure. How'm I supposed to dress?

**BINA**
You don't dress. You just come however. Come as you are.

Alike nods.

**BINA (CONT'D)**
Can I see?
Bina snatches the book from Alike's hands and starts flipping through pages before Alike can answer.

**ALIKE**

Yeah...But that's mainly old stuff, though.

**BINA**

This is the one you did today?

**ALIKE**

Yeah.

**BINA**

Nice.

Bina offers the journal back to Alike. Alike reaches for it. Bina pulls it away at the last second--an impromptu game of keep away.

**BINA (CONT'D)**

Take it.

Alike misses again. The girls crack up.

**BINA (CONT'D)**

Sorry, here.

Bina yanks it away again. Alike gives up, still smiling.

**ALIKE**

You play too much.

**BINA**

Seriously, it's right here. Just take it.

Alike summons the courage for one last swipe. She manages to grab it but Bina doesn't let go right away. The girls lock eyes during the extemporaneous tug-of-war.

**ALIKE**

Thank you...

**BINA**

You're welcome...

Beaming with her victory, Alike busies herself with the journal. Bina recruits a small stuffed moose for her next foray. She dances the moose up Alike's arm and plants an
exaggerated peck on her cheek with it.

BINA (CONT'D)
Mmmwaahhh!

The girls erupt into renewed giggles. Bina tosses the stuffed animal aside and scoots closer to read over Alike's shoulder.

BINA (CONT'D)
What's so private?

ALIKE
Nothin', just my writings...

Bina studies Alike's profile. She leans in and pecks Alike on the cheek. Alike lets the kiss soak in, glancing at Bina sidelong. Bina leans in again, this time planting a long kiss on Alike's lips. Alike pulls away. Bina tenses for the verdict.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
Why'd you do that for?

BINA
Sorry---

ALIKE
No, I'm sorry. I just umm...I gotta go.

BINA
I thought--

ALIKE
Sorry.

Alike blindly grabs up her things and rushes the door, Bina flounders in her wake.

52  INT. LAURA'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING  52

Laura and a group of friends play a rowdy game of spades. A cute Puerto Rican girl is draped around Laura's neck like a PERSONAL CHEERLEADER. Music blasts from the TV but doesn't drown out the hoots and banter of the rollicking entourage. There is a knock at the door.

LAURA
You'll get that for me?
One of the friends breaks away from the pack, opens the door without greeting and walks away. Alike is left alone to escort herself in. Laura hardly looks up as Alike stops at the fringes of the pack.

**ALIKE**

Wassup man.

A collective grumble of greeting goes up around the table although no one addresses Alike directly. Laura slams the table and raises her hands in triumph.

**LAURA**

Board, goddammit!! I told you!

**PIER GIRL #1**

Awww, we shoulda been done set you!

Laura slaps hands with her partner. The unlucky pair of partners argue. The personal cheerleader kisses Laura on the neck. Alike looks away.

**PERSONAL CHEERLEADER**

Good game, baby!

**LAURA**

What's good, Lee?

**ALIKE**

Just came to say wassup.

**LAURA**

Whatchu got, Ty?

**PIER GIRL #2**

Three, maybe four.

**LAURA**

We goin' eight!!

Roars of disbelief from around the table. Alike is quickly forgotten in the ruckus. Alike circles to Laura's side. The personal cheerleader looks her up and down.

**ALIKE**

Can I talk to you for a second?

**LAURA**

Now I got to cut you!! Grab 'em partner. We gonna run a Boston on that ass!
(to Alike)
Yo, I'm busy right now.

More raucous laughter from the table. Alike endures another few moments of card slapping, table pounding dejection before leaning into Laura's ear.

ALIKE
I really need to talk to you--

LAURA
I said later!

Wide-eyed silence and scattered snickers around the table. Laura resumes her hand and the game banter cranks back up. Alike picks up her face and slips away.

PIER GIRL #3
Thought that was your girl?

LAURA
Mind your business. Bam! That's what I thought!

Laura slaps another card on the table and takes a deep swig of water.

53 INT. ALIKE'S PARENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Audrey lies awake in bed. The clock on the nightstand indicates a little past two in the morning. She looks at the sliver of light underneath the bedroom door, the sound of Arthur's key in the door breaks the silence. Arthur's voice in hushed tones. Audrey rolls over and faces the wall.

54 INT. ALIKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alike watches her father's footsteps break up the light beneath her door. She tosses off her blankets and springs into the hallway.

ALIKE
(loud whisper)
Hey Dad!

She is talking to empty air. She eases down the hallway
toward the kitchen and the sound of his muffled voice.

   ALIKE (CONT'D)

   Dad?

   ARTHUR (O.S.)

   Come on now, you know that's not what I want. That's not what I'm saying. That's not--listen to me. Are you gonna listen to me?

   ALIKE

   Mom?

Alike stops short outside the kitchen door, confused.

   ARTHUR (O.S.)

   Lee? Hold on.

55 INT. ALIKE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Alike swings around the corner.

   ALIKE

   Huh?

   ARTHUR

   No, not you.

   (into phone)

   Hey, I'll talk to you later, alright? My daughter's up.

   Arthur flips his cell phone shut and tucks it into his pocket. He fishes a beer out of the fridge.

   ALIKE

   Who was that?

   Arthur sips his beer and walks over to the kitchen table. A foil covered plate with a little pink sticky note waits.

   ARTHUR

   What you doing up?

   ALIKE

   Just wanted to talk.

   Arthur crumples the sticky note and tosses it into the trash without reading it. He peels up one side of the foil, peeks
at the food underneath, and launches it into the trash, too.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
Dad, the plate--don't trash the plate.

Arthur strips off his dress shirt and tie and flings them into the living room.

68.

Alike rescues the plate from the garbage and carefully lays it in the sink so it doesn't clatter.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
Aren't you hungry?

ARTHUR
Ate already.

ALIKE
You ate at work?

ARTHUR
No, just grabbed some take out.

ALIKE
Oh. Where?

Arthur explodes.

ARTHUR
Why you asking me all these goddamn questions, girl? What's wrong with you? You don't question me.

ALIKE
Sorry.

Alike starts to head back to her room.

ARTHUR
Hold up. I'm sorry, Alike come on back. Look-- I got patties...

Arthur tosses a greasy bag onto the table and pulls out a chair for her.

ALIKE
Beef?

ARTHUR
And chicken. C'mon.

Alike sits happily and the two munch in silence for awhile.

ARTHUR
Listen uh...Your momma's worried that uh...How's school? Straight A's?

ALIKE
Probably.

ARTHUR
That's right. Want a sip?

Arthur offers her the beer. Alike takes it to the head.

ARTHUR
I said a sip. A sip!

Arthur snatches the beer from her. They laugh. Alike picks at her patty, eating little pieces of crust.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
What's on you your mind?

ALIKE
Nothin'.

Arthur snorts.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
What if--what if...say somebody liked you right?

ARTHUR
They like you? Or they like you, like you?

ALIKE
Say they like you, like you.

ARTHUR
Uh-huh.

ALIKE
I mean, they haven't said anything yet. But what if... so what if the person is kinda like a friend, but you know they like you more than
that?

**ARTHUR**
Well, I think that's the best way to start--as friends.

**ALIKE**
But then what if...What if the person is --

Arthur scents the heavy news packed in Alike's expressive pause and scrambles to intercept her at the pass.

**ARTHUR (CONT'D)**
What's his name? What grade is he in?

(MORE)

I'ma look his ass up in the system. Ha-ha! Wait 'till your mama finds out. She'll be so goddamn happy.

Alike plays along, swallowing her disappointment.

**ALIKE**
Yeah.

Arthur pushes back from the table and pulls a fresh police uniform out the hall closet. He lays it across the back of the couch and unzips his pants. Alike turns her back to give him privacy.

**ARTHUR**
Say uh--there's this new--uh women's club up there by the liquor store--have you--do you--you haven't heard anything about it, right?

Alike shakes her head no. Arthur tucks his undershirt into his pants.

**ARTHUR (CONT'D)**
Called the Kitty Litter, the Catbox, something like that?

**ALIKE**
Nah, I never even heard of it.

**ARTHUR**
Good. 'Cause you know that's a uh...it's a rough neighborhood. You know that right? I had a case over there. You wanna be careful--stay away from that element. Just in case it ever comes up?

ALIKE
I'll be careful.

ARTHUR
Good. I know you will.

Alike glances back at Arthur and sees that he's decent. She scoots back around to face him. Arthur smooths his uniform shirt into his pants.

ALIKE
Dad, when you were on the phone earlier? It sounded like...I mean...I guess you're headed back to work, huh?

ARTHUR
Yep. Your mama still up?

ALIKE
Probably.

ARTHUR
Tell her I had to work.

Arthur picks up his work tote and kisses Alike on the forehead.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Love you.

56   INT. LAURA'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Laura jams a pillow into a t-shirt as a makeshift pillowcase as she escorts one of the pier girls to the couch. The pier girl looks slightly unkempt and is relieved to plop her knapsack on the floor. Laura tosses the pillow onto the couch.

LAURA
My sister gets home at six so, you gotta be gone by then.
PIER GIRL #2
Good looking.

LAURA
There's some lunchmeat in there too, help yourself.

PIER GIRL #2
'Preciate ya.

Laura pulls up close to the kitchen table. The GED test prep book, now dog-eared and worn is on the table in front of her.

She finds her place and copies notes and multiple choice answers into a spiral notebook. A stack of old Math and English textbooks are in a chair next to her and the room is peaceful and still save for the scratching of her pencil.

57 INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON 57

Alike spies on Bina stuffing books into her locker. She draws her breath and approaches.

ALIKE
Hey.

BINA
Hey.

A long awkward silence. Alike leans against the bank of lockers, not daring to make eye contact.

ALIKE
I'm sorry about the other day.

BINA
It's cool.

Bina pretends to rearrange books in her locker.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
Things have been crazy. But look, I'm sorry I bugged out. It's just...I didn't know that you...I wasn't expecting that.

BINA
You still coming to the party?
ALIKE
I don't know--I need to try and catch up with Laura.

BINA
Oh.

ALIKE
But I do wanna hang out...I mean...maybe we could do both.

Bina smiles and shuts the locker door.

BINA
Cool.

(beat)
You could spend the night if want to. Avoid the whole curfew thing.

ALIKE
Yeah...

BINA
You sure?

ALIKE
Yeah.

58  INT. FAMILY CAR - DAY

Arthur coaches Alike as she navigates the car to a jerky stop in front of Mack's liquor store.

ARTHUR
Easy, easy now. Watch your right hand side.

ALIKE
I am.

ARTHUR
Don't ride the brakes though. Good.

ALIKE
See? I'm getting better!! Can I drive back?

Arthur rubs his chest in mock heart-attack.
ARTHUR
I don't about that. You're shaky girl, you're shaky. Get us some chips and I'll think about it.

Arthur hands Alike a five dollar bill and she bounces down out of the car.

59  EXT. LIQUOR STORE - CONTINUOUS

Arthur shouts a greeting to Mack who lounges on a plastic chair outside his door. Sock and TWO OTHER MEN chit chat nearby. Their chatter lowers as Arthur approaches. Alike bops into the store.

MACK
Hey, baby!

ALIKE
Hey Mr. Ferguson!

MACK
I see Alike's been running circles around you again!

ARTHUR
Little bit, little bit. I still got it though.

Arthur claps Mack on the shoulder and glimpses Sock whispering to one of the men.

Arthur follows the men's gazes over to Alike at the potato chip rack. She twirls the string of her basketball shorts round and round her finger and idly hikes the collar of her t-shirt up over her nose. The smile evaporates from Arthur's face.

Sock peers back at him, smirking. Arthur starts toward him, when Alike saunters out between them.

ARTHUR
We better get going.

MACK (CONT'D)
Gone already?
ARTHUR

I'll holler at you later.

Arthur crosses the lot in a bound, snatches the car keys from Alike's hand, and hustles her into the car.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Get in the car.

ALIKE

But you said I could drive--

ARTHUR

I said get in the car!

Alike frowns, then catches sight of the men in front of the store. She slumps into the car and slams the door. Arthur piles into the driver's seat. They sit in silence for a moment, Alike traces the lines in her hands.

60 INT. ARTHUR'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

ARTHUR

Look...umm...you know you're daddy's girl, right?

Alike avoids eye contact, staring out her window. Arthur searches her face a moment longer, then starts the car and pulls away in silence.

61 INT. ALIKE'S APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Audrey reclines on the couch reading a book. The doorknob jiggles and Audrey folds the book against her chest, pretending to be asleep.

75.

Arthur slips in and lays his holster on an armchair, not even bothering to approach Audrey's sleeping form.

Arthur peeks inside the fridge and inspects one of Audrey's foil covered plates. He tosses it aside and gathers sandwich ingredients instead. Audrey yawns and props herself up on one elbow.

AUDREY

Oh you're home?

ARTHUR
Hey.

AUDREY
I must've dozed off. How long have you been in?

ARTHUR
Hour.

Dad takes a bite of his sandwich and shoves the ingredients back into the fridge.

AUDREY
Did you see the plate in there?

ARTHUR
This is fine.

Arthur plops down on an armchair and flips the TV channel to sports highlights. Mom scoots over on the couch.

AUDREY
There's room over here. You can see the TV better.

ARTHUR
This is fine.

Arthur props his feet up on the coffee table and catches Audrey's hurt expression. He winks at her.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Thank you.

AUDREY
Just alike.

ARTHUR
Say what?

AUDREY
You and your daughter. Have you talked to Lee yet? I told you she--

ARTHUR
I talked to Alike.

AUDREY
You did?
ARTHUR
Everything's fine. Like I told you. Matter fact, she's got a boyfriend.

AUDREY
Boyfriend?

ARTHUR
Just give her some space.

AUDREY
Space? She's hardly ever home in the first place and you're just like her, creeping in all hours of the night. Both of you. Running around like you got something to hide, like I'm the big, bad witch and what about me? I'm home by myself all the time and Sharonda's getting older and starting to go out and pretty soon--

ARTHUR
I don't have anything to hide. Look I told you I talked to Alike and everything is fine.

AUDREY
Did you ask her?

Dad slams down his half-eaten sandwich and stands up.

ARTHUR
No, because I didn't have to. Besides, I would know okay? If anybody would know, it would be me. I know my daughter--

AUDREY
Your daughter?!!

ARTHUR
--better than anyone else and--

AUDREY
So now all of a sudden she's just your daughter?!

ARTHUR
--I'm telling you she's just

AUDREY
Well I guess I better not
fine!!

have nothing else to say
then, huh?!

ARTHUR
That's your damn problem, you're
too much of a damn worry wart.

AUDREY
Let's hope you're right, Detective.

ARTHUR
Will you shut the fuck up?!

Audrey jerks to her feet and flings the book aside.

AUDREY
An hour? Really? I'm not your dumb
damn floozy in the street. And you
will not talk to me that way.

Audrey slaps the sandwich off Arthur's plate and storms to
the bedroom. Arthur sees Sharonda peeking from her bedroom
door but can't summon any words. Sharonda skitters into
Alike's bedroom.

62  INT. ALIKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT  62

Alike is awake, hands folded behind her head. Sharonda curls
up on top of the covers next to her.

ALIKE
I know you're not scared.

SHARONDA
I'm not.

The girls lay silently as they listen to Arthur bang around
in the kitchen.

SHARONDA (CONT'D)
Lee?

ALIKE
Hmm?

SHARONDA
I hope you know it doesn't matter
to me.
Alike rubs Sharonda's head and gives her a little squeeze.

ALIKE

I know.

63 INT. HOUSE PARTY/POETRY SLAM - NIGHT

A MOHAWKED WOMAN yowls into a microphone atop a coffee table turned stage. Kids roam from room to room nursing plastic cups. Some in elaborate ensembles, some in thrift store duds, others in plain old jeans, but no two people the same. Alike clad in simple shirt and jeans looks especially comfortable as she and Bina ease their way through the crowd. In between performers, guitar riffs rock the large loft apartment and render their voices practically inaudible.

MONTAGE:

--Bina introduces Alike to different people, Alike is welcomed

--Alike & Bina point out different performers, they laugh and talk in each other's ears

--Alike and Bina dance wildly in the middle of the crowd, surrounded by dozens of other clamorous bodies

--One performer beckons Alike up onto the table, Alike demurs at first, then leaps on top of the table. Bina cheers.

--Alike drags a giggling Bina out of the party and they crash into the open night

64 EXT. THE PIERS - NIGHT

Lights glisten across the Hudson River--distant orbs reflected in a thousand shimmering faux stars in weak defiance against the night sky. A sodium vapor glow veils everything in generous haloes, making the night more beautiful than it really is.

Dancing silhouettes, laughing, playing, yelling, flying, always dancing silhouettes punctuate the summer breeze with clapping set to the rhythm of soulful house. Like Puck on a midsummer's night, like Peter Pan and his lost boys. Among the silhouettes is Laura, enthroned atop a railing. Laura, smoking a joint grandly, surrounded by an adoring circle, a sycophantic harem of four.
Laura, completely miserable as she watches two other silhouettes drawing closer, spinning, collapsing, now righting, always connected. Alike and Bina. Bina smiles and snakes her arms around Alike's neck. Alike too shy to react, giggles and folds. Laura watches the pair spin and passes to the left before stalking off toward the connected shadows.

65   EXT. THE PIERS- CONTINUOUS 65

Laura cuffs Alike on the neck, pulling Alike's hoodie up over her face. Alike's laugh is tentative at first, not sure whether this is play or for real. Laura chuckles, breaking the ice. The pair slapbox and rough house, both missing with wild arcing blows. Laura aims a mini charge at Alike that lifts her off the ground and deposits her a short distance away. Alike swipes Laura's hat. Laura claps Alike on the shoulder and Alike waves to Bina. Bina waves and smiles.

ALIKE
So whatchu you think? She's cool right?

Laura looks around and shrugs. Laura plucks a fresh joint out of her coat and lights it.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
She's hot right? I told you. It was so tight. I'm tellin' you, you shoulda been there tonight!

Laura takes a puff and offers it to Alike.

LAURA
This one's just for me and you.

Alike waves it off, oblivious and intoxicated with the night.

ALIKE
And she's smart, too. She does poetry, you should hear it. It's like, it's good, you know?

Laura stops walking and Alike skips ahead, still chattering.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
I was thinking next weekend the three of us could--

LAURA
Look, I'm right here.
Alike snaps out of it.

**ALIKE (CONT'D)**
Oh my bad, I thought you were beside me. Anyway, I was thinking--

**LAURA**
Look, I'm sorry for all the drama.

**ALIKE**
No, it's cool. I shoulda--

**LAURA**
What I'm saying is, I probably overreacted.
(beat)
And then...I don't know. Seeing you two together or whatever. I'm glad to see you're finally happy.

**ALIKE**
C'mon man, you know you're my best friend. Nobody's gonna --

**LAURA**
You don't need to say anything. I just wanted to get it off my chest. I'm happy for you, that's all.

Alike shakes her head. Her mouth moves but nothing comes out.

**LAURA (CONT'D)**
Because I love you, alright? And I'm sayin'...I'm right here.

Alike is stopped cold, as the light bulb finally goes off. Laura takes a long drag on the joint. Bina and Mika stumble over giggling. Bina hooks Alike's arm. Mika kisses Laura on the neck. Laura snaps out of her gaze, her familiar smirk creeping back.

**MIKA**
We goin' to get something to eat?

**LAURA**
That's what's up.

**ALIKE**
Listen, umm--
Laura pinches out the joint and hands it to Mika who tucks it away.

**LAURA**
That's for later. Bina, nice to meet you.

**BINA**
You too. We had fun.

Laura gives Bina a polite hug, pounds Alike on the shoulder and starts to lead Mika away.

**MIKA**
Byyee!!

**ALIKE**
Hey hold up!

Laura pumps a lazy fist in the air in acknowledgement. Bina takes Alike's hand and slowly drags her away. Alike keeps looking back, then finally gives up. Laura looks back just as and disappears around the corner.

**BINA (CONT'D)**
I like your friends. They're cool.

---

**66 INT. BINA'S BEDROOM - LATER**

Music videos play on the TV. Alike and Bina lay stretched out on pillows, a plate of brownie crumbs between them. Alike dozes. Bina smacks her with a pillow.

**ALIKE**
I'm not sleep.

**BINA**
Yes you are.

Alike rubs sleep out of her eyes and props herself up on one elbow.

**ALIKE**
Any brownies left?

**BINA**
Nope.

Bina flicks off the TV and stares at Alike.

**ALIKE**
What?

BINA

Nothing.

Alike looks away.

BINA (CONT'D)

What?

ALIKE

Nothing.

Alike folds her arms behind her head. Bina strokes Alike's stomach. Her finger's dance at the top of Alike's pajama bottoms. Their eyes meet. Alike sits bolt upright.

BINA

What're you doing? What's wrong?

ALIKE

This is uh... I never... I'm sorry, I'm trippin' out.

BINA

It's okay. We don't have to.

Alike leans in and kisses Bina on the lips. Bina considers and takes Alike's chin in her hand and kisses her back. Bina places Alike's hand on her chest. Alike lets her hand linger, then traces Bina's shoulders.

67 INT. LAURA'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Laura stands over the kitchen table shuffling through the mail. She pauses at a stiff envelope with her name on it. The return address reads "NYS Educational & Testing Services". She flips the envelope over and looks around, she rips the top off and eases the top of a slip out of the envelope. The top of the slip reads "'Campbell, Laura' GED TESTING RESULTS."

68 EXT. BRONX HOME - MORNING

Laura shifts her weight on a painted concrete porch outside a small wooden frame home. The paint is peeling and the flowers in the window-box are dead. A rusted metal mailbox next to the door overflows with circulars. Laura lifts the circulars
out of the box and trashes them. She picks up a discarded fast food bag and tosses it too. A dog barks from a neighboring yard. Laura pulls open the screen door and tries to peer in through the diamond shaped window in the main door, but it's covered over in aluminum foil. More barking. Laura surveys the street and bangs hard on the door. She snaps the screen door back and takes a big step backward. Laura shifts her weight and smooths her shirt. LAURA'S MOTHER, 54, and no-nonsense opens the door and frowns down at Laura through the screen.

LAURA

Oh.

Laura's mother crosses her arms and looks at Laura up and down.

83.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Thought you might've stepped out or something? How've you been?

Laura's mother frowns up and down the block before refocusing on Laura. Laura takes a step closer to the door.

LAURA (CONT'D)

Me and Candy, you know we're doing real good.

Laura's mother puts her hand on the doorknob.

LAURA (CONT'D)

We might even be moving to a bigger place soon. You know she's workin' at the hospital now, yeah you'd be real proud of her. She might even go back and get her RN--

Laura takes another step forward.

LAURA (CONT'D)

How--? How's Pops? You look good. You look healthy, yeah you look real good. You know uh, we miss you and everything--

Laura's mother starts to close the door. Laura backs away.

LAURA (CONT'D)

I don't wanna take too much of your time. I just stopped by--you know I
I'm getting my stuff together too--I uh--

Laura fishes the stiff envelope out of her pocket and advances on the screen door again, holding it out.

LAURA (CONT'D)
So, I did it. I took the test and--

Laura's mother slams the door. Laura stands on her tiptoes and yells at the diamond shaped window.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I got my GED!

The lock on the door snaps into place. Renewed barking from across the street. Silence from the door. Laura brushes a fist across her eyes and stuffs the envelope into the mailbox.

LAURA (CONT'D)
But listen I--I gotta go. I gotta get to work but I'ma leave it for you to see. It was nice talking to you.

Laura backs off the porch and starts down the walkway. She stops halfway and bounds back onto the porch. She yanks the envelope out of the mailbox and jams it into her pocket. Laura storms off the porch and out of yard, never looking back.

69 INT. BINA'S BEDROOM - MORNING 69

Alike is asleep on the bed. Bina cleans up feverishly, "accidentally" bumping Alike awake. Alike yawns and rolls over, a huge grin spreading across her face as she remembers her surroundings.

ALIKE
Hey.

BINA
Hey.

Bina bolts to the dresser and crams clothes in.

ALIKE
You up already?
BINA
It's after one o'clock, actually.

Bina deposits an armful of clothes into the dirty clothes hamper, and then begins making the bed with Alike still in it. Alike pulls Bina down beside her.

ALIKE
What's wrong?

BINA
Nothin's wrong, I'm just cleaning up. Don't worry about it.

ALIKE
Okay then, I'll help you.

BINA
No, I got it.

Bina snatches a pillow from behind Alike and fluffs it. Alike, still oblivious, grins and traces Bina's shoulder. 85.

ALIKE
Look um--I just wanted to say that last night...last night was amazing...thank you for--

BINA
Last night we were just playin' around, that's all.

Bina flinches away from Alike's touch. Alike shoots a glance at the door and drops her voice to a choked whisper.

ALIKE
Look... We can slow things down... Nobody has to know that we're together.

BINA
"Together"? Whoa, no...

ALIKE
Huh?! I thought... Look if you don't want to call it that, that's fine, but don't act like nothing happened.
Bina moves away and levels her gaze at Alike for the first time. Alike touches Bina's elbow, Bina flinches away.

**BINA**

Look, I'm not gay okay? This isn't me--I wasn't--I'm not ready for all this...

Alike recruits the discarded stuffed moose and dances it around on the bed. Bina recoils and snatches it away. Recognition seeps across Alike's pained face. Bina moves away from the bed and turns her back on Alike.

Alike finds her pajama pants on the floor and yanks them on. She pulls on jeans over her pajama bottoms and hauls a sweatshirt down over her nightie. She flings her backpack open on the bed and hunts around the room wildly gathering her things. Alike goes in the bathroom and reappears with an armful of toiletries, dumping them in the bag. Bina watches her, arms folded. Alike takes one last look around the room and heads for the door, running a sleeve across her face.

**BINA (CONT'D)**

Lee?

Alike ignores her and launches into the hallway. Bina runs to her bedroom doorway.

**BINA (CONT'D)**

Wait--Lee?!

Alike beelines for the front door. Bina chases Alike across the room.

**BINA (CONT'D)**

Lee, stop please?

Alike wipes a sleeve across her swelling eyes and running nose and turns to face her. Bina takes several steps toward her. Alike lets go of the doorhandle, her voice cracks.

**ALIKE**

What?

**BINA**

You promise you won't tell anybody?
Alike rages outside, weaving blind fury down the sidewalk. She kicks over a cluster of garbage cans and cyclones out into the street, narrowly missing getting hit by a car. She continues her zag to the other sidewalk, her pace quickening. She rips open her backpack and launches a baseball cap into the air. She tears a handful of wifebeaters from the bag and flings them into the street. Spinning and thrashing she wrenches out a football jersey and jams it into another garbage can. She circles back and kicks the can over. She hurles her backpack into the trees like a discus and sheds her hoodie like a skin before disappearing into the scream of a subway station.

71  INT. ALIKE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING  71

Lee bursts into the living room and charges to her bedroom. Audrey, who has been waiting in the living room storms in after her.

AUDREY
Where in the hell have you been?!

Alike kicks off her shoes and paces the room.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
You hear me talking to you?! Where you been? You left Bina's hours ago!!! Lee--

ALIKE
I'M NOT YOUR HUSBAND!!!!

Audrey gasps in stunned silence.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
I'm not your husband so stop comin' at me like I am. I'm not your companion, I'm not your friend -- you made that abundantly clear--I'm your daughter and I have my own shit to deal with!!

AUDREY
LEE--don't you dare--Alike--I am your Mother--

Audrey melts back against the doorjamb. Alike slings off her shirt and slams the door in Audrey's face. A livid Audrey bangs on the door and jiggles the handle.
AUDREY (CONT'D)
You must have lost your damn mind!
Wait until your father gets home!

72 INT. ALIKE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alike attacks her closet, ripping all the "girly" shirts from the hangers and hurling them toward a small vanity trashcan. She plunges back in and slams an armful of blouses to the floor. She launches a pair of pumps into the wall, followed by a chunky pair of Timberlands. Silent sobs rack her body as she tears off her own shirt and slings it at the mirror. She strips off her jeans and kicks them brutally into a corner. Alike considers her unclothed form in the mirror before collapsing onto the bed. She writhes against the pillows and covers her eyes with her elbow as darts of grief twist through her body. Blackout.

73 INT. ALIKE'S BEDROOM - LATER

Alike jerks awake in her bed, a pillow pulled down around her ears. The sound of a muffled argument leaks from her parents's bedroom. The shouting gets louder, and Alike sits upright in her bed as her father's footsteps boom past her doorway and into the living room. Audrey's voice trails him down the hallway, and Alike scrambles into a t-shirt and shorts.

74 INT. ALIKE'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Arthur's hand is on the doorknob, a small tote flung over his shoulder. Audrey blocks the door, her hands on her hips. They both look up as Alike edges into the living room.

AUDREY
You see, that's exactly what I'm talking about?! Get over here!

ARTHUR
Go back to bed!

AUDREY
No, you come tell your father what you told me!

ARTHUR
Don't drag her into this, Audrey!
(to Alike)
Go to your room, Alike. Your mom
and I are having a discussion.

AUDREY
We are not discussing!! I wanna
know right now--

ARTHUR
Go to your room!

AUDREY
Your father's leaving us!!

ARTHUR
I am not leaving you!!

AUDREY
Sharonda, wake up!! Come see your
father leaving us!!

ARTHUR
I'm not fucking leaving!! Will you
stop saying that?!

AUDREY
Come say goodbyeeee!!

Audrey shoves Arthur toward the door. Reflexively, Arthur
raises his hand at Audrey. Audrey puffs up.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
Oh, what?! I wish you would!! Go
ahead!! Look girls, your daddy's
going to beat me!!

Sharonda bursts into tears behind Alike. Alike hurries
Sharonda back down the hallway.

ALIKE
Shhh. It's okay. Go in my room and
lock the door. Don't come out,
'kay?

Sharonda bawls harder. Alike gently closes the door on her.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
It's gonna be okay.
Arthur and Audrey argue viciously.

**ARTHUR (O.S.)**
No! Dammit, that's not true! Look, will you stop sayin' that?!

**AUDREY (O.S.)**
It's the truth!!

Alike edges back into the living room, Audrey wheels on her. Arthur is beaten and cornered.

**AUDREY (CONT'D)**
Your daddy's got a new girlfriend! Or did you already know that?! You know, I bet you did!!

**ARTHUR**
Audrey, stop it!! Alike go back to bed!

**AUDREY**
Meanwhile, your daughter's turning into a damn man right before your very eyes, and you can't even see it!!

Arthur drops his tote and advances toward Audrey, leveling a stiff finger at her face.

**ARTHUR**
No you take that back.!! You shut the fuck up about that, Audrey!

Arthur gets in Audrey's face. Audrey leers back at him. Alike jumps between them.

**ALIKE**
Dad?! Stop!

**ARTHUR**
Go back to bed, Alike!!

**AUDREY**
Tell him, Lee!

**ARTHUR**
Don't call her Lee!

ALIKE
Mom, stoppit please!?

AUDREY
Tell your Dad where you hang out! Tell him about your butch-ass girlfriend--

ALIKE
Laura's NOT my girlfriend!!

ARTHUR
What the hell are you talking about?! You don't know what the hell are you talking about. Alike, please just go to your room, baby!

Alike drops her gaze and backs away.

AUDREY
Tell him!

Arthur's expression cracks and he tears his focus from Audrey to Alike.

ARTHUR
Tell me what?!

ALIKE
I'm not tellin' you nothin'.

AUDREY
Tell him you're a dyke! You tell him you're a nasty ass dyke!!

ARTHUR
No she's not gay. Alike we didn't raise you that way, baby.

Eyes still downcast, Alike just shakes her head and backs away.

AUDREY
There!! You see!!

91.

ARTHUR
You shut the hell up Audrey!!

91.
Arthur extends his arms toward Alike, his voice trembling.

**ARTHUR (CONT'D)**
I know that's not true. You tell your mother right now, Alike. You tell her it isn't true!!

Alike meets her father's eyes.

**ALIKE**
Dad--

**ARTHUR**
Don't you lie now, you tell the truth!!

**ALIKE**
You already know.

**ARTHUR**
No, I don't know. You tell your mother it's just a phase.

**ALIKE**
It's not a phase!

Arthur is stopped cold, his shoulders slump.

**AUDREY**
See, if you would've DONE SOMETHING!!

**ARTHUR**
(to Alike)
What's wrong with you?

**ALIKE**
There's nothing wrong with me!

**AUDREY**
This is your fault!! If you had--

Arthur tears into Audrey, spittle flying.

**ARTHUR**
AUDREY WILL YOU SHUT THE F**K UP!!!
often!! Why don't you DO SOMETHING!!

ALIKE
YEAH I'M GAY!!

Arthur spasms as though he's been stabbed. Out of nowhere, Audrey's backhand pistons Alike to the ground. She raises her hand high and slaps it down hard on Alike's shoulders and arms. Alike yells. Arthur turns to stone.

AUDREY
Say it again! Say it again!

Alike fends off Audrey's blows with her hands. She kicks angrily as Audrey towers over her.

ALIKE
I'm a lesbian! Yeah, I'm a dyke.

AUDREY
No you're not!!!!!

Audrey's blows become more manic and vicious. Arthur wakes from his trance and tries to wrestle Audrey off of Alike.

ARTHUR
That's enough! Stop it!

AUDREY
Don't you say that! Let go! Don't you say that!

ALIKE
Get offa me!!

AUDREY
What? You a man now? YOU GON' FIGHT ME LIKE A MAN??!!

Audrey swings and hits Alike with a nasty hook to the jaw, Alike's head snaps back and hits the floor.

ARTHUR
AUDREY STOP!!!!

Arthur yanks Audrey off of Alike. Audrey directs her rage at him, pummeling his face and chest.

AUDREY
Tears stream down Arthur's face as Audrey shakes free and aims one last blow at his face.

AUDREY (CONT'D)
YOU SAY IT'S NOT TRUE!!!

INT. LAURA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Click-clack. Click-clack. The rattle of circuit breakers echo through the bare darkness of Laura's small apartment.

LAURA
Anything?

ALIKE
No.

LAURA
How about now?

ALIKE
No. Nothing.

LAURA
Shit. Fucking building.

Laura bangs into something in the darkness.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Owww. Shit!

A small light flicks to life and grows larger. In its dim glow, Laura spots Alike leaning against a worn couch. The lights become two as Laura hands Alike a candle.

LAURA
Here. Good thing I keep some these around.

Alike snorts thickly. Her words are slurred and nasal.

ALIKE
Yeah, for your many women.

LAURA
Hey, you thanking 'em now.
Laura holds her candle up to Alike's grim face.

**LAURA**

You okay?

Alike wipes at already dried tear streaks on her puffy face and looks down. Laura slides an arm around her waist and guides her into the small bedroom.

**LAURA**

You bring clothes?

**ALIKE**

Huh-uh. I stopped by the house--I stopped by---

**LAURA**

That's alright, man. You can wear some of mine. It's okay, c'mon. Let's get some sleep. My sister'll be home in a little bit, too.

---

77 **INT. LAURA'S BEDROOM - LATER**

Overturned Ramen noodle cups litter the floor. Laura sips a beer and strokes Alike's head who sleeps fitfully in her lap.

78 **INT. ALIKE'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING**

Arthur is frozen in the middle of the living room with a contractor trash bag. He stoops and piles the shards of a broken lamp into the bag one by one. Sharonda peeks out at him from her bedroom door. Arthur looks up at her and Sharonda pushes the door shut.

79 **INT. ALIKE'S PARENT'S BEDROOM - DAY**

Audrey sits at the edge of her bed in a housecoat. Her hair is ruffled and flyaway. Her ankles are crossed and her hands are dead birds in her lap. Her work clothes are laid out in a neat line beside her: shirt, pants, socks, and shoes on the floor right underneath. The telephone begins to ring, but Audrey does not hear it.

80 **INT. BINA'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON**
Bina and a HIGH SCHOOL BOY sit on the floor, their backs propped against the bed, books spread on the floor. The boy puts his arm around Bina, launching numerous passionate advances, but Bina pushes him away.

The clueless boy continues his clumsy attempts. Bina stares out the window, completely detached.

81 INT. ALIKE'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Audrey, still in her housecoat, stares into the refrigerator, transfixed by the mountain of foil-covered plates. Her eyes are cried-out buttons. Suddenly she remembers to breathe, and her breaths come raggedly tearing out fresh tears. She yanks a foil-covered plate, dumps its contents into the trash can and tosses the plate into the sink. She dumps another and another, her composure returning with each plate tossed. By the time she gets to the last one, her breathing slows and returns to normal. She disappears into the bedroom and reappears with the red shopping bag. She calmly lifts out the pink blouse and stuffs it into the garbage. She wads up the shopping bag and stuffs it in too. She takes a deep breath and wipes her sleeve across her nose.

AUDREY

Okay.

82 INT. ALIKE'S KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Arthur, Audrey and Sharonda are pegged around the dinner table. Audrey's make-up fails to cover the dark circles beneath her eyes and Arthur has a week's worth of stubble. There is a jagged hole where Alike usually sits. Noticing the asymmetry, Audrey bundles up Alike's place setting and sweeps it onto the floor. Sharonda looks from Audrey to Arthur then into her plate.

AUDREY

You want to say grace?

Arthur clears his throat.

ARTHUR

Heavenly Father...

Audrey thrusts her hands out to Arthur and Sharonda. They each take her hand and Arthur begins again.
ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Dear Heavenly Father we pray... we
pray thank you for this food and we
pray... we pray for your continued
blessing...

Arthur stops talking but his head remains bowed. An awkward
silence ensues. Audrey and Sharonda look up at him still
holding hands.

AUDREY
Amen!

ARTHUR
Amen.

Audrey switches to an overly cheery auto-pilot mode, babbling
to no one in particular.

AUDREY
I got this recipe from a magazine.
Supposed to be very good. And you
see I made those green beans you
like. Sharonda pass the rice
please.

Sharonda, staring at her father doesn't reach for the bowl.

SHARONDA
Dad. You know where she is.

83  EXT. LAURA’S ROOFTOP – WEEKS LATER

Alike and Laura sit at the edge of the roof sharing a quart
of mint chocolate chip ice cream. Sunset paints the cityscape
pink and orange. The faint cadence of children playing drifts
in and out on a fickle breeze. Alike's wounds are healing and
she seems happy. The friends exchange wordless smiles and
soak in the peacefulness around them.

Laura hears a noise at the door and gets up to investigate.
Arthur is standing in the doorway. Laura calls out to Alike.
Alike looks up and the smile fades from her face. Arthur
tries to move around Laura, but Laura stares him down. Laura
looks back at Alike. Alike considers, then carefully nods.
Laura steps out of the way and watches Arthur pass.

Alike rises to face her father. She stands tall, her weight
is centered. Arthur struggles to find her eyes, and she turns away from him. Distant playground voices fill the pause.

EXT. LAURA'S ROOFTOP - WEEKS LATER

Alike sits at the edge of the roof writing in her notebook. Laura swings open the door and Alike looks back in greeting, her smile fading as Arthur appears behind her. Laura motions to Alike. Alike considers, then carefully nods. Laura steps aside and watches Arthur pass.

Alike wanders to the edge of the roof, Arthur follows. Distant playground voices fill the pause.

ALIKE
Where's Mom?

ARTHUR
She...your mother couldn't make it.

Alike shakes her head and peers into the rusty skyline. Arthur slumps his hands in his pockets and edges closer.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Remember our old place? Waaay out in Queens? It was our first apartment, we were so proud. Had all those trees around it? In October, the whole block would be covered with leaves. You remember.

Alike makes no sign.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
You couldn't've been more than 2 years old. And when the wind would blow, all those leaves would come rushing down the street at us and you thought they were alive. You'd get so scared. You'd cry and you'd scream and beg for us to pick you up. I would try and tell you "they're only leaves, baby" and make you stay on the ground. But you were so afraid and you cried so hard, your mother would always pick you up. She always picked you up.

Arthur is silent beneath the weight of his memory. He dares a
glance over at Alike.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
`Member how we used to--

ALIKE
I've been accepted into a early college program. Starts in the Spring. Berkeley.

ARTHUR
California's a long way away--

ALIKE
Ten weeks writing boot camp, workshops. Then I can start summer semester.

98.

ARTHUR
We can talk about that. Okay?

ALIKE
I need you to meet with my guidance counselor. Sign the paperwork so I can graduate early.

ARTHUR
I'm sorry, alright? I'm sorry I let her hurt you--

ALIKE
I need to know now if you'll sign the papers. Yes or no?

ARTHUR
Can you forgive me?

ALIKE
Yes or no?

ARTHUR
You can always come back home. Things are gonna be different, I promise you--

Alike holds Arthur's hand, stopping him.

ALIKE
Dad, I'm not running. I'm choosing.
Arthur's heart breaks, he gasps back a sob.

**ALIKE (CONT'D)**
I'm not going back home.

**ARTHUR**
I know.
(beat)
Okay.

Alike nods, squeezes Arthur's hand. Arthur breathes deeply, composing himself. He starts to pull away.

**ARTHUR (CONT'D)**
I better--

**ALIKE**
Tell Mom that she was right.

**ARTHUR**
Right about what?

**ALIKE**
God doesn't make mistakes.

**ARTHUR**
You should tell her yourself.

Arthur squeezes Alike's hand and drifts away. Alike inhales the sunset.

**84** INT. HOSPITAL BREAK ROOM - AFTERNOON**84**

Audrey is cleaned up, well-dressed and freshly put together. She sits alone at the lunch table, crunching an apple. A bible and a daily devotional guide are spread open in front of her. Alike knocks on the glass, and Audrey looks up stunned. Alike comes in and sits across from her. Audrey glances around, concerned about passing coworkers.

**ALIKE**
Mom.

**AUDREY**
Lee--Alike. How've you been?

**ALIKE**
Fine. Did Dad tell you?
AUDREY
He told me, yes.

ALIKE
How are you?

Audrey gathers her lunch garbage and pushes back from the table.

AUDREY
I just hope you're keeping yourself safe.

ALIKE
I love you, Mom.

Audrey stacks her devotional guide on top of her bible and stands. She starts to speak, then crosses to the door instead.

ALIKE (CONT'D)
I said I love you.

AUDREY
I'll be praying for you.

Audrey disappears into the hallway.

84A  EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

Alike writes in her notebook, mouthing the words to a poem. She looks up and studies the horizon from time to time.

84B  INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Alike relaxes at a desk, reading from her notebook. Mrs. Alvarado sits cross-legged on her desk listening.

ALIKE (V.O.)
Heartbreak opens onto the sunrise
For even breaking is opening
And I am broken
I am open
Broken to the new light without
pushing in
Open to the possibilities within
pushing out
See the love shine in through my
cracks
See the light shine out through me?
I am broken
I am open
I am Broken Open
See the love-light shining through
me
Shining through my cracks
Through the gaps
My Spirit takes journey
My Spirit takes flight
Could not have risen otherwise
And I am not Running
I am Choosing
Running is not a Choice
From the Breaking
Breaking is freeing
Broken is freedom
I am not broken
I am free.

Alike closes her book. The pair reflect in easy silence. Mrs. Alvarado nods.

MRS. ALVARADO

Yeah.

(beat)

Yeah.

101.

85  INT. ARTHUR'S CAR - DAY

The downtown Brooklyn landscape hums against the windshield as Arthur and Alike ride in complete silence. Sharonda chews a thumbnail, peering over the backseat. Laura slumps against the window, a smirk hiding at the corner of her lips.

86  EXT. REGIONAL BUS STOP - DAY

Laura and Sharonda fumble a suitcase out of the trunk of the car. Alike shrugs into her backpack. Arthur nudges them aside and hefts out the rest of the luggage.

ARTHUR

I got it.

Arthur slams the trunk shut.

ALIKE

Thank you.
ARTHUR
You want me to come in with you?

Alike shakes her head. Arthur starts to back away.

ARTHUR
Well--

Alike pounces on Arthur in a surprise hug. Arthur squeezes her back.

ARTHUR
You can always come back home.

ALIKE
I love you.

ARTHUR
I love you too.

87 EXT. REGIONAL BUS STOP - CONTINUOUS  87

General chaos as passengers, and well-wishes scramble for position.

LAURA
Let me get a hug or somethin', damn.

Laura squeezes Alike first with one arm then pulls her hand out of her pocket to wrap both arms around her friend.

SHARONDA
Call us when you get there.

ALIKE
You know I will.

Laura backs away and wipes a sleeve at her eye.

LAURA
You just better fuckin' call.

Alike disappears through the bus doors. Laura slouches on a hydrant and Sharonda paces, scanning the windows for Alike.

88 INT. BUS - DAY  88
Sharonda waves maniacally. Alike musters a smile and puts a hand on the window. Laura raises a fist. The bus sails away from the curb.

Alike leans forward to keep Laura and Sharonda in sight as long as possible. As she faces front again, she glimpses Arthur, standing in the doorway of the terminal. A passing van blots him from view and she leans back in her seat. An OLD KOREAN WOMAN next to her offers her a piece of ginger candy. Alike pops the candy into her mouth and takes a deep breath.

Reflections of the retreating city landscape replay across Alike's face and she is able to hold back neither the smile nor the tears that come.

FADE TO BLACK.