

ESCAPE

Written by

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Based on, If Any

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INT. BOYS AND GIRLS AUDITORIUM - MORNING

SASHA (18) darkskin, short, with shoulder length twist in a high messy bun sits in the back row at Boys and Girl High school in Brooklyn. She's wearing a cropped hoodie, baggy cargo shorts and VANS. She shifts in the old, cheap wooden auditorium chairs, probably made in the 70's.

She looks up and scans the huge room. High ceilings, pale green walls and three long rows of old chairs, with the middle one being the widest. She pulls out a notebook and pen.

JUSTIN (O.S.)
(yells)
Hey bitch!

JUSTIN (18) Hispanic and short, with a big, curly afro, waves at Sasha through a crowd of students. He tires to break through the wall of teenagers pouring in from the second set of large doors.

SASHA
Yerr!

Justin RASIES his voice dramatically.

JUSTIN
Excuse me! Cuse'! I'm trying to get through-

He walks through and adjust his clothes. He's wearing all black, down to the Air force 1s.

He makes his way past other students and a desk with a Para' sitting behind. There's a open booklet with names and dates. The para' taps the booklet with their pen and nods at Justin as he passes.

Justin smiles sarcastically and signs his name and plops down in the seat next to Sasha's bag.

Justin dabs his forehead with a brown paper towel.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Whew, chile. It is hot as a bitch- why are we doing this college thingy now? We should've been did this! And they got all these lil ass twelve year old's in here.

SASHA
(LAUGHING)
Twelve? How?

JUSTIN
Anyone younger than me, by two
years, is twelve.

SASHA
Are- not is.

Justin waves his hand.

JUSTIN
Still, they shouldn't be here,
maybe the Johnnies but def not the
babes.

SASHA
You and your names. How you doin'?
I haven't seen you in a while.

JUSTIN
Yeah, since a couple of weeks after
the funeral, how are you?

SASHA
Yeah, I know...I'm aight' though.

She looks forward.

JUSTIN
Did you pick any schools yet? I'm
waiting on two.

He starts digging around in his big, brown patterned Coach
bag, moving and shaking it obnoxiously.

SASHA
Um yeah, I'm actually gonna check
the status of some with Akai.

JUSTIN
The counselor? You don't get them
in the mail, at ya crib?

SASHA
Nah, my mom will definitely try to
sabotage me and I'm not giving her
that opportunity.

JUSTIN
Bet. You excited?

SASHA
Foor?-

JUSTIN

For school bih! I'm high-key excited, I picked gay ass schools! Ju already know the vobez. I'm not dealing with the anti-gay bullshit anymore.

He pulls out a comb, a brush and some Eco gel. He starts to comb his hair out.

SASHA

To be fucking honest. My mom still askes me when I'm gonna meet a guy and I literally came out when I was thirteen.

Justin shakes his head and sprays his hair with a small spray-bottle.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I see you're still mourning, huh?

JUSTIN

And? You aren't.

She gets quiet.

As more students pour in, it gets noisy. The VOICES of hundreds of kids can be heard talking over each other, and not paying attention to the giant screen that was just lowered, hanging above the stage.

Some kids are sneaking through the swing door, on the right side of the stage. The old door SQUEAKS and CREAKS loud enough for a few of them to get caught by monitoring teachers and paras, and are separated.

SASHA

I know, but it's been like two-almost three months...

Justin rolls his eyes.

JUSTIN

That's not long, Sasha.

Sasha sits up and scrunches her face.

SASHA

Plus I'm tired of people asking if I'm okay. When I was wearing black, all eyes were on me. It'd made me feel like I'm on suicide watch.

Justin CHUCKLES.

JUSTIN
I mean...you were tripping last
year.

He nudges her arm and gives her a look. They both taking
turns raising their eyebrows before both crack a grin.

SASHA
(LAUGHING)
Bitch, I'm not finna kill myself.

JUSTIN
(brushing hair into a
ponytail)
I mean...you do be looking kinda,
ya know-

SASHA
Nah, like seriously I can't. I
tried to when I was younger

Justin shakes his head and looks at her.

Sasha shrugs.

SASHA (CONT'D)
I had just had an argument with my
mom and I went into the kitchen,
pulled out a knife and cut my arm,
not o.d, but when I tell you that
shit hurt.

Justin LAUGHS and shakes his head, continuing with his hair.

SASHA (CONT'D)
So basically, I can't kill myself
cause it hurts.

JUSTIN
But yet, you yearn for death?

SASHA
Mhmm.

JUSTIN
Such a gen z'er.

An adult of importance comes through the swing door and walks
onto the stage, in front of the screen and holds up their
hand and then a mic.

ADULT

I'm going to count to three-

Behind the screen, the vast burgundy red curtains are slightly open in the middle, revealing the darkness of the empty stage. In the back there's a large poster displaying a blown up photo of Malik, and white doves flying above his head in the clouds.

SASHA

(Shaking her head)
Such a ghetto poster...

JUSTIN

At least, they captured his beauty.

SASHA

And the crazy thing is, Mals
dumbass would love it.

JUSTIN

Deadass, he loves the hood-esque
shit...

Beat.

Sasha scribbles on the corner in her notebook.

Justin takes a deep BREATH and dabs his eyes.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I can't believe his like really
gone...

SASHA

Justin, don't start cause if-

JUSTIN

(voice breaking)
Like- can you just tell me again?

SASHA

Why? Why torture yourself over a
memory-a memory that has the worse
ending.

JUSTIN

Because,
(SNIFFLES)
It was like yesterday and he-he was
here one moment then poof!

Sasha SIGHS and crosses her legs up atop of the chair in front of her. She folds her arms and looks at Justin with a resting bitch face.

SASHA

(dead pan)

He called me as I was getting ready for bed, told me his father was being a dub, I went to sleep and boom his dead.

JUSTIN

You know, you don't have to be a dick about it!

SASHA

No, I don't but you and everyone else who brings that day or even him up, makes me a dick. I'm tired of talking about it-

JUSTIN

Well, some of us still wanna remember him...

SASHA

That's fine, but if I'm showing clear discomfort talking about it, you should understand. Niggas, get to be sad too the fuck. I'm the one who knew him since grade school, anyway...damn.

Awkward beat.

Students in front of them, give each other a look.

The adult walks paces back and forth from each end of the stage and waves his hands like Obama.

ADULT

...as you finish your final regent exams and your classes-, you should have all applied or are going to apply, for college. The next step in your education is an important choice because you have the choice...

SASHA

Look, my bad...I'm still hurting over it and I'm learning to understand that other people go through shit differently...

Justin's hair is now slicked back into a ponytail.

He folds his arms and rolls his eyes.

JUSTIN

I just don't know how-

(SIGHS)

Damn...it's just, I don't really have anyone to talk to about him...you're barely at school now- I'm even surprised to see you here today.

SASHA

(HUFFS)

Yeah, I'm surprised too...but deadass, we don't have to get in our bag over this. I know I can be a little defensive.

JUSTIN

No shit. You don't cry anymore?

SASHA

I mean, yeah- I just hold it in most of the time or whateva. I try.

Two students at the right-end of the row in front of them, turn around.

STUDENT 1

I'm really sorry, Sasha- er, guys. Sorry.

They put their hand on Sasha's ankle and do a lil shake.

Sasha furls her lips up and nods.

SASHA

(faint smile)

Thanks...

Both her and Justin look at the hand and the two students turn back around.

EXT. FULTON ST, BOYS AND GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL - LATE MORNING

It's a cold, rainy day. The wind is relentless in its aim to blow every twig and leaf left outside in Sasha's face.

She pulls out a leaf from her hair as she walks from the store towards the park next door.

SASHA

Why are there still leaves around?
The hell.

Sasha steps behind a parked car and J-walks across Fulton street, holding her hand out as cars HONK and speed past her.

JOEL (O.S.)

Yerr, Sasha!

Joel does a little jog to catch up with her, also dodging cars.

She turns around and waits for him to cross.

The school is large and ugly. Red is the dominating color of choice. A red gate wraps around the school, holding up different types of signs advertising school involvement and lunch programs.

They walk past a ramp and stand in the center of the "outside lobby" of the school. A few structures of abstract art accompany them.

JOEL (18) is tall and light-skin. He has pretty eyes and a smile to kill. He's wearing a dark green Nike Tech suit.

His voice is soft and deep.

JOEL (CONT'D)

Hey Sash! How you doing? I tried to talk to you at the funeral but you dipped. I-I haven't seen you in a couple of days...

SASHA

I'm good, I guess. I've just been sad.

JOEL

Um, can I hug you?

SASHA

Yeah, sure...

He pulls her in a tight embrace before she can react.

She's stiff, even with her arms around him.

JOEL

(pulling away)
I'm sorry, about Malik bro.

SASHA
Thanks. It's been...weird.

JOEL
I understand.

Joel fidgets with his foot and a small pebble.

Sasha looks everywhere but up at Joel.

Joel watches her.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Sash..you know you can talk to me.
I'm not a stranger.

SASHA
I know. It's just-
(VOICE BREAKING)

JOEL
Hey, its okay. You don't have to
talk. We don't have to talk about
it... Are you going inside?

SASHA
Yeah, I came out to get some food
but didn't see anything I wanted.

Joel holds up a fat blunt.

JOEL
I mean instead of wanting food,
would you want-
(grinning)
We might as well, ya know. Relieve
ourselves of such grief with the
grass of the earth.

Sasha CHUCKLES.

SASHA
You're such a bad influence...and
what was that? You sound like a
student of Socrates who got to
high.

They LAUGH.

They start walking down the ramp, around the other side of
the school entrance for cover. In the distance, a corner of
the green of grass glows bright and an lonely yellow football
goal stands strong against the winds

They squat against a big bright, red abstract sculpture in the somewhat middle of the walk way. It stands tall and leans towards the right, facing the red brick wall.

Joel FLICKS the lighter a few times but the wind is determined to make sure they don't smoke.

After a few seconds of no success, Sasha covers her hands over Joel's.

He takes a few pulls and passes it.

JOEL

This shit is crazy bruh. You was at the assembly?

Sasha take small puffs and then a long drag.

SASHA

Yeah, talking about shit I already know.

Joel nods.

Beat.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Justin, kinda blew mines this morning. Getting in his bag about Mal and mad cause' I don't wanna always talk about it.

Joel nods.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I dunno, his energy was just a lil too much... Like I have no problem telling people how I feel but this is just-just too much.

Joel nods and passes.

JOEL

I feel you.

SASHA

I don't even know what to do. Like-
(turns to him)
How do I? I feel like I've been putting on act since I can remember, but now I'm the only one left in the show...and I'm scared, like really scared. Shit, I talk a lot when I'm high-I'm sorry.

Joel LAUGHS and shakes his head.

JOEL
You're good. It's good to talk a lot sometimes, and it also means you're comfortable with me, so thank you. As for Justin, sometimes he can come on a little strong, but he means well.

Beat.

Joel exhales.

JOEL (CONT'D)
(flicks end of blunt)
Scared of what?

SASHA
Hm?

JOEL
You said you're scared, scared of what?

SASHA
Scared of living life without the one person you truly loved-

There's YELLING in the background. They look around, then continue.

JOEL
Ah, I thought Mal was gay?

SASHA
No, I mean yeah he's gay...was gay. He was just my bestfriend, like a brother and now he's gone

JOEL
I feel that. Can I share my experience? I don't want to take away from yours.

SASHA
(long drag)
Nah, you good bro.

JOEL
Bet. So when my pops died, he was all I had and at first I was really angry. I pushed everyone away, like I deadass wanted to die.

SASHA

Yeah that's exactly how I'm feeling right now. Kinda like there's no point...

JOEL

Ay bruh, you shouldn't talk like that. Lemme finish. So look- it felt like that was the only option but even though I was clouded by false judgement and guilt...or rather my own self. I remembered that he would want me to keep pushing and see me succeed.

Joel looks at Sasha with deep conviction.

Sasha burst's with LAUGHTER. So much that the smoke comes out through her nostrils. She COUGHING and LAUGHING.

Joel smiles and shakes his head, rubbing her back.

JOEL (CONT'D)

See that's what you get. Talking allat' shit.

He takes the blunt from her.

SASHA

(finally catching her breath)

Aw man, I'm weak. I'm sorry- damn (wipes eyes)
I don't mean to laugh.

JOEL

(CHUCKLES)

Yeah you do, cause it sounds corny.

SASHA

It does but, I know it's facts.

JOEL

Exactly. But don't just hear it, I don't like saying this cause' it lowkey feels like it is but, "it's not the end of the world"

SASHA

(shrugs)

It is for Mal.

JOEL
His soul is at rest...or maybe he's
already reborn?

Sasha looks at him offended then shakes her head.

SASHA
You really believe in that stuff?

JOEL
What you mean? Life after death?
Spiritual release? Yes.

SASHA I mean, I guess	JOEL (CONT'D) Yo that shit is real bro. Seriously.
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Joel takes out a small jar, that's filled with roaches from former blunts The jar looks tiny compared to his hands and drops the roach in.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Shaking my head.

JOEL
You know the vobes...did you just
say "shaking my head?"

Joel CHUCKLES.

SASHA
It's Vibes.

JOEL
No
(he turns to her)
VOBES.

Sasha smiles a genuine, warm, lips wide apart smile.

Joel pulls out another spliff.

SASHA
Oh my god, bro are you tryna get my
smacked?

JOEL
Yup. What you've been through is a
traumatizing life event.
(fixing the blunt)
An altered state of mind can change
you perception of the outcome that
your mind has already projected.

The energy changes to a more serious tone.

Sasha brings her knees to her chest more and wraps her arms around.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Also companionship helps ya know.
Humans aren't meant to be
alone...even in the "after life"
(he takes a long drag and
puts arm around Sasha)
What you and Malik had was a
beautiful friendship, and his soul
appreciates that. I def believe
that his still with you.

Sasha is stiff. Her face scrunches up as big tear drops cascade down her cheeks.

She SNIFFLES.

SASHA
(quietly)
I feel so alone...

JOEL
You don't have to be.

He squeezes her shoulder.

She leans into him and relaxes.

Suddenly, DANTE (19) average, brown-skin comes up behind them. He has a small studded nose ring. He's wearing a light grey Nike Tech suit, it's a little worn.

DANTE
Yeo, what's goodie.
(he daps up Joel)
Heard you getting all spiritual and
shit.

Sasha ROLLS her eyes and wipes her face.

Dante watches them.

Feeling Sasha tense up, Joel takes his arm from around her.

Both Sasha and Joel stand up instinctively. They brush off and dirt and grime from their butt.

He passes Sasha the blunt.

JOEL
What's good bro.

DANTE
Ya'll was looking real close
(HUFFS)

JOEL
Nah bro, we was just cyphing and
talking. Giving thanks to Mal.

DANTE
Oh right, the gay nigga that got
murked by his pops-

SASHA
(snaps)
Yo watch yo fucking mouth.

Joel stands in front of her.

JOEL
Chill, chill.

DANTE
My fault, you right- you right.

She passes the blunt to Joel.

DANTE (CONT'D)
Yo bro, lemme get a pull of that.

SASHA
Hey Joel, I'ma go...

Joel looks visibly disappointed.

DANTE
Nah, nah. Don't go cause' of me.
Just chill I-, look, I'm sorry
about ya friend.

He smiles, but his face is smug and untrusting.

SASHA
Whatever.

Joel looks at both of them.

Sasha rolls her eyes and shakes her head.

Awkward beat.

DANTE
So Sash, when's then funeral?

SASHA
You know, you got a lot of fucking
nerve bro.

Dante holds up his hands in defense.

DANTE
(CHUCKLES)
Well damn. I only asked a question.
Females always going hard for
nothing.

JOEL
Bruh, don't start.

SASHA
First of all!

She steps to him, not in his face but close enough to punch
him.

SASHA (CONT'D)
First the fuck all, you know I
don't even fuck with you that way
so stop. Second, his funeral was
literally two months ago, so please
don't start.

DANTE
Aight calm down, it's not even that
serious. You don't need to get in
my face.

SASHA
Yes it is. Besides the fact that he
was my friend, Malik was a person
who was wrongfully murdered- and
you're talking about him like
someone with no empathy.

Dante nods.

DANTE
Yeah, you right... by his pops at
that...

Sasha shakes her head and starts scrolling on her phone.

DANTE (CONT'D)
(towards Joel)
They said his pops snapped his neck
bro. That's crazy.

Sasha makes a face and leans against the sculpture facing the street. A large bush blocks some of the low view. People walk by looking at their phones, late students cross the street and have their umbrellas fly away from them.

Joel is very uncomfortable. He looks at Dante and shakes his head questioning him.

DANTE (CONT'D)
Aight, my bad. I'm done. I know I shouldn't speak ill of the dead.

Sasha looks up from her phone.

DANTE (CONT'D)
I know that was your *only* friend. Like I couldn't imagine living without that one person bruh.

SASHA
(puts her phone away)
Alright, I'm done. Fuck you. Thanks Joel.

She starts walking back.

JOEL
Oh, yo wait.

Sasha turns around.

SASHA
Yeah, what.

JOEL
So I wanted to invite you out tomorrow night?

Sasha looks at him.

JOEL (CONT'D)
You know, with some other people- just to get out and ish.

SASHA
Do I know them?

JOEL
Ya. Loren and em, maybe some other people. A small get-to-gether

SASHA
(motions towards Dante)
Is he finna be there?

JOEL
(Shrugging)
Let's hope not. Maybe he'll forget.

SASHA
(SIGHS)
Alright um, I'll let you know by
tomorrow afternoon.

JOEL
Bet.

Sasha walks up the ramp towards the front entrance.

JOEL (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Yo what's wrong with you?!

INT. SCHOOL STAIRCASE - CONTINUOUS

Sasha walks in quickly and into the staircase

Sasha walks up the stairs. Ugly red handrails, where thick chips come off as she ascends. Depressing grey walls surround her as her feet PIT-PATS the cracked, but still holding steps.

She passes students going down and passing her. Some of them with the occasional--

RANDOM STUDENT
I'm sorry, Sasha. My condolences.

Even that weird group of kids, who hangout in the back of the staircase give condolences. They're sitting at the top the staircase on the second floor, leaned against each other. Each of their hair are a different color. They're quiet as Sasha steps around them.

Justin gets up and pulls away from the group.

SASHA
Oh shit, hey, you okay?

Justin SNIFFLES. He immediately breaks down and engulfs Sasha. Sasha is caught off guard, she tenses.

Sasha comes around after a several seconds and pats his back.

JUSTIN

(MUFFLED)

I miss him so much. I just miss him
so much!

SASHA

(SIGHING)

I know. It's gonna be okay, you're
doing great so far.

She pats him awkwardly, ever so slightly starts pulling away.

Justin finally comes up. His face is wet and disgruntled. His pony tail loose, with a few loose strands sticking to his forehead.

He takes a tissue out his pocket and wipes his face. He tries to compose himself.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Come.

She pulls him to the center of the double sided staircase, against the small, light grey tiles. They both hop and sit on the ledge, pushing their bags against the large gated, windows.

JUSTIN

(SNIFFLES)

I'm so sorry Sash. I know you don't
wanna always talk about him but-
okay.

(CLEARS THROAT)

Alright, I'm okay- I'm good.

Sasha nods and pats his arm.

SASHA

It's okay, I get it. Trust me.
Look, how about this... Joel just
invited me to Loren's thingy.

Justin nods.

JUSTIN

Yeah, I heard about it. She can't
keep her mouth shut. I might go,
she said it's a small thing.

He wipes his eyes.

Sasha stares out the window.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

After the assembly ended, they lifted up the screen and everyone got quiet cause of Malik's poster in the back- mad depressing and shit. Ugh! I need a smoke. 'Dis tew much.'

SASHA

Facts.

JUSTIN

And you know what was mad weird, I saw mad people who didn't fuck with Mal acting like they knew him personally. I don't understand how people be on ya dick when you die but probably wouldn't even defend you while you're alive. Everyone is acting like-like-

Sasha nods and looks around.

SASHA

I know. It's all bullshit.

She SIGHS and shakes her head.

Justin looks at Sasha.

He kicks her leg hanging aside the ledge.

SASHA (CONT'D)

What's up?

JUSTIN

Sash...you don't have to be distant. I know we're not close but it doesn't have to be that way. Just cause Mal isn't here doesn't mean we can get to at least be real friends. I don't just have to be his ex or whatev'.

Sasha looks at him, eyebrows raised.

She half smiles and shrugs.

SASHA

(reluctant)

Sure, I don't mind. Maybe this weekend we can hangout or something.

She hops down and dust herself off. She gives him a quick hug, turns and leaves.

CUT TO:

INT. GUIDENCE CONSOLER OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Sasha walks into the office.

The office is small but comfortable. A small loveseat on the right side of the room as soon as you come in. In front of it a round table with four chairs. Behind the table there is small futon. At the back of the room a large but modest desk, stands tall, as if it's watching over the room.

The consoler, AKAI JOHNSON (35) a darkskin man, wearing a green Kufi and a white polo shirt with brown slacks, looks up and a random student with a wet, puffy face turns around.

Sasha stands there awkwardly.

SASHA

My bad! I'll just wait...

MR. JOHNSON

No that's okay Sasha. Come and take a seat on the sofa. We're just finishing up.

Sasha sits down while the consoler walks the other student to the door.

MR. JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(to the student)

Don't worry, it's going to get better. Day by day, Malik is still with us.

He opens the door and the student leaves.

MR. JOHNSON (CONT'D)

(walks back to his seat)

So Sasha, grab a seat. I see that uh- the assembly brought back some sad memories from earlier this year.

Sasha takes one of the chairs from the round table and sets it in front of the desk.

SASHA

Yeah, I peeped. It's very annoying.

He leans against the side of his desk, half sitting.

MR. JOHNSON

Why do you say that? Malik was well known and loved by a lot of his peers.

Sasha rolls her eyes.

SASHA

It's bullshit, to be honest. Most of em' talked shit about Mal, and me too.

He SIGHS.

MR. JOHNSON

Some people realize their wrong doing sooner or later. I think Malik would accept their apologies and tears.

Sasha waves her hand and gets comfortable.

SASHA

(Sarcastic)

Yeah, yeah forgive and forget, I know how you boomers work. So, Akai. How are we today?

Akai gives her a look and sits in his chair.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(CHUCKLES)

I'm just yanking your chain. How are you?

MR. JOHNSON

I think we should be focusing more on you!

He leans back in his seat like a psychiatrist and folds his hands in his lap.

MR. JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Our last meet was more than a month ago, how are you? Are you making new friends? Connecting with your peers? How are you coping with Mal?

SASHA

The only way I know I can.

MR. JOHNSON

And what's that?

SASHA

(Propping her feet up on
another chair)

Ya'know, avoiding my
responsibilities, the lil bit of I
have friends and shit. Digging a
deeper hole into the void of my
depression. The regular degular'
bullshit of being a teen during
this generation.

MR. JOHNSON

How's that working for you?

SASHA

It's not working, I've missed three
days of school and called out of
work three times...

MR. JOHNSON

Mhm. How's your mother?

Sasha SCOFFS and puts her feet down.

SASHA

She's still a major pain in my ass.
It's just worse now...

Beat.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(shakes head)

She said some shit like "well now
'it' doesn't have to come over
anymore". She tells me to get over
it...I don't even want to be home,
or at least not when she's there.

MR. JOHNSON

Hm, so that's why you haven't been
returning my calls?

SASHA

I told you, don't call my house!
I'd rather my cell.

MR. JOHNSON

That would be inappropriate. Where
have you been staying?

SASHA

With a friend, but I think it might be time for me to dip. I'm invaded her space and her mom has been asking question so...wait, why'd You call?

MR.JOHNSON

Well...I don't want to have to dump this on you right now-

SASHA

Just tell me it can't be that bad.

MR.JOHNSON

Alright, so we got some replies! Unfortunately, Brooklyn said no.

Stunned, Sasha sits back and slumps in her seat.

SASHA

(exasperated)

What?

MR.JOHNSON

Hey, hey! Things are still looking up, no need to become undone.

(he opens his laptop)

They're technically not acceptances but nothing is wrong with the waitlist, especially if you add enough pressure.

Sasha rubs her hands over her face and takes a deep BREATH.

MR.JOHNSON (CONT'D)

You're waitlisted for three actually... Oswego, Potsdam and Purchase!

Sasha stares at the floor, zoning out. Lightly TAPPING the tip of her sneaker against the desk leg.

She BREATHES deeply again.

MR.JOHNSON (CONT'D)

But we should have you apply for some safety schools, before its too late There's Kingsborough, LaGuardia, Queens, BMC-

Sasha's head snaps up.

SASHA

Hell no! You mean I have to stay here!?

MR. JOHNSON

Sasha, these schools aren't terrible. As a matter-of-fact, you can do your associates' here and then pro-

SASHA

Yeah no fuck that. I'm not commuting! The-the whole point of this was to go away with Mal and get away from my fucking mother. And now you're telling me worse news on top of the fact that I just lost Mal to a fucking murder! What the fuck is wrong with you?!

MR. JOHNSON

(calmly)

Sasha calm down. It's not the end of the world. We can-

SASHA

Yeah no fuck that.

She stands abruptly and leaves, SLAMMING the door behind her.

EXT. FULTON STREET, BOY AND GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Sasha walks down Fulton Ave towards downtown.

The school stands four stories high and takes up the entire block. A large mural of black art is above the windows as she storms further down, the art stops. The large basement windows reveal the cafeteria and the workers in their white hairnets cleaning the tables

She HUFFS and PUFFS. Shaking her head.

SASHA

(to herself)

Like why would- why would you say that to me? Okay, maybe I'm dragging it but...nah. My guy knows that I don't fuck with my mom. Like Mal just died...no he was murdered...

She takes deep BREATH and for a second her face scrunches up and tears well in her eyes.

She shakes her head and wipes her eyes.

SASHA (CONT'D)
No. Don't do it Sasha. Don't be one
of those people who cry in the
street.

She crosses Troy Ave.

She walks past a American Chinese joint, back tracks and
walks in.

INT. LEON KITCHEN - DAY

Sasha leans against and scrolls on her phone.

Her phone starts VIBRATING.

SASHA
Shit. Okay.

She BLOWS out air and puts the phone to her ear.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Heeey Eli.

ELI (V.O.)
Look Sash, I know you're going
through it but, you gotta put some
hours in or we would have to let
you go.

SASHA
Yeah -I know, I know. I'll come in
tomorrow or something.

ELI (V.O.)
Perfect! How about you just clean
then? At least you won't have to be
in the front.

Two women walk in the restaurant, changing the quiet
atmosphere to rowdy.

They're sweaty and their natural musk fills the small area.

WOMAN 1
Oh my god, it's so good right? I'll
literally be able to choke someone
out now.

WOMAN 2

Deadass, this plus the gym! But I feel like I hurt myself with the kicks -like I can't turn my body in time.

WOMAN 1

That's because you have to make sure your back foot is turning also. You should try the Muay Thai stance, that works for me.

Sasha listens to their conversation.

ELI (V.O.)

Sasha? Yo? You heard me? You have to complete the assessment before-

SASHA

Oh, yeah! Bet, I'ma talk to you tomorrow. I gotta go.

She hangs up.

The women notice her looking at them.

Sasha lifts her chin towards them.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I just heard you talking about a gym?

WOMAN 2

Don't worry, girl you're good. Not a reg gym, a kickboxing gym. They have other stuff too.

SASHA

Is it-

CHINESE MAN

Fried shrimp with white rice and broccoli!

SASHA

Cuse me!

Sasha pays for her food quickly, then returns to the woman.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Sorry, is -is it in the area?

WOMAN 1

Yeah, it's actually a couple of blocks away over on Marcus Garvey.

SASHA

Bet, thank you!

She opens her tray as she walks out.

EXT. MARCUS GARVEY BLVD - DAY

Sasha walks down the block passing various buildings and businesses, old and new.

The sidewalks are dirty with old gum on the ground blackened by many shoes. Pieces of trash sprawl out of the overflowed city trashcans, being flown down the street by the wind.

She passes the newly gentrified Fine Fare supermarket.

SASHA

(shaking her head)

Box of pasta for five dollars? Pssh

She gets to the intersection of Decatur street and Marcus Garvey Blvd and looks around.

Nothing but old ass brownstones, an old cleaners and an old church.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Well, where the fuck is it?

She spots people walking in and out of the side of a church in workout gear.

She throws the rest of her food out.

As she walks into the block she spots a small table set up on the side of the church.

The table has a black table cloth with a sign up pad and a few pictures of people kickboxing. There's also a cup with a bunch of pens and a few head and sweat bands.

She walks up to the table as a woman is walking out of the church towards her.

The woman is in her late thirties, and her body is strong and toned. She has on black leggings and a long sleeve green shirt, with a small jean jacket that's open.

She takes a seat behind the table.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Hi, um is this the sign up for the
gym thingy?

WOMAN
(energetic)
Hey girl! Yas this is! My name is
Amber and we have a special this
week until Friday-tomorrow, if you
sign up for four classes, you'll
only pay \$50!

She hands Sasha a flyer from the stack she just put on the
table.

Beat.

Amber looks at Sasha for a second and leans in a little
closer to Sasha.

AMBER
It's a great way to relieve stress
and ya'know let go of all that
anger and...pain

Sasha looks up from the flyer.

SASHA
Is it that obvious?

AMBER
Don't think of it as people pitying
you or anything. It's just that
sometimes some of us carry the
emotional stress with us everywhere
we go and we can even add others
stress to ours indirectly.

Sasha nods.

SASHA
(clears throat)
Mhm, yeah...I think I'ma do it. I
need a distraction.

AMBER
(smiling)
Great! We have a few classes coming
up Saturday, it's free! You can use
that to see if you would want to
continue.

Amber hands the clipboard to Sasha.

INT. SASHA'S HOME, LIVINGROOM - EVENING

It's a small living-room on the second floor, inside a three family apartment building in Bushwick, Brooklyn. The walls are off white with nothing on them.

Sasha lounges on the on the loveseat and reads, SAPIENS by Yuval Noah Harari. She's not paying attention to the flat screen TV mounted on the wall in front of her.

ISAIAH (50) waltz's in. He's a big man with a beer belly, and a scruffy unkempt beard. He has on big straight jeans and a white T-shirt.

Sasha makes a face of disgust without looking up from her book.

He sits on the couch and tries to unknowingly rest his hand on Sasha ankle.

She quickly kicks his hand off and sits up.

SASHA
Don't fucking touch me!

ISAIAH
(stern)
Damn Sash, calm down. Why you gotta be-

SASHA
And don't fucking call me that.
Don't talk or look at me

ISAIAH
You know you don't have to be a,
bitch about everything.

SASHA
My nigga-- fuck you and your dirty
ass hands and your feelings. Don't
talk to me.

SONYA (50), same height as Sasha but with more weight. She has box braids and is wearing jeans and a blouse.

She storms in from another direction.

SONYA
Sasha you need to watch your mouth!
Stop talking to him that way.

SASHA

Hell no, my nigga! He's a fucking creep and I don't want him touching me.

SONYA

Sasha please don't start this shit again.

ISAIAH

Yeah, how about you shut the hell up, always telling stories and shit.

Sasha stands up and points a finger at her mother.

SASHA

You took this fucking pervert back after I told you what he did! So cry me a river.

ISAIAH

(he gets in her face)

Listen you little bitch. Shut up. You don't know what your talking about

SASHA

Yo, my guy get the fuck out of my face. I'm dead not scared of you, my-

Sasha pushes him away from her, but he grabs her wrist.

Sonya just watches at first. She watches her daughter struggle to get free.

After a few seconds she snaps out of it and attempts to come between them.

SONYA

Okay, okay ISIAIAH! ISIAIAH!

They all struggle with each other.

Isiah tries to grab Sasha's neck but fails.

ISAIAH

Co'mere-

At this point Sasha YELLING.

SASHA

Get off of me- what the fuck-

Isiah manages to smush Sasha's face and she falls back into the small TV stand under the TV. A PS4 system and games fall out of place. A Bible on top of the stand falls.

Isiah steps forward to continue his bullying but Sonya steps between him and Sasha.

SONYA
YOU NEED TO STOP!

Isiah backs off and holds his arms up.

ISAIAH
(HUFFS)
I'm out of here.

He walks out and we hear the front door SLAM soon after.

Beat.

It's dead silence but Sasha light BREATHING is trembling.

They don't look at each other. Sasha looks at the floor in front of her. Sonya stares ahead, her eyes burning a hole in the wall.

Sonya makes the first move to leave.

SASHA
Of course, you just walk away.

SONYA
Sasha what do you want me to do?! I stopped him didn't I?

SASHA
After how long?!

SONYA
I don't have time for this.

Sonya starts to walk away but Sasha quickly gets up and grabs her arm, yanking her back. Sonya retaliates by smacking Sasha in the face. Sasha stumbles and falls backwards, grabbing her face.

She looks up at her mother with tears welling in her eyes.

SASHA
What the hell is wrong with you?

SONYA

Oh please Sasha, you're just tryna ruin my life again! All the same bullshit talk about ISAIAH-

SASHA

Bullshit! You're literally full of it!

Sonya shakes her head in disregard.

SONYA

(BLOWS RASBERRY)

Sasha, I don't have time for this cry wolf shit right now.

SASHA

Cry wolf?! You never protected me! You never took my side, you would just fucking punish me for nothing! To you I was always wrong or being fresh.

SONYA

(dismissive)

I don't know what you're talking about. You've always tried to blame me for yo-

SASHA

(voice TREMBLES)

And then you gaslight me, like I'm crazy! Stop doing that!

Sonya SCOFFS and CHUCKLES.

SONYA

I can never do anything right huh? You have a roof over your head and clothes on your back. Yet you blame me for your woes? Make up lies and have the nerve to tell the whole family.

SASHA

Those are things you're suppose to do, I owe you nothing. You're a mother, that was your fucking choice! I'd rather have not been born...at least not to you.

Sonya makes a face of disgust and anger.

SONYA

With that mindset you can get the
hell out of my house.

Sonya looks down at her daughter. They have a staring contest for a few more seconds before She walks away.

A door is SLAMMED.

It's quiet.

Sasha stares at the door where her mom just left out.

She pulls her knees to her chest and sobs.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SASHA'S ROOM - SHORTLY AFTER

Sasha SLAMS her door.

Her bedroom is small, and humble.

Old hard, Blush red walls and wooden floors. Old bedroom furniture that most would consider 'vintage'.

From the bedroom, we see Sasha in the bathroom. She's in front of a mirror pulling her hair back into a tight, low bun, using the last of her edge control to lay her edges.

She comes back in her room and hurries, her are STEPS heavy and the floor CREAKS.

She throws a duffle bag on the twin bed and starts to pack clothes, throwing them in the bag from an open drawer of the bureau.

She gently tosses her laptop, and chargers on top of the clothes and attempts to zip up the bag, but the zipper keeps getting caught on the fabric.

SASHA

(frustrated)

Ugh! Come the fuck on!

The bag finally zips. She then slips on a pullover hoodie and a thick coat.

She goes under her bed and pulls out a small, rectangular safe. On her keychain and uses the smallest key to open the safe, revealing a 6 rolls of various dollar bills, some bigger than others. She grabs a small roll and stuffs it in her inside pocket of her jacket.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sasha walks out her room and down the stairs.

SASHA
(to herself)
Good luck.

She SLAMS the door as she walks out.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - NIGHT

There's snow on the ground, nothing much but a fresh thin sheet. It won't stick.

Sasha walks a few blocks before she the cold starts to get to her.

She shivers and stops walking.

SASHA
(to herself)
Sasha what the hell are you doing?

She looks up at the sky.

Snowflakes fall atop her face and she closes her eyes.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(to herself)
Man Mal, why'd you get yourself
killed...I really can't do this.

She sits on the stoop to an apartment building and pulls out her phone.

She shivers as she types, struggling to keep her phone from dropping. She puts it away and rubs her hands together.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Ugh fuck this.

She gets up and walks to a coffee shop on Bushwick Ave.

INT. THE PLATFORM COFFEE HOUSE - NIGHT

Sasha hurries in, bringing in a small trail of snow as she pats the doormat. She puts her stuff down on a table nearest to the door. She takes off her jacket and put's it around the chair to dry off properly.

She rubs her hands on her jeans and walks to the counter.

The Platform has a rustic, woody aesthetic. Dark wooden floors and highchairs with small wood top tables. There are displays of various types of domestic and foreign coffees and teas.

There is only one person behind the counter, putting freshly baked pastries in a container.

SASHA

Hi, can I get a large hot chocolate and a plain croissant?

CASHIER

(deadpan)

We only have one size.

SASHA

(sarcastic)

Well then lemme get a one size *hot chocolate* and a plain croissant!

The cashier looks at her, rolls her eyes and SIGHS defeated.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Is there a issue? I don't even know you and you're tripping.

CASHIER

Nah, I'm just going through it. I'm sorry...I didn't mean to take it out on you...I'm just tired...

SASHA

It's okay, I feel you. You'll pull through.

CASHIER

I hope so, mane. It's just- sometimes I feel like what's the point ya'know?

They SIGH again.

SASHA

Try and look at it this way, "I am not the person talking in my head, I am the observer" Life is literally what you make it...even if there is a blueprint already put out in front of you.

The cashier nods and silent mumbles the words.

Beat.

CASHIER

Thanks.

(They smile widely)

Um, you can sit down if you want,
I'll bring you the food.

SASHA

How much?

CASHIER

On the house.

Sasha looks at them and smiles faintly.

SASHA

Good looks bro.

She walks back to her seat.

She pulls out her laptop and plugs it up.

After a few minutes the cashier comes with her stuff.

CASHIER

If you're gonna be here a while,
there are chairs and couches in the
back as well.

Sasha nods and gives her thanks.

She grabs up her things and walks towards the back.

The back of the coffee shop is spacious. A large couch is against the left wall and two big comfy chairs are against the back with a small round table between them. Adjacent to the large couch, are five large beanie chairs. There is also a big fluffy rug on the floor. Heavy on the earth and nude tone walls.

A few people are back there and one couple.

Sasha notices shoes lined up and she follows suit, taking her shoes with her instead.

She sits in one of the big chairs and places her cup on the table.

There's an old woman sitting in the chair next to her. She's wearing a cardigan with blue jeans. She's reading, her eyes intensely scanning the book she's reading.

Sitting cross legged, Sasha starts on her laptop again.

After a few minutes she pulls out her phone and dials a number. She looks around and turns away a little from everyone.

SASHA
 (quietly, in phone)
 Hey! How ya' doing?
 (beat)
 That's good.
 (beat)
 Mhm...you think I could uh
 sleepover again tonight? I-I know I
 said yesterday was the last but...
 (beat)
 Uh, yeah...mhm hm.
 (beat)
 No-no it's okay it's fine. Aight,
 be safe. I'll talk to you later.

She hangs up the phone and slouches in the chair.

She SIGHS and rubs her eyes.

SASHA (CONT'D)
 (herself)
 This some bullshit.

The old woman glances over at Sasha and does a double take.

OLD WOMAN
 Sasha Guard, is that you?!

Sasha's head swivels towards her and she sits up and straightens her hoodie out.

SASHA
 Oh shi-
 (she covers her mouth)
 Oop, I'm so sorry! Hi Mrs.King.

The woman beams at Sasha. The wrinkles on her face are expressed more as her lips and eyes form a smile.

They both lean over the small table to hug.

MRS.KING
 I thought I recognized your voice!
 How are you sweetie?

SASHA
 I'm good, ya know. Just tryna get
 outta school.

MRS.KING

That's good. Wow, I haven't seen you since you were below my hips!

She CHUCKLES.

SASHA

Yeah...

MRS.KING

You look good, and strong. It's nice to see my former students doing well.

Sasha manages to crack a warm smile but is clearly distracted by her thoughts.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)

Baby, what's got your anxiety all twisted up?

SASHA

It's nothing...just tired.

MRS.KING

Sleepy tired? Or life is stressing you out tired?

SASHA

More like, 'life hates me' tired.

MRS.KING

Oh, I know about that but that's the thing about life. It will always be there, we won't unfortunately which is why we have to make the best of it.

She puts her hand over Sasha's and squeezes.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry about your friend Malik. Losing a best friend... specially at this age is a hard thing to experience. But you know, he's still with you.

She smiles warmly, it seems to light up the room.

Sasha doesn't look at her. Instead she stares at the floor, trying to keep her composure but the tears swell her eyes and she takes deep BREATHS.

SASHA

(weak and cracking)
Yeah, I-I just. I don't think I
want to do this anymore.

MRS.KING

Do what? You better not be talking
about that! You're too young,
Sasha! Why are you thinking like
this?

SASHA

Because I just feel empty
now...well almost-I kinda felt like
this since I can remember...alone.

MRS.KING

But you weren't, were you?

SASHA

No, not when I was with
friends...mostly Mal and now he's
gone and I don't know what to do. I
can't go to the schools that I
want, I-I can't get out of this
fucking neighborhood, I can't get
away from my mom--who hates
me...like My entire life up until
this point has been "four out of
ten, do not recommend"...and now I
probably have to sneak into my
house.

MRS.KING

Sounds rough. Ya'know what you can
do about that right?

SASHA

What?

MRS.KING

Keep pushin' of course! These are
just bumps...Even if some of them
are large and seemingly impossible
to overcome. Your mama doesn't
control your life and you're not
letting her either! You don't need
her.

SASHA

But why does she hate me? I've did
nothing to her.

MRS.KING

Well...some humans just aren't meant to take care of other humans. Perhaps it's her own past trauma that's haunting her and unfortunately she's taking it out on you but, you don't have to take it and now that you're older and much more capable of yourself. You can leave and make your life better.

The cashier comes to the back.

CASHIER

(Quietly)

Guys we close in 15, okay?

They do the employee "smile" and walk away.

SASHA

Guess I gotta go beg my mom for forgiveness now.

MRS.KING

Why would you do that?

SASHA

We got into it and she fucking kicked me out, AGAIN! Oop, sorry-didn't mean to-

Mrs. King holds up her hand.

MRS.KING

It's okay, sweetie.

Mrs. King starts to gather her things.

Sasha glances at her and looks away.

SASHA

(sweetly)

Have a nice night Mrs. King, it was nice talking to you again.

She smiles.

MRS.KING

Child, if you don't get your black ass up. I'm not letting you beg to your mom to let you back into YOUR home.

SASHA
No, I-are you sure?

MRS.KING
Yes, I'm sure. Now come on, it's
cold and I know that snow might
stick and make the ground icy.
C'mon now!

Sasha starts to put on her hoodie and jacket

Mrs. King wraps one of her scarves around Sasha.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)
For your neck!

EXT/INT. MRS.KING'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is one of those long forgotten, large old houses of
Bushwick. A all white house with some pieces of red. The
white paint has slowly been chipping away from years of
neglect.

They go through the side door which leads to the kitchen.

INT. MRS.KING'S HOUSE, KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She flicks on the light and reveals a beautiful, but sort of
old school kitchen. Instead of paint, there is white and red
floral wallpaper.

A moderate size, but big enough to have a small square dinner
table and four chairs in the somewhat center of the room. The
table has a floral table cloth. The counter starts from the
side door and wraps around to the hallway.

Mrs. King takes off her things and hangs it up on the wooden
coat hanger on the other side of the door.

Sasha looks around the kitchen.

MRS.KING
C'mon now, take those off. It's wet
and needs to dry.

She helps Sasha take off the scarf and jacket.

Sasha rubs hers hands together.

SASHA
It's nice and warm in here.

MRS.KING

Mhm. I know you're hungry, sit down.

Sasha takes a seat.

Mrs. King rummages around the fridge and takes out different sizes of Tupperware.

She fills up the electric kettle and flicks the switch. She then goes in on of the cabinets and takes out a two large mugs and two packets of turmeric-ginger tea. She prepares the cups as the kettle starts BOILING. She pours two cups and places them on the table, one in front of Sasha and the other in front of the chair next to Sasha's.

Sasha sits quietly, fidgeting with her fingers.

Mrs. King makes a hearty plate of curry chicken, rice & peas and cabbage, and heats it up in the microwave.

She heats up some roti on the stove.

SASHA

Oh, do you need help?

MRS.KING

No, child. You just relax and warm up.

She places the steaming hot food in front of Sasha.

Sasha smiles politely as she gives her a water bottle and utensils.

She puts the roti in some foil and places it next to Sasha's plate.

SASHA

Thank you, so much!

MRS.KING

(sitting down)
You're very welcome.

Sasha eats quietly and politely.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)

Don't be shy.

SASHA

Oh, I- um...ok, thanks.

She starts to really eat but not like a savage.

Mrs. King smiles and takes a sip of her tea.

MRS.KING

Oh!

She gets up and opens one of the drawers for Splenda packets.

Sasha wipes her mouth.

Mrs. King sits back down.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)

Now, you can stay in the room upstairs. There are fresh sheets in the closet in the hallway and comforter and a thick blanket. It's going to be cold tonight.

SASHA

Mrs. King can I ask you a question?

MRS.KING

Yes.

SASHA

Why are you doing this? Being so nice and...warm to me?

MRS.KING

Well, why wouldn't I be nice?

SASHA

Because, like...you're just gonna let me stay here tonight?

MRS.KING

Sasha, I know you. Hell, I changed your diapers in daycare! I watched you and the rest of the neighborhood kids grow up...ya'll are like my children, even if we don't talk or see each other all the time.

Sasha SIGHS and nods.

She lifts up her fork again.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)

Besides, I wasn't letting you beg your mama...you can stay here as long as you need.

Sasha smiles.

SASHA
Mrs. King you don't...

MRS.KING
No! I do. It's better for you to
anyway. I have the space.

SASHA
Thank you.

MRS.KING
(Nodding)
Of course! But there are rules
obviously. You just clean up after
yourself and go to school.

Sasha nods.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)
Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going
to go finish my tea and watch my TV
program.

She gets up with her cup and walks through one of the
doorways that leads to the living-room.

MRS.KING (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And make sure you wash those dishes
when you're done!

Sasha finishes up her food, cleaning the plate and the tea.

She washes the dishes, puts them in the dishwasher and grabs
her bag.

She pops her head in the living-room.

SASHA
Goodnight.

MRS.KING (O.S.)
Goodnight, Sasha. Remember to turn
the light off when you go to sleep.

She walks through the back hallway and up the stairs.

INT. MRS.KING'S HOUSE, BEDROOMS - LATE NIGHT

Sasha takes off her bra through her shirt and her jeans.

She types on her laptop and lays down.

Sasha lays on the thick wool sheets and stretches dramatically.

She YAWNS loudly into the pillows.

SASHA
(to herself)
No more talking to you before I
sleep, Mal...Don't start crying
Sasha...

She SIGHS.

Soon after she gets comfy, sounds of THUNDER and RAIN start blaring out of her laptop.

She finally completely relaxes and closes her eyes.

EXT. BROADWAY, FLUSHING AVE - DAY

Sasha up a flight of stairs to the J, as the train is pulling in.

INT. FLUSHING AVE STATION - CONTINUOUS

She quickly swipes at the turnstile but the bar doesn't move. She looks down at the small screen.

SASHA
Are you deadass!

She runs over to the MetroCard vending machine just as a gentrifier is walking to it, and jumps in front of them.

GENTRIFIER
Um, excuse me you can't cut.

SASHA
You good.

Sasha quickly inputs her info and refills her MetroCard. She looks over at the turnstiles and see's that it's now packed.

She BLOWS air out her nose.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Fuck it.

She yanks open the emergency door and runs up the steps to the platform. Just as the doors are closing, she grips them with her hands and forces herself in.

She SIGHS and leans against the door.

She looks around for a open seat. There are no seats available.

After a couple of stops, the train stops abruptly.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR
incoherent mumbling

Everyone on the train SIGHS and shows their annoyance.

Sasha pulls out her phone and dials.

SASHA
Yo! I'm running late cause of the
fucking train stopping. I'm
literally on my way! I might
honestly end up taking an Uber...
(beat)
Ok-ok I'm trying!

After ten minutes of waiting, the train moves but at a slower speed than usual.

Sasha shakes her head and flares her nostrils.

A random man across from her stares at her.

She looks at him, rolls her eyes and returns to scrolling on her phone.

The man continues to stare.

Sasha pulls a headphone out of one ear.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Can I help you Mr.?

CREEP
You seem like a pretty girl, you
should smile more...

SASHA
You seem like a creep, you should
shut up and mind your business.

She continues to scroll.

CREEP
Females-

SASHA

Okay, I'm gonna stop you right there. No females this or that my guy, I'm a WOMAN, not a female of another species! Also, you can get out of my face with all of
 (gestures to him)
 This! You don't even have to smile for me to know that you're a dusty ass nigga with doodoo stains in his underwear...

People on the train SNICKER.

She gets up as the train stops at Gates Ave.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(on her way out)

Have a nice day...

She runs down the first flight of steps before the evening rush crowd can slow her down. She then fly's down the second flight leading to the street.

EXT. GATES AVE - CONTINUOUS

Sasha runs up the block, passing a large old church with old timey lamp post painted red, but the paint is chipped.

She looks both ways before running across the street and runs into the gym.

INT. GYM - CONTINUOUS

The gym is one large floor, grey tiles in the front and black mats throughout the gym. In the front there is a large black and grey desk. On top of the desk is work phone and a couple sign promotions for the gym.

Wiping the counter at the desk is MORGAN (23) Black, tall, thick and handsome, with long dreads. She's wearing the all black uniform.

An employee walks up to the three large fridge's to the right of the desk and starts refilling Aquafina water, yellow and red Gatorades, and Muscle Milks.

In the distance you can see various gym equipment.

Morgan is just hanging up the phone as Sasha rushes in and walks past the desk. She doubles back to the front.

The back desk is the same color as the front. The counter has two computers. There are some clips and jump ropes on the end of the back desk, brought back over from members.

SASHA
Yo, is Eli here?

MORGAN
And hi to you too!

Sasha smiles and wraps her arms around Alex's neck. They embrace tightly. MORGAN towering over Sasha, holds her.

SASHA
I'm sorry. I'm just worried.

Their hug is questionable, as Sasha lifts her head and looks up at MORGAN. MORGAN licks her lips smoothly and, stares back at Sasha, she half smiles.

Sasha is brought back to reality as a member walks up and scans in. She's blushing and gathers herself.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(clearing her throat)
So, Eli is here?

MORGAN
Mhm hm, he is. So is Zack, so tread carefully.

SASHA
Ugh, ok. I guess that's why everyone is keeping busy--thanks.

She starts to walk around the back of the desk.

MORGAN
Yo'
(turns around)

Sasha slows down.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
If you ever want to talk, I'm here. I don't want to try and make this about me but, I know what you're going through...so I got you. We all miss Mal, too. You don't have to be alone.

Sasha nods and smiles sincerely at MORGAN.

SASHA

Thank you, I appreciate that.

She continues to the office.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The white office is small and compact but big enough to have a medium-long rectangular desk, with two computers, on the right side and a printer/scanner in the back as you walk in. And three of those old school metal file cabinets in the far right corner of the room. There are also black cabinets above the desk.

ELI, the assistant manager (28) Hispanic, short and wearing a black shirt and black joggers. And ZACK, manager (30) white, tall, wearing light blue jeans and a zip up hoodie, both sit at the desk.

They look at Sasha as she yeets open the door and stops.

SASHA

(awkwardly)

Uh, hello...

Zack nods at her and continues typing on the computer. Eli smiles and blows her a kiss.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(still awkward)

Soooo I can clock in?

Sasha clocks in.

She makes the "oops" face as the system indicates that she's clocked in late.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I'ma just go and put my stuff down
in the back...

Eli and her share a look and wiggle their eyebrows, as she leaves.

INT. OFFICE - SHORTLY AFTER

Sasha sits on top of one of the metal cabinets, eating a banana and holding green grapes.

SASHA

(mouth full)

I've literally never felt so alone
bruh. I don't even wanna be here!
I'm only here cause of money

ELI

(popping grapes into their
mouth)

No! You should be here. It's a
distraction. Unfortunately, Mal
used to work here too...It's just
crazy to think about, he was just
here a few days ago man.

SASHA

I know

(takes deep breath)

I've been trying to not cry but
it's honestly been waterworks since
that day. I've literally been
avoiding everything and shit. And
my mom fucking kicked me out!

ELI

Oh shit, why?

SASHA

Remember how I told you I called
shawty out a few months ago, about
how my step father molested me when
I was younger?

ELI

Ooooh shieet.

SASHA

Exactly. So I'm home, chilling, and
then this pedo walks in. So,
automatically I'm tight.

ELI

Mhm.

SASHA

Aight, so boom. Chilling he walks
in and puts his dirty ass hands on
my leg. So I'm like nah, ah ah ah.
Don't touch me and I have no but
attitude, like I don't care, I have
every right, you feel me? So bet,
I'm like don't touch me and we
start go back and forth.

(MORE)

SASHA (CONT'D)
(she coughs as she
swallows a grape)
Whoops bitch, I almost died.

They both LAUGH.

Sasha gets up and throws out her grape vine, in the garbage under the desk next to the two hard-drives.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(sitting back down)
So we going at it and my mom comes in with her bullshit, defending him on some captain save-a-hoe type of time.

ELI
Shaking my damn head.

SASHA
Exactly, so now I'm on one hundred, and I decide to call her out again. I'm like how dare you take this man back after I told you what he did. So we literally end up in a scuffle and he leaves. Then me and my mom started arguing, I'm crying and shit. And she basically thinks I'm being ungrateful and dramatic. talm' bout I blame her for everything and she kicked me out. It's not the first time though.

ELI
So where are you staying?

SASHA
At an old friends? I dunno, she used to babysit back in the day. I went there from like three to eight, then my mom stopped taking me because they got into an argument...

ELI
You trust her? Like she cool?

SASHA
Yeah, she is literally like the nicest stern person, in the world.

ELI
Wait, where were you staying before?!

SASHA

Some girls crib.

(starts eating banana)

I was actually finna go back there
but her girl came back, so she
dubbed me.

ELI

So how long are you going to stay
at the old lady's crib?

SASHA

I dunno, I don't think she's gonna
let me stay that long. Like I don't
wanna be a burden...

ELI

Look I want you to be...okay. I
know you're going through a lot
with Malik, college and your mom.
You have to let me know if your
okay. Like you cant just disappear
for a couple of days.

SASHA

I know that's my fault. I was just
in shock.

ELI

I know. So if you need to take some
time, lemme know so I can actually
put you in. Zack wants to fire you!

Sasha SIGHS.

SASHA

Today?

ELI

I don't know. I've been giving him
good reasons why you should stay
so...Just be on your P's and Q's. I
know it's gonna be hard but just be
extra "happy" today.

Sasha pulls her scarf off and reveals four big box braids.

She rubs her face, stressed out.

ELI (CONT'D)

You, er, sure your gonna be okay,
Sash?

Sasha's face scrunches up. It looks as if she's about to cry, but she doesn't.

She shakes her head and nods.

SASHA
Yeah, I'm good.

ELI
Okay...MORGAN is gonna hold down
the front. She said you can do
maintenance today.

INT. BACKMAT, SEVERAL HOURS LATER - EVENING

A couple of members stretch in the back on the soft blue mat.

On each side of the blue mat there's a large mirror. And on the far back wall there is a large metal pole set up for stretching. In between the wall and the pole are various gym equipment such as medicine balls, dumbbells, free weights and mats.

Sasha cleans one of the large mirrors with a squeegee. She sprays the mirror with Windex and wipes the sponge around the mirror.

She gets lost in the moment. Staring at herself through the soap suds, over soaping the mirror.

Beat.

Sasha SIGHS.

SASHA
(herself)
Let's just try and keep the anxiety
at a low simmer. Just can't let
anything make me boil over...maybe

She finally flips the squeegee over and clears the soap, revealing a spotless mirror, and a man sweating like he's just finished eating Jerk chicken. The sweat is oozing out of his pores so profusely, that a couple of drops lands on the mirror and on Sasha.

Sasha rolls her eyes dramatically and cleans the mirror again.

Zack comes up behind her and taps her shoulder.

ZACK
Sasha?

SASHA

Yo?

ZACK

Can we talk...in the office? Come.

They walk back to the office. Walking in-between a row of treadmills and ellipticals.

The door to the office is propped wide open with a wedge.

ZACK (CONT'D)

(to employee)

Can you give us ten minutes? Thank you.

The employee gets out of the seat and leaves as they walk in.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Zack closes the door and sits down in one of the computer chairs but Sasha hesitates.

Beat.

She sits in the other chair.

Zack types something into the computer, then turns to Sasha.

The energy is thick and tense.

ZACK

Ok so,

(clasp hands)

I'm going to be straight with you...we have to let you go and you know why.

Sasha doesn't say anything for a sec. She opens her mouth then closes it.

SASHA

Actually, I don't?

ZACK

Sasha, you rarely show up for work! At first, it was understandable because of Mal-

He stops.

Sasha glares at him with a quick glance.

SASHA
Malik!

ZACK
Er, right, Mal.

He is visibly uncomfortable.

ZACK (CONT'D)
Look, Sasha. It's unfortunate,
yes...but- this is how it has to
be. I would keep you on-

SASHA
But you'd rather kiss Carlo's ass
and keep your job, because
technically I *should* be fired.

She waves her hand.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Yeah, yeah. I get it.

She SIGHS.

ZACK
(sincere)
I'm really sorry, I know this is a
bad time...It's just out of my
hands.

Sasha nods.

SASHA
...Thanks for letting me finish my
shift though.

ZACK
Yeah, of course. I had to hook you
up--Carlo wanted me to fire you
last month but, we were short and
it would've been unempathetic. I
had to at least give you some time
to adjust.

SASHA
Okay bet. I'll go pack up my stuff.

Zack nods and gets up. He puts his hand on Sasha's shoulder
and squeezes.

ZACK
Good luck, it gets better.

INT. GYM - SHORTLY AFTER

Sasha walks towards the front. Coat and scarf on, head hanging low.

Amber turns to her as she stops at the desk.

MORGAN
Damn, Matt gave you the boot huh?

SASHA
Yup.

She leans against the front-desk.

MORGAN
Mhm. I think that's fucked up
cause' Carlo knew the reason why
you didn't show up that morning and
he had to have an idea about the
next few days.

Sasha shrugs.

SASHA
It doesn't matter, to be honest.
These big companies don't care
about us and our problems. They
only care about their moneys.

MORGAN
Haha, moneys is it?

Sasha smiles.

SASHA
Yes. Moneysssss, not money. Moneyss!

LAUGHTER.

MORGAN
So what you finna do now?

SASHA
I dunno, I guess focus on school?
But I literally have no classes.
Just like two and there
electives...

MORGAN

Copy, but I meant like overall. I know you said you wanted to go away for school?

SASHA

Yeah, essh. I dunno how that's going. I'm waitlisted so probably not.

MORGAN

Waitlist doesn't mean, "not accepted". Best thing to do is to like write them a letter about yourself or do something to show that you're really tryna go to whatever school. Usually works.

SASHA

Hm, bet. I might try that, cause I gotta get out of here...

Amber helps out a member.

Sasha stares out of the large glass windows, lost in thought.

MORGAN

What are you doing later?

Sasha is still distracted.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Yo!

SASHA

(looks at Morgan)

Hm?

MORGAN

You busy later?

SASHA

I dunno. I'll probably just stay in a read or something. Watch Netflix...

MORGAN

You shouldn't be alone- I mean you don't have to be. I know you and Mal were up each other ass all the time...

(fixes Sasha's hat)

(MORE)

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Like- I'm not tryna assume anything but, it's different when you lose a best friend. It's like you're- you're other half is missing, in a sense? You get me?

Sasha nods, not looking at her.

SASHA

So you're saying I don't know how to be alone?

MORGAN

No, no! Just like, it's difficult...cause you have to adapt to almost a new lifestyle. Am I being confusing or?

SASHA

Nah, I got you.

Beat.

MORGAN

...Like, just know you have friends and we're here for you. You-

SASHA

-don't have to be alone. I know...Ok, I'ma head out.

Sasha turns to leave.

Morgan puts her hand on her arm.

MORGAN

Also, if you ever wanna hangout or go out sometime, we could do that too...

Sasha smiles and seemingly raises an eyebrow but Morgan doesn't notice.

SASHA

Bet. Text or call me, whenever. I'm free.

She walks through the doors.

EXT. GATES AVE - CONTINUOUS

It's dark and cold outside. Small patches of snow stick on the sides of the sidewalk and on the sides of the street.

There covered in that dirty black grime from cars driving, pushing it to the side.

Sasha walks down Gates towards the train.

She passes by people bundled up, with those ugly long coats that went out of style in the late 2000s. Little kids wrapped up in anything that will insulate them, that their mother could find.

Sasha stops walking.

People behind her suck their teeth and shove past her, rushing to get on the bus that's about to leave.

Sasha lifts her head in the air and...

SASHA
(SCREAMS)

A few people look at her, most continue on with their business.

Her pocket's BUZZING interrupts her scream.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Yerr?

JOEL (V.O.)
Yeoo, what's up? What you doing?

Video games are heard in the background.

Sasha crosses the street and continues down Broadway to the train station.

SASHA
On my way from work, why?

JOEL (V.O.)
Oh, are you still coming out tonight? There's a small kickback happening, nothing to crazy.

SASHA
Ehh, who's crib?

JOEL (V.O.)
You know Loren? Yeah she got the free this weekend and she invited a few of us over, including you...we finna do it up for Malik.

Sasha rushes up the first set of steps to the train station, skipping every other step.

She goes through the turnstile.

SASHA
Hmmm, maybe...

JOEL (V.O.)
We got jungle juice and bud! And we
finna have food, shawty!

SASHA
See now you talking.

JOEL (V.O.)
Yeah, ju know the vobes.

She walks down the train platform.

JOEL (V.O.)
Shawty said she frying some
chicken, baking mac and cheese,
some greens. Baking some good shit,
you feel me?

SASHA
(GIGGLING)
Aight, you dragged it. But bet I'll
pop out. I just realized, I'm not
actually going home but I'll see
how it goes...

JOEL (V.O.)
What're you chatting about?

SASHA
None, I'ma call you later. What
time should I pull up?

JOEL (V.O.)
In a couple of hours, I think they
started cooking and shit now.

SASHA
Bet, byeee.

The train pulls up.

Sasha gets on and immediately finds a seat.

She puts on her headphones and scrolls on her phone. She
picks a song and leans her head back.

INT. MRS.KING'S HOUSE, HALLWAY - A COUPLE HOURS LATER

Sasha walks through hallway of the old house.

It's a very brown-ish hallway. Old wallpaper with wood planks lined at the bottom, and dark brown hardwood floors.

There are pictures lined in a pattern on the wall. Pictures that haven't been disturbed in many years. The very old ones have a thick coat of dust on them.

The floorboards CREAK as she steps.

She stops in front of a cluster of photos on the walls and a few on a little brown corner table, with a small drawer.

The photos are mostly made up of family.

SASHA

Wow, such a beautiful, black-ass family...

Mrs. King comes up to the beside her, from the other side of the hallway.

MRS.KING

'Black-ass family' is correct.
(smiling)
We we're a 'panther' family.

Sasha's heads snaps to her and then back at the photos.

SASHA

Oh shi- sorry. Seriously? That's dope.

MRS.KING

Yeah, growing up during that time...whew. Not a good time to be black in America-

SASHA

When is it ever?

MRS.KING

But child, those parties! We used to get down baby! And some of them Panthers', mhm hmm. Like fine wine.

Sasha CHUCKLES as Mrs. King reminisces.

SASHA
(looking at the photos on
the table)
You are so pretty.

She picks up a photo of a younger version of her. In the photo she's wearing a floral patterned dress and a red jacket.

MRS.KING
Thank you! I think I was about 24
here.

SASHA
Ya fro' poppin too!

They LAUGH.

MRS.KING
Ah, things were so different back
then, we didn't have so much to
think and worry about. This
generation- ya'll worry
about...everything...don't know how
to live in the moment. Ya'll are so
stressed...

SASHA
Well...we see it more as bringing
attention to things that were
ignored in the past. Acknowledging
that the current state we're in, as
a people and as individuals, wasn't
okay, nor is was it normal.

MRS.KING
Mhm, more like finding closure for
humanities woes.

SASHA
Hm, closure...I don't know what
that feels like.

MRS.KING
Closure is like therapy. Even if it
doesn't feel good, you know it's
the end.

She stares at a photo of her and a group of young black people in the 70's.

SASHA

Hey-um, so I'm gonna go out tonight...a couple of friends are having a get-together and were gonna toast Mal..if that's okay?

MRS.KING

Of course, baby! I think that's a good idea. You should be around friends. Just don't do to much.

She gives Sasha a look.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)

Nothing truly good happens after 3 am. So try and be on your way back.

SASHA

Okay, no problem! What're your plans for tonight?

MRS.KING

Oh, I'm just gonna read my tablet and relax...retirement can be quite boring when you're alone, but at least I don't have to work the "American dream" anymore.

She smiles and squeezes her arm.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)

(Walking away)

You have a good night, baby. I'll leave some food for you in the oven.

SASHA

Oh that's o-

Mrs. King leaves before she could finish.

EXT. BEDSTUY STREET - SHORTLY AFTER

Sasha walks down the dark street.

There are little to no cars on the block. It looks like its ripped straight out of a fairytale. The tall, leafless old trees wave as the fierce winds blows. The dark brownstones all blend in with each other, but the lights coming from them shows the warmth and comfort of the historic, block.

Sasha small body struggles to walk correctly. The cold wind cuts at the open parts of her face.

SASHA
 (to herself)
 I swear to the gods, this shit
 better be fun. It's too brick for
 this!

She stops and moves to the side.

SASHA (CONT'D)
 Hey, Siri
 (beat)
 Call Joel.

Beat.

The phone CLICKS over.

LOUD ass music and incoherent SHOUTING are heard in the background.

JOEL (V.O.)
 Yeoo. Where ya at?

SASHA
 Freezing, what house is it?

JOEL (V.O.)
 The loud one. We gonna turn it up,
 hol'on.

The music gets unbearably LOUDER. Sasha takes her ear pods out and hangs up.

She walks towards the sounds and finds herself in front of newly renovated home.

There are loud, MUFFLED sounds of ratchetry as she walks up the steps. Before she can knock the door opens.

INT. LOREN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

JOEL
 Yooo, Sashaa!

He's a little tipsy.

Sasha extends her arm for a dab but Joel quickly embraces her in a tight hug.

Sasha tenses and pats his back awkwardly.

They close the door

The front is spacious. All white walls, high ceilings and Hardwood floors covered with a large area rug. It leads to a long hallway on the right and a staircase leading to the third floor. On the right side of the hallway a large archway, with two sliding doors.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Whoops, sorry.

SASHA
What's up...Damn it's loud.

JOEL
Yeah, we just getting started too!

She starts to take off her scarf and coat. Joel stumbles to help her.

SASHA
(LAUGHING)
Boy...

Suddenly sliding doors open and music and laughter BLARES out as a few people stumble and fall out.

One of them is Dante, he spots Joel's hands resting on Sasha's shoulders and her coat on the floor.

DANTE
Oop, my bad.

They get up.

SASHA	JOEL
Noo, no my bad nothing.	Nah, chill bruh. It's not like that.

Sasha hangs her coat up. She has on comfy attire. A hoodie, black jeans and some UGGS of course.

INT. LOREN'S HOUSE, LIVINGROOM - CONTINUOUS

The sliding doors lead to a large living room. White walls and hardwood floors again with an even larger area rug. There's a fire place and large flat screen TV hanging on the wall above it.

Young people are scattered throughout the room.

There's a large bougie-looking couch in the center of the room, in front of the fire place. To the right of the couch is a small round antique wooden table surrounded by chairs.

On top of the table various type of liquor bottles some half-full, a giant mason jar full of jungle juice, and a RAW tray with a substantial amount of weed and wax.

Next to the living-room, another pair of opened sliding doors.

SASHA

Sheesh. The fuck does Loren's parent's do?

JOEL

I'll be back.

Sasha stands awkwardly in a corner.

LOREN (17) Hispanic and short, is heard RUNNING down the steps. She zooms into the living-room, carrying a Bigger Blacker Box of Cards Against Humanity. She has her hair in pigtails and she's wearing black bodysuit, clearly this is a big deal for her.

Loren quickly puts the box down on the table and runs over and hugs Sasha, who is thrown off guard.

LOREN

(yelling over the music)
Oh my god! Sasha! I'm so glad
you're here! Thanks for coming!

Sasha opens her mouth to reply but Loren hurries away.

Sasha nods to herself and looks around. She pulls her phone out of her pocket and begins to go on instagram but her finger hovers. She looks at the screensaver and swallows.

It's a picture of her and Malik at the beach.

SASHA

(to herself)
I thought I wanted to be here but I
feel out of place...You would like
this Mal.

A hand gripping her shoulder breaks her distraction.

WINSTON (18) and BRIEANNA (19) black, both wearing matching Nike tracksuits, smile sympathetically at Sasha. They're both taller than her.

BRIEANNA

Hey girl, how you doing? I'm
surprised to see you here?

SASHA

I know, I just thought I should get out, ya know? Mal used to drag me to shit like this.

BRIEANNA

Yeah, that's crazy what happened to him.

WINSTON

Deadass. Like we always knew his dad was a little off and shit, but bruh

SASHA

Mhm, yeah. It's really something...

WINSTON

Who would've thought he would kill him...

BRIEANNA

Right before graduating at that, damn.

Sasha looks sadder.

BRIEANNA (CONT'D)

I mean like he was literally *JUST* here, man. Did you go to the funeral? There we're like mad people, it was crazy.

WINSTON

Catering was poppin' tho.

Winston and Brieanna are nodding.

SASHA

Yeah, it's really hard to-to think about.

WINSTON

Oh right, I'm sorry. It's just something like this doesn't happen all the time. Almost like a freak accident.

SASHA

(getting irritated)

Well it wasn't a freak accident! My best friend was murdered by his father. Like how hard is that to understand?

Brieanna rubs Sasha's arm. Sasha moves away a little bit.

BRIEANNA
Look, Sash we don't mean to get you
upset. Sorry...

SASHA
(calming down)
It's fine. It's- just-

BRIEANNA
-if you ever need anyone to vent to
I'm here.

She gestures a hand over her heart as if it means something.

They walk away, leaving Sasha alone.

Sasha goes into to dining room.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The dining room table has spread of delicious food and junk
food.

Sasha grabs paper plate off the antique 4-door Credenza.

She starts to make a plate of food. Some mac and cheese,
yams, and chicken wings, the works.

JOEL
I see you found the food.

SASHA
Well it's kinda hard to miss. I
dunno know what else I want. Why'd
they cook so much?

JOEL
You know Loren want's everyone to
be on her dick, so.

SASHA
(LAUGHING)
Yo deadass. You see what shawty is
wearing?

He makes a plate.

JOEL
So whatcha think?

SASHA

It's aight. I haven't really been in the mood for this. It's been two months since the funeral and everyone is just on my ass about Mal--and about freakin' school. I'm over it.

They find a corner and stand and eat.

JOEL

I mean can you blame them?

Sasha sees Justin and waves.

He hurries over and hugs her.

She tries not to spill her food.

JUSTIN

Oh my gosh, I'm sorry...I'm so happy to see you here.

He pretends to WHISPER.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

There's mad people here I don't really fuck with. Joel, you cool though.

He GIGGLES.

SASHA

I feel you. Half of these people were Mal's other friends and shit. And the other half cappin'

JUSTIN

Yeah I can already sense the toxic masculinity in the air...Mad DL's here

JOEL

Wait what?!

JUSTIN

Oop, I'ma go make a plate.

SASHA

(smiling, mouth full)
This finna be a long ass night. I'm not staying long. Alcohol and too many young people don't mix.

JOEL
You sound like an old woman.

SASHA
Listen bro, I just saying. I
already feel an attitude coming on
cause of Brianna and Winston noisy
asses.

JOEL
No, no. We're gonna have fun
tonight. I know Malik would want
you too.

Justin joins them again.

JUSTIN
This is def- Mal's type of function

SASHA
Yo bro, I deadass just said that.
And you know why!

JOEL
Cause he was mixxy as fuck...But
this isn't bad right?

SASHA
Eh, I guess. Well see how the birds
do.

Dante YELLS over from the living-room. He's drinking with a
group of people.

DANTE
Yerrr, Joel why you over there
vibin' with the tranny and "diary
of an angry black woman?"

He gets some LAUGHS and a few disapprovals.

SASHA
And here we go.

JUSTIN
Right, I'm only staying a couple of
hours.

Joel shakes his head in embarrassment.

JOEL
I'm sorry bout' that. He really be
on some shit for no reason.

JUSTIN
Trust me, this is reg shit--and
there's always a reason.

JOEL
I know, I just-

A few girls come through the door on other side of the dining-room, that leads to the kitchen.

JOEL (CONT'D)
Hey babe,
(he kisses one of the
girls)
Where we're you?

KAYLA (18) Afro-Latina, short and a bitch. She has her hair in the same pigtails as Loren, her bestfriend.

Kayla gives Sasha and Justin a plastic smile and looks back at Joel.

KAYLA
Was just with the girls...why are
you over here in the corner?

JOEL
What' you mean? I'm talking to
Sasha and Justin.

Kayla gives them a look of sympathy

KAYLA
I'm so sorry guys. I dead miss him
too, I mean we only hungout a few
times but he was my nigga you know?

Sasha raises an eyebrow.

SASHA
He was? I thought ya'll only fucked
with him because he was the plug...

KAYLA
I mean still though-

SASHA
Noo- that's what Mal told me.

Kayla looks from Sasha to Joel. Sasha keeps her eyes on Kayla.

KAYLA
Um, okay. I'ma go before...

She pats Joel's arm and rejoins her friends. They all give Sasha looks and smirk.

SASHA

Ugh, I think I'ma leave with you Justin. This shit finna be fake as hell.

JOEL

Chill, bruh. Aight look, we gonna finish this food and then have some drinks, play some games and then toast Mal. Please stay.

Sasha rolls her eyes and shrugs.

SASHA

Okay, whatever. I need a blunt bruh-then I won't be so anti-social.

Schoolboy Q's Hands on the Wheel starts play.

JOEL

(harmonizing)

"Weed and booze! Weed and booze, like for me is just weed and booze!"

Sasha and Justin GIGGLE.

JUSTIN

Bitchh, that's not even the words!

SASHA

Deadass, weed and *BREWS!*

JOEL

(finishing his plate)

Listen, it don't matter...

(licking the plate)

Brews, broads, booze! I'm tryna be on that type of timing tonight.

SASHA

Ooo, well don't let ya girl hear about the broads.

JOEL

She is the broad!

(folds plate)

Aight, I'ma be right back.

Joel goes over to the "substance" table.

Sasha still has a smile on her face.

JUSTIN
I see you...

SASHA
See what?

His chin motions towards Joel.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Oh no, ew. I mean not ew but, um
hell nope.

JUSTIN
Well, I think he feeling you.

SASHA
Well he better stop feeling cause'
I'm for women only.

JUSTIN
Really?...no one...?

SASHA
Meh, menzzz don't really do it for
me. We might just end up staring at
each other cause I'm a top.

JUSTIN
I'm weak! Team work make the dream
work!

He gives her a high five.

Joel waves them over.

SASHA
Alright, lets try and make the best
out of this, free drinks and bud.

JUSTIN
Facts, lets.

They start to walk over.

INT. DINING ROOM - SHORTLY AFTER

The small kick back has now turned into a small party. The music is still up but the voices are bouncing off the walls are louder and being carried in every direction.

A majority of the parties occupants are now in the living room.

The dining table has been cleared of food and in its place, classic red and blue plastic solo cups. Some empty, some full. The floor is sticky from drunk people spilling jungle juice.

Sasha sticks close to Justin and Joel. Her face is seemingly stuck in a permanent, drunk half smile, she's sweaty and her edges aren't laid anymore. Justin is in the same boat. His jacket is off, revealing his fishnet tank top.

She uses Justin's arm to hold herself up.

The party patrons are playing a game of NEVER HAVE I EVER. The box is passed to Loren. She's standing across the table smiling and LAUGHING. One of her pigtails has come undone.

Everyone is under the influence.

LOREN
(reading card)
Never have I ever...slept with
twins before...ooo

A couple of people including Justin drink.

LOREN (CONT'D)
(LAUGHS dramatically)
Ya'll are so crazy! Omg! Okay,
okay, whose next? Justin!

She passes the box of NEVER HAVE I EVER over to the next person.

PARTY GOER
Never have I ever...slept with
someone I just met in a public
place!

JUSTIN
Oh god...

Justin ROLLS his eyes and drinks the rest of his cup and grabs a bottle of Henny behind him and proceeds to refill it.

Loren and a few other SCREAM and LAUGH dramatically at Justin's reveal.

SASHA
Biiitch, where? When?

JUSTIN

It was the A train, late at night.
I saw a cute guy and we gave each
other a look. Next thing you know,
we fucking in the station.

JOEL

Yeo, PAUSE. Like the downstairs
where the train come or on the
train?

JUSTIN

*Once upon a time, MAD long ago, I
was a hoe!....and on the platform,
in the cut.*

SASHA

Oh no, this might get messy...I
can't wait.
(takes a swig and wipes
her mouth)

JOEL

Bruh, you're wild.

Justin passes the box to Sasha, who stumbles and grabs onto
Joel for support.

SASHA

Mhm kay, never have I eveeer... um
never have I ever, been with a
clingy partner.

Joel SNICKERS too himself and lifts his cup but quickly puts
it down, causing some of his drink to splash.

He glances at Kayla who is already fuming with anger.

KAYLA

Who the fuck are you talking about,
my guy?

The people surrounding the table lower their volume.

JOEL

Look, Kay...just chill! Don't do
this shit right now.

KAYLA

No, cause what the fuck?! First of
all, watch your fucking mouth!

JOEL

Yo it's just a game...yo I'm-

KAYLA
 You're what-what? Spit it out.
 Don't Be a bitch, say what you
 gotta say!

Joel is visibly embarrassed.

Loren tries to intervene but Kayla waves her away.

KAYLA (CONT'D)
 You can't say nothing now? You was
 over there giggling and shit with
Sasha all fucking night

SASHA
 (slurring)
 Listen, it's not even like that-

KAYLA
 I don't give a fuck, bro. You're a
 weak ass nigga.

DANTE
 Damn, Joey...you finna let yo
 shawty emasculate you like that?

SASHA
 Yo, Dante shut up. Don't be an
 instigator.

JOEL
 Kay, we can take this somewhere
 else?

Kayla is still giving Joel the stink face as she grabs her
 drink and walks out the door behind her.

We hear them STOMPING up the stairs and YELLING.

Everyone who saw the scene gives one another a look and Loren
 is seen in the living-room, crying on the couch.

Sasha and Justin walk into the hallway.

INT. LOREN'S HOUSE, FRONT - CONTINUOUS

SASHA
 Sheeit. Can't breathe in there

JUSTIN
 I know right. What a fucking shit
 show.

SASHA

Yeah, welp...nothing good happens
after three am...

JUSTIN

But it's not-

YELLING is heard upstairs, even with the loud music coming
from the living-room.

They both look up.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

You saw how he froze up when she
was yelling at him? Like, I wanna
say I get why she was angry, but a
game?

SASHA

Seems like she was finding an
excuse to show her power over him.
I hate people like that...only
abusers do that.

The music volume is lowered.

BRIEANNA (O.S.)

Shhh! Crazy ass night right?! So
Loren is out of commission right
now so...everyone hold up your
cups!

Sasha and Justin crack the door open and peak in.

We see Brieanna through the crack standing up in front of the
couch, holding up her drink.

BRIEANNA (CONT'D)

Our baby, Malik has unfortunately
has left us.

Sasha SCOFFS.

SASHA

Its deadass crazy how I keep
hearing people say "he left us",
when in reality...he was taken and
not from us-me.

BRIEANNA

We all knew and loved Mal! This
would've been his type of 'arty'.
So we gotta do it up for him and
continue to get litty.

She points at Sasha peeking through the door.

BRIEANNA (CONT'D)

But big shout out to Sasha though!
I'm not tryna put her on the spot
but losing ya best-friend is hard,
and I knew we all wanna be like we
was close to Malik but they was
always up each others asses...and
for shawty to come out and be
comfortable enough to vibe with us
means a lot.

Everyone holds up their cups.

PARTY GOER

Can I get a Yerrrmen!

EVERYONE

YERRRMEN!

Sasha smiles and nods at Brieanna.

She sits on the steps, her legs slightly shaking.

Justin sits next to her.

JUSTIN

Are you good?

SASHA

I'm -I'm as good as everyone
thinks...it's like I know life will
go on cause' like
(gestures)
It is, but it just doesn't-

JUSTIN

Feel real?

SASHA

Yeah...more like it's not fair.
We're dead here at this party but
Mal, an innocent person isn't
because some fucking asshole of a
father killed him. Like, bruh, my
bestfriend is gone, and
(sarcastic CHUCKLE)
It still fucking baffles me, like
he wasn't hit by a truck or drug
overdose, bro was murdered, what
the fuck-

Joel comes storming down the stairs.

JOEL

I'm fucking done. Get the hell away
from me!

His shirt has some blood on it.

Sasha and Justin scoot to the sides of the steps to make
room.

Kayla follows soon after, causing Justin and Sasha to quickly
get up.

KAYLA

Get the fuck back upstairs! We're
not done talking!

JOEL

I'm fucking done, you're insane!

Dante's head peeps out from the door of the dining room.

JUSTIN

Um, what's happening?

JOEL

She fucking cut my neck with her
fucking nails!

Some of Kayla's friends comes out of the dining room and
tries to pull her back.

KAYLA

Cause you think I'm fucking
playing, my nigga! You're mad
fucking stupid!

JOEL

(YELLING, voice becoming
horse and cracking)
Yo stop calling me stupid! I'm not
fucking stupid!

KAYLA

(LAUGHING)
Ya'll see now he's gonna fucking
cry!

JOEL

Just leave me the fuck alone, I'm
done with ya shit. Go fuck all the
niggas you want, I don't care
anymore.

KAYLA

Yeah, okay! You're nothing bruh.

She gets in his face, stretching her neck. The veins popping out, with the force of each word.

KAYLA (CONT'D)

You're nothing without me, Joey.
Whatchu' gonna do, huh? You gonna
fuck her?

(points to Sasha)

Huh? She doesn't want your dumbass
bruh! No one is.

JOEL

Kayla get out of my face.

KAYLA

Or what?!

Joel reaches his hand out to grab Kayla's neck but by that time Dante, Justin and Sasha intervene.

Kayla tries to grab Joel's hair but ends up grabbing Sasha's. Sasha punches Kayla in the face and this results in them, including Joel and Justin fighting off Kayla for a short, hot min. Kayla's friends finally manage to pull her back. They tug her up the stairs while she talks shit up the stairs to the point where they almost have to drag her away.

Sasha's on the floor and she's in shock. Justin's hands are over his mouth. Joel is pace back and forth, shaking his head.

SASHA

Son, what the fuck!

JUSTIN

Yo, Sasha are you okay? The hell.

He checks on her.

SASHA

Yeah bro, I'm honestly good.

She gets up.

LOREN (O.S.)

(SCREAMING)

You always ruin my shit! Why do you
always make shit about you Kayla!
What the hell, my fucking house
looks crazy!

JUSTIN
We should go.

SASHA
Facts, com'on.
(grabs her things)
Joel, come on- damn she ripped his
shirt. Bruh he's all cut up.

She SUCKS her teeth and tilts his head from side to side.

Dante steps out of the living-room.

DANTE
(Smugly)
Bro, you leaving already?

SASHA
See I'ma stop you right there.
Before you say anything-you think
we don't know your dirty laundry,
but we do...and you-

Dante's expression changes from smug to nervous.

Justin pops his head in from the front entrance.

JUSTIN
How did Mals dick feel in your
guts?

All the color in Dante's face disappears. He looks panicked
and goes back in the living-room.

She gives Joel his coat and they exit.

EXT. BEDSTUY STREET - SHORTLY AFTER

There is no wind, or sound. Only the quiet silence of snow.

Everywhere you look outside is white.

Cars, front steps to houses and some streets all covered in
untouched snow.

The trio are stumbling their way down a block, heading toward
Saratoga Park. Sasha is looks warm, wearing the scarves that
Mrs. King lent her. Justin is shivering, wearing a small
bubble jacket. Joel is staring ahead, his face lost.

After a minute of more walking, Sasha struggles to keep up.

The quiet is interrupted by a snowplow.

SASHA

Can we stop for a second? I'm mad hot.

They stop in front of Saratoga Park.

JUSTIN

Let's walk through here.

They slowly walk through the park. Their footprints being the only disturbance to the fresh snow.

SASHA

Welp, that was a disaster...I can't say I'm surprised though.

JUSTIN

Deadass.

They stop.

Sasha turns to Joel, whose looking at the ground.

SASHA

Jay...you okay?

Joel bursts with tears and he wraps around Sasha and cries into her shoulder. Sasha stumbles but is able to hold him.

She looks at Justin, who has an empathetic expression.

She rubs his back.

Beat.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Damn , you're mad tall.

They all LAUGH.

Sasha stumbles and slips. Justin also falls after failing to help Sasha.

The trio lay on their backs, looking up. The street lights bounce off the snow giving the sky a dark/orange look.

Joel wipes his face.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Make sure you get the snot too.

JOEL

(LAUGHING)

Very funny.

SASHA
Are you okay?

Beat.

JOEL
I'll be okay. I'm sorry ya'll had to see that- I just got tired of all the bullshit.

JUSTIN
It's all good. We've all been in an abusive situation once.

SASHA
It's unfortunate that that's the case for most of us.

JOEL
I'll tell you what though...that shit felt fucking good. We've been arguing for months but we barely talked to each other. She was always calling me stupid or retard. Gaslighting me and shit...I just finally got tired of it.

SASHA
Is this the first time she put hands on you?

JOEL
No, that started a month or some ago...she was always on that mental shit.

Beat.

JOEL (CONT'D)
I just feel like such a bitch, ya know-

SASHA
No, noo. You're def not!

JUSTIN
No, not at all! None of this is your fault.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Some people take advantage of other people and leech of their energies and just use and abuse them.

JUSTIN
The best thing to do is just leave and get closure.

JOEL

Hm, that's what this feels like.
Closure...knowing I don't have to
deal with her anymore.

They all stare up at the sky.

JUSTIN

It's gonna be hard, at first.
Because you build a dependency on
someone it's-it's...hear me out.
It's like a drug.

JOEL

Nah, I get it. Almost like a
prescription drug that you get
addicted to.

SASHA

A prescription that was intended to
make you feel better, even if it
was assigned to you at birth.

JOEL

We're all just on different drugs,
some of us just get Paxil and
others get "*Clonazepam*".

Sasha and Justin both sit up slightly and look at Joel.

Sasha smiles to herself.

They enjoy the silence.

Beat.

SASHA

Thank you, guys.

JOEL

For what?

SASHA

Being there. I've been feeling
alone, lately. Like, everyone keeps
telling me I don't have to be alone
and that they're there for me but
they don't get it. I know I don't
have to do this by myself but-
that's how it's gonna be no matter
what.

(MORE)

SASHA (CONT'D)

I was so used to having Mal,
attached to my hip...my safe place
is gone and I feel like I have no
where else to go...and it's already
hard for me to open up to other
people, friends or not.

JOEL

Don't worry, Sasha. we'll be here
as long as you need us and then
some...well, I will.

JUSTIN

'Vwoow'.

Justin LAUGHS.

SASHA

Shit, I'm sorry Justin...I know you
and Mal we're a thing.

JUSTIN

It's okay, hun. I've come to terms
with it. No offense, but Mal was a
hoe and he had me fucked up.

LAUGHTER.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

But, he was good to me. We never
defined our relationship with
labels, but we always had each
other, ya' know?

JOEL

Yeah, Mal was cool. Did he really
fuck Dante?

Sasha nods.

JUSTIN

Yeo, Dante loves it up the ass! I
got so much shit on him. His kinks
would be no problem if he wasn't
such a piece of shit.

JOEL

Ha! Well we won't have to deal with
him or Kayla, in a few months. At
least well be able to control some
part of our lives.

JUSTIN

What school are you going to—are you going to school?

JOEL

Yeah, I got accepted to a couple. Oswego, Buffalo and Purchase, I think?

JUSTIN

Oh shit, word me too. I'm probably gonna go there. Everything is gay okay.

JOEL

Yeah, I'm thinking about it. It's close too, cause Oswego is deadass basically Canada.

They LAUGH.

Sasha is still staring up at the sky.

JUSTIN

What about you, Sash? You going to school?

SASHA

(still looking up)

That was the plan. Me and Mal planned on going to Dutchess for two years, then head to Purchase. Potsdam and Oswego waitlisted me, and for some reason Purchase too! Brooklyn said, nope.

JOEL

The ghetto Harvard said no? Pssh. They're trash anyway!

JUSTIN

You should try and write Purchase a letter!

SASHA

Eh-

JUSTIN

Seriously! That's what I did and now a bitch is going...we could all be together!

JOEL
Sounds like a plan. What say you,
sir?

Sasha looks at Joel.

SASHA
(GIGGLES)
Mane, you be watching to much of
Thrones...but fine. I'll write the
fucking letter.

JOEL
Bet, now we have our closure and we
can vibe at school together.

SASHA
I don't have any closure,
everything feels like a door ajar.

JOEL
So close em'.

SASHA
You make it sound so easy...

JOEL
Well most of the time it's not, but
if it's good for you, it doesn't
matter how painful.

JUSTIN
And would you look at that,
(holds up his phone)
It's tree am.

They LAUGH and Sasha slings snow on Justin.

EXT/INT. UBER, QUEENSBORO PLAZA - EARLY MORNING

Sasha sits in the back of the Uber and stares out the window.

It's a gloomy, rainy day. The rain has turned the snow into
frozen mush and everything looks wet.

The Uber stops.

Sasha says her thanks and opens the door. She jumps over a
large frozen-ish puddle and runs to the Q101.

The bus steers onto the bridge passing a sewage treatment
plant and drives past the traffic gate.

Dead ahead, in plain view was the island, ringed by chain-linked fences and barbed wire.

People huddle around the back door before the bus stops in front of the registration building.

Sasha hurriedly walks towards the building, following the regulars. She looks around, looking lost. The line into the building is about 40 people strong.

She SUCKS her teeth.

An older Asian woman stands in front of Sasha with her pre-teen daughter.

After about 10 minutes, an officer comes.

OFFICER

Alright, good morning! If you've been here before you know the drill...absolutely no radios, beepers, walkmans, cell phones or cell phones are allowed inside. No electronic equipment at all!

He points his hand to the left, to a bright red mailbox that says "Amnesty".

OFFICER (CONT'D)

If, you have it, drop it. No questions will be asked.

Sasha raises an eyebrow.

The pre-teen lifts her chin at Sasha and gestures towards to box.

KID

(WHISPERS)

Drugs.

Sasha makes an "Oh" face. She smiles and nods at the pre-teen who smiles back warmly.

The guards check for identification as each civilian goes inside.

INT. REGISTRATION, RIKERS ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

There are several lines, each with it's own metal detector and X-ray machine.

Sasha looking confused, follows the kid and their mother on a line.

The kid smiles lets Sasha mimic her. Sasha puts her shoes, belt, and keys in the tray to be scanned.

After being scanned she steps into a chamber that holds one person at a time.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER

You don't have anything else on you?

SASHA

Did you see anything?

The officer gives her a look.

CORRECTIONS OFFICER

You'll be able to put your keys and belt in a locker at the visitation building. It's a quarter.

He lets her go through the door.

INT. REGISTRATION, RIKERS ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

The room looks similar to the DMV.

After filling out a form detailing who she is and who she's visiting, she puts her shoes back on and joins another line.

There are only two service windows, but only one is available and there are over a dozen people waiting in front of Sasha.

Sasha shakes her head.

Montage

- Sasha gets on a shuttle bus and rides to a housing unit called George Motchan Detention Center (GMDC).

- She passes an empty room where the New York City Department of Health has a table full of literature and displays discussing depression, emotional management and substance abuse. The table is not staffed.

- She waits in the waiting room, with 30 other people. The room is labeled, GMDC.

- An on duty guard checks her ID and time stamps her card. The television sets BLARE, E!'s Botched.

People complain and SUCK their teeth. Regulars sit comfortably and some even fall asleep.

- The Asian kid from earlier taps her. She wakes up from a 45 minute nap and wipes her face.

- She rides the bus, groggy from her nap and quickly gets off and waits shortly along the side of another building. People shiver. Another officer comes and announces again about dumping drugs into another red amnesty mailbox. He says this is their last chance.

- Inside the building, Sasha walks past a wall polaroid pictures of people in handcuffs. "This will be you if you have contraband on you."

- she gets her time card stamped again and they give her a key for her locker.

- Lastly, she walks into a private vestibule and is advised to open her mouth, raise her tongue and fold down her waistband to ensure there is no contraband.

- she waits one final time, before being called for her visit.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. VISITING ROOM - SHORTLY AFTER

Plexiglass is line in a row across the benches, to ensure separation. Sasha sits and waits. Her hands are in the pockets of her jeans and she's looking down.

Suddenly the doors open and she looks up.

GIDEON(22) tall, dark and handsome. He's wearing the brown inmate uniform. He walks over to her, accompanied by a guard.

Melancholy overcomes Sasha's face, and then a warm smile.

Gideon sits down and smiles.

Beat.

SASHA
Are you eating enough?

His voice is deep and calm.

GIDEON
It's decent for what it is, I'm-I'm straight.

SASHA
 (SIGHING)
 How you doing baby brother?

He LAUGHS.

GIDEON
 You still calling me baby brother,
 when I'm older, Sash.

SASHA
 I can't help it. I feel like I
 watched after you most of the time.

GIDEON
 (SIGHS)
 Yeah, you did.

SASHA
 You didn't answer my question.

GIDEON
 (shakes head and shrugs)
 I'm honestly...I'm doing okay. This
 place is the shits but what do you
 expect from Rikers.

Sasha nods.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
 How about you? How's Sonya?

They both shake their head.

SASHA
 I wouldn't know where to start.

GIDEON
 Still on her bullshit, huh?

SASHA
 Yeah, I'm out of the crib.

Gideon SCOFFS.

GIDEON
 She'll let you back. Just gotta let
 her have it. Just let her be right,
 and you be wrong.

Sasha starts shaking her head.

GIDEON (CONT'D)
 What?

SASHA
I don't think I can do that
anymore. I can't, G.

GIDEON
What do you mean? She's our mom, we-

SASHA
No, we really don't. I think I've
decided that...that it's time for
us to move on.

GIDEON
That's easy for you to say! I'll be
here a while.

SASHA
Don't do that. You did this to
yourself and now you have to live
out the consequences. Plus, no one
told you to get caught.

Sasha shakes her head and rubs her face.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Look...I'm Staying with someone
else.

GIDEON
(smiling)
One of your hoes?

SASHA
No--Mrs.King from daycare.

GIDEON
Oh wow! You asked her or she
letting you crash there?

SASHA
She's allowing me to stay there
until I go away, if I get to.

Beat.

GIDEON
That's mad nice. A good way to stay
out of trouble too. Speaking off
trouble, how have you been since
Malik?

Sasha shrugs and leans forward.

SASHA

I- it's a lot harder than I thought
but I think I'll be okay, even
without you being there.
(pouting)

GIDEON

So, no bad thoughts?

She shrugs.

SASHA

No more than the usual.

GIDEON

Sash, you should talk to someone.
That's what I've been doing.

Sasha looks confused.

SASHA

Like a therapist?

GIDEON

Yeah! There's a program here--and
also me and some other kin, we made
a group.

SASHA

A therapy group?

GIDEON

Yeah, it actually helps...a lot.
I'm able to address my trauma-

She SCOFFS, folds her arms and laps her leg.

SASHA

(smirking)

Look at you, baby brother.
"Addressing trauma".

GIDEON

C'mon, Sash. I'm serious. I've
changed since being here. I'm no
longer the scared, ignorant child
that I was a year ago and with good
behavior, I'll be out in less than
two years.

SASHA

I believe you. I dead do...
(she watches him)
Trust me, I can tell.

GIDEON

I think it would do you some good.
I mean, look at us...

SASHA

What's wrong with us? Mommy issues,
daddy issues, depression with a mix
of incarceration, and a dash of
mental illness.

They both GIGGLE.

SASHA (CONT'D)

It's so sad, that it's funny!

GIDEON

But, seriously we're gonna break
that cycle. We kind of have too...
but also, you said something about--
if you get to college?

SASHA

Yeah, long story short, I'm
waitlisted for a few schools and-

GIDEON

Oh, that's it? Easy moneys! Just
right a fuckin' essay or something.
Visiting the school might help too.

SASHA

Really? People have been telling me
but it sounded like a waste of time
at first.

GIDEON

Listen, those who don't try, will
never know. Those are "what if"
people. I don't know about Potsdam,
cause' that's wild far but try.
Send all of em' the same damn essay
if you have too.

SASHA

A freakin' essay though? Ugh.

GIDEON

Sash, don't think of it like an
essay for school. You're literally
just talking about yourself and why
you think-no, why you should go to
the school.

Sasha looks at him and smiles.

EXT/INT. Q101 - SHORTLY AFTER

Sasha sits on the back on the bus and watches as they get further and further away from the jail.

She wipes tears from her face.

INT. MRS.KING'S HOUSE - DAY

Mrs.King sits at the table. She has a cup of coffee in her hand, raised to her lips and she's reading a book. She's wearing a thick, warm robe.

On the table, is a small spliff in an ashtray, still lit and smoking.

Sasha comes in through the side door of the kitchen.

She takes off her boots and sniffs. Her head snaps to the table and to Mrs.King.

MRS.KING
(not looking up from her
book)
Hey, sweetie. How you doin'?

SASHA
Think I'm-I'm getting a cold...uh,
are you smoking?

MRS.KING
Mhm, you want a pull?

She looks at Sasha and LAUGHS.

Sasha takes off her coat and garments.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)
How was your day? Did you see your
brother? How is he?

SASHA
(sitting down)
Yeah! He's good, way better than I
expected...

MRS.KING
You wanted him to be...sad?

SASHA

No, no! Just I wouldn't expect people--him, to have such a positive attitude, in such a shitty situation...it's comforting. I found myself crying leaving.

MRS.KING

Well, I'm glad to hear that
(she pats her hand)
He was always a good boy, even if he was misguided. What did he do again?

SASHA

He threw a trash can at a cop, during one of the BLM protest.

Mrs.King CHUCKLES.

MRS.KING

Heh, so something like a political prisoner?

Sasha LAUGHS out loud.

Beat.

SASHA

Also, I...

MRS.KING

Mhm

Sasha hesitates.

SASHA

I don't want to feel like I'm over staying my welcome...I know it's only been a few days and you said I can stay, but-

MRS.KING

Child, I know! But I want you to know that you're not. I want you to stay for as long as you need, and if that means for a while then that's okay.

She stands up, goes to the wall across the kitchen next to the windows and takes a photo of the wall.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)
(walking back to the
table)

This beautiful girl right here was
my daughter.

She shows Sasha.

It's a photo of an teenage girl at a tropical beach. She's
smiling from ear to ear.

MRS.KING (CONT'D)
This was my niece and my
goddaughter. When my sister and her
husband died in an car accident,
she was only about four years old.
I adopted her, raised her but when
she was 15, there was an accident
and I lost her. She was a sweet,
loving girl. Her name was Jasmine.
That was ten years ago.

SASHA
I-I'm sorry for your loss.

MRS.KING
(nodding)
It's alright, sweetie...she
would've wanted me to help you. I
want to help you. I know you will
accomplish great things, there are
just some hiccups right now, and
there will be in the future. But
the way you handled this situation,
I know you'll be okay.

Sasha smiles and nods.

SASHA
I honestly don't know how to repay
you?

MRS.KING
Pssh, babygirl just make sure you
go to college!

SASHA
About that...I'm waitlisted. So I
dunno if-

MRS.KING

Oh, don't worry about that! A good letter usually always sways a school. Shows you have character and integrity.

SASHA

Hm, my brother even said that. To be honest, everyone's been telling me that! And I keep saying, maybe but now that you said something, I feel even more confident.

Sasha picks up the lighter and lights the spliff, taking a long drag.

Mrs.King watches her with an impressed expression.

MRS.KING

Well, okay Miss Thang.

She smiles and gets up, heading for the hallway.

She stops after noticing Mrs.King still looking at the photo. A cloud of melancholy developing over her face.

SASHA

Hey, would you want to do something with me?

MRS.KING

Like what?

INT. KICKBOXING GYM, BASEMENT OF CHURCH - SOME TIME LATER
THAT DAY

The gym is one floor, but it's very spacious. The entire floor is covered in soft blue mats and the walls are all white, with a few old white church ceiling fans.

Sasha and Mrs.King stand at the front door, both of them astounded.

Sasha is wearing black leggings and a sports bra. Her hair is styled in straight back, cornrows. Mrs.King is wearing a grey tracksuit.

SASHA

Well damn, I didn't know all of this was down here.

MRS.KING

My thoughts exactly!

In the far back of the room, there's a moderate sized group of people, picking up gloves from a pile.

Sasha recognizes Amber and they walk over.

There is kickboxing equipment everywhere. Multiple heavy, punching bags hang from the ceiling in a row against a wall, with a good amount of space between them. Speed bags are across from them, with people attempting to keep a rhythm.

Amber is chatting with a few members before noticing Sasha.

AMBER

Hey! You made it!

SASHA

Yeah, and I brought a friend, I hope that's okay?

AMBER

Oh yeah, that's no problem. Class starts in a couple of minutes, so stretch a little bit.

As she walks away, Sasha checks her out.

MRS.KING

(nudges her)

Don't wanna bark up that tree.

SASHA

(LAUGHING)

Oop. Copy that.

Sasha stretches and Mrs.King attempts too.

MRS.KING

Oh,

(grips Sasha's arm)

You're gonna help me through this.

Sasha smiles.

SASHA

I got you.

The class starts.

They both struggle to keep up. Muscles that haven't been used in years pop on both of them.

INT. KICKBOXING GYM - SHORTLY AFTER

The class breaks off in small groups of three.

AMBER

Okay everyone! So now we're
practice our jabs, So I want ya'll
to go to a punching bag or a torso.

Sasha and Mrs.King stand around a torso training bag. It has markings on the face to bring out the emotion, rather than just be have a torso. It also has fake bruises on it's torso.

Sasha does a few slaps and then stands behind.

SASHA

Okay Mrs.King! Give him a black
eye.

She seemingly puts all her force behind the punch but it comes out weak.

Sasha holds back a LAUGH.

MRS.KING

Well, you think you can do a better
job?

SASHA

I mean, Mrs.King you low-key punch
like a fly.

She CHUCKLES.

They switch places just as Amber comes over with Morgan.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Oh wow! What's good, Morgan?

Morgan has on Muay Thai shorts that show off her toned, muscular legs and a sports bra, that shows her biceps flexing every time she moves her arms.

Morgan and Sasha beam at each other and hug. Sasha lingers a bit.

MORGAN

Hey, How you doing? I actually work
here, part-time on weekends.

SASHA

Wow and you never said anything!

MORGAN

I know, I know my fault.

Amber and Mrs.King Glance at each other.

Morgan CLEARS her throat, looking nervous.

AMBER

Right, soo Morgan is just gonna show you how to do a proper jab.

Amber smiles that smile and walks away.

The three give each other a look before nervously laughing.

SASHA

Oh um, Mrs.King Morgan, Morgan Mrs.King. I used to work with her at the gym.

MRS.KING

(sweet, but knowingly)
It's nice to meet you, sweetie.

MORGAN

(smiles nervously and nods)
Okay, so first...both of you stand on either side.

They follow.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

(gets in position)
So first you want to make sure you're in the right position. So-
(she adjust both of their feet)
That way if anyone tries to push you.
(she attempts to push over Sasha, but she doesn't fall)
You won't fall, or you'll be able to rebalance yourself.

MRS.KING

But what if you don't always have the time to remember the proper position.

MORGAN

See that's the beauty of muscle memory and training!

Mrs.King nods.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
 So, when you jab, it's just a
 flick. Something to throw them off
 and/or distract them in a fight.

She demonstrates a quick jab and flicks the nose of the torso
 lightly but enough for it to move.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
 See, pretty quick and effective.
 Then there's the regular jab.

She demonstrates with more force and the torso makes a sound.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
 Okay, and when you jab with your
 dominating hand, you always wanna
 make sure your other hand is up and
 ready to defend your face and body.
 So in boxing, the best stance for
 that is the Philly stance. In this
 stance, you're able to defend both
 your torso and your face.

Sasha checks out Morgan as she's talking.

MORGAN (CONT'D)
 Got it?

SASHA
 Huh? Um, yeah I got it.

Mrs.King watches.

Sasha gets into position and jabs. The torso slightly moves.

MORGAN
 Nice! How about you Mrs.King?

MRS.KING
 Oh, I think I'm better off watching
 for right now. My old bones won't
 let me. I'll just have you strong
 ladies to fight for me

She LAUGHS.

SASHA
 Aw, really? You sure?

MRS.KING

Yes, yes. I'ma go over there to those few ellipticals and see what these old knees can do. Ya'll got this.

(she grips Morgan's bicep)

Oh!

She squeezes and looks at Sasha and winks, Morgan doesn't see.

Sasha looks like steam would be coming off of her.

SASHA

(to herself)

Oh my god.

Mrs.King walks across to the elliptical.

Sasha and Morgan live each other a looks and LAUGH nervously.

MORGAN

Okay so, lets get back into it. So try again, and this time try to exert the force of the flick so...blow out air-like take a quick breathe in right before you flick and huff it out.

SASHA

(smirking)

So breathe in and out?

MORGAN

Mhm, yeah. Just like you're doing right now.

SASHA

Smart ass.

Sasha gets in position and JABS. The torso moves more and slightly shifts.

They both exert excitement.

MORGAN

Good job! Okay so,
(she moves Sasha out of
the way)

So this one is more like a flick-up! This one is truly designed to catch them off guard.

(MORE)

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Instead of the leading fist being up here, near your face...it's down by your leg...it's not a boxing or kickboxing stance, it might feel more like Tae Kwon do. So when you're at a distance and you let your hand down...move in quickly and flick up.

She demonstrates.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Now you.

Sasha follows instructions. She flicks her flicks quickly.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

Good job! Not bad, you're not bad actually, just need some training to polish it.

SASHA

(LOW voice)

Are you gonna show me?

MORGAN

If you'll let me...

SASHA

What did you have in mind?

MORGAN

Oysters, cocktails, Seawolf, next Friday.

SASHA

(smiling)

Finally, a formal invitation! Are you asking me out?

MORGAN

(blushing)

I mean, yeah...hear me out but you low-key intimidating...

They continue to flirt for a couple of minutes, not training.

AMBER

(YELLS across the room)

Yo! Stop flirting and go help other people.

MORGAN

Oh! Um, okay. I'll just-

SASHA
 (LAUGHING)
 You're good, go ahead. You'll be
 back.

Morgan fake jogs away to help others.

Sasha approaches Mrs.King, who has worked up a little sweat.

MRS.KING
 She seems like a nice girl. Strong
 and kind. The soft ones are the
 best sometimes.

Sasha smiles to herself.

SASHA
 Yeah, she is. I'ma give her a
 chance. She seems nice.

MRS.KING
 Thank you for bringing me
 here...this was fun. We should have
 more adventures before you head
 off!

SASHA
 I got you. That sounds-I would
 really like that.

INT. SASHA'S ROOM - A FEW DAYS LATER - NIGHT

We see Sasha from the inside, climbing through her bedroom
 window. The bottom of the bars have been cut off.

She overestimates her height and tumbles in, making some
 noise.

SASHA
 Shit! Okay.

She gets up and looks around for the light. Flicking it on,
 she quickly flicks it off.

She turns her phones flashlight and goes in the closet, pulls
 out a large size suitcase.

SASHA (CONT'D)
 Okeeeey, so...

She changing her clothes quickly, switching into a Nike Tech
 suit.

She starts taking out clothes from her closet and throwing them in the suit case.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Aight, this isn't working.

She props up her phone on the dresser and starts folding her sweaters and hoodies. She then opens her dresser and folds her shirts and under garments. Everything goes into the suitcase.

She takes down her hats and tapestries and throws it all in the suitcase.

She tip toes around her room and taking all of her important possessions. Pictures on the bureau, all of her books and her incense holder. She then tip toes to the bathroom and comes out various hair products and oils. She places her products carefully in a plastic bag before tucking it under some clothes.

Lastly, Sasha goes to reach under her bed without looking.

There's nothing.

She looks under the bed but it's too dark.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(getting up)
Hold the fuck up!

She grabs her phone with the flashlight still on and gets back down to look under the bed.

There's nothing.

Sasha stands up and takes a deep BREATH.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Okay, Sasha calm down...they got me
fucked up. She got me fucked up.
Nah, bro.

She flicks on the room light and yeets opens the door and the door knob HITS the wall.

Sasha storms to her mothers room. Her feet are STOMPING so hard on the old wood floors that each step makes a CREEK.

She attempts to open the door but it's locked.

She BANGS on the door but there is no answer.

BANG. BANG. BANG. Still no answer.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Okay, fuck this.

Sasha heads down the stairs and into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

It's a refurbished, railroad kitchen. The walls are off-white with granite countertops and the cabinets are a light grey. The Fridge and stove are stainless steel and the floor is a cheap tile. The kitchen for the most part is clean and no appliances are out beside an Keurig K-Mini coffee maker and a basket of fruit.

Sasha storms in, opens a top drawer and takes out a butter knife.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Sasha tries sticks the butter knife between the door and lock.

After a few tries, she finally manages to wedge the knife in and unlock the door.

She stumbles in but keeps her balance.

INT. SONYA'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is basic but bigger than Sasha's.

Sasha stands there and scans the room.

She tosses the bedding of the queen size bed in the center of the room. The comforter knocks over items on the large vanity that's facing it.

She kicks up the edges of the area rug and then yanks open the drawers of the two small end tables on either side of the bed, throwing herself across the bed and only finding meaningless papers and envelopes.

She starts opening, searching through the all the drawers in the vanity and rummaging through the clothes. She tosses her mothers clothes on the floor and leaves the drawers open, some of them on the floor.

A few minutes of searching and finding nothing, Sasha sits on the bed. She SIGHS in frustration.

She gets up and goes inside her mothers closet, next to the vanity. Inside she moves various types of hanging clothes out of the way till she can pull the large hamper out.

She throws the dirty clothes out until she gets to the bottom and exhales a SIGH of relief.

The safes lock is off.

She opens it and only sees 3 of the 5 rolls she had left.

Sasha faces fuels with anger.

The front door OPENS and SHUTS.

Sasha puts the 3 remaining rolls in her back pocket.

SONYA (O.S.)
(YELLS)
Isaiah? Baby?

We hear keys CLATTER and shoes being shook off.

Sasha sits on the bed calmly but she fidgets with her fingers and her foot is shaking. She has the safe next to her.

The stairs CREAK.

Sonya slowly pushes the door open, her expression full of fear. She looks at Sasha and they have a short staring contest.

Sasha glares. Sonya stares.

Sasha opens her mouth, then closes it.

SONYA (CONT'D)
Sa-

SASHA
I just wanna know, you know?

Sonya looks at the empty safe then back at Sasha.

SONYA
Listen-

SASHA
No, you listen! My entire life I-oh
for fuck sake,
(sarcastic laugh)
I've been giving a similar talk
like this since Mal died! So I'll
keep it short-

SONYA
Sasha, lis-

SASHA
And you're going to let me TALK!
Because as my mother you need to
listen to me when I say this.

Sonya comes in the room more.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Understand, that I don't think that
I'll ever want to talk to you
again.

Sonya looks surprised.

SONYA
(offended)
And why is that?

SASHA
Don't play dumb..

SONYA
No, I want to know. I also have a
bone to pick with you!

Sasha holds up her finger.

SASHA
Well then, I don't give a shit
about what you want to discuss or
the bone you have to pick...so I'm
moving out.

Sonya LAUGHS.

SONYA
You always say that and then you
come running back, because no one
will keep you.

SASHA
I'm leaving for good. I don't think
you take into account that all
those other times, I was young and
way more vulnerable than I am now,
which is eighteen and capable of
solving my own problems.

SONYA
Well congrats. I'm so happy for
you.

SASHA

I've also learned that I don't have to forgive adults who have treated me and my friends like a burden, to get closure.

SONYA

What does that mean?

SASHA

It means, I don't forgive you. It means, I have the power to change my life and not include you in the future.

Sonya SCOFFS.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Like do you see yourself?! Look how you're acting right now. Your daughter is telling you that she's moving out for good and she doesn't want you in her life, simply cause you were a piece of shit mother.

SONYA

(points)

Now you watch your fucking mouth.

Sasha stands up.

SASHA

No, I don't think I will. See, and I know I'm talking a lot right now, but I'm trying to calm myself down...

Beat.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Yeah, so fuck you and your feelings. It was fuck me from you for eighteen years.

Sasha starts to go out the door but Sonya stands in her way and pushes her back cause her to stumble on the bed.

SONYA

You don't have any right to talk to me that way! You don't get to. You have no idea what I went through! What happened to me when I was a child.

SASHA

Oh boo hoo! Cry me a river. I'm your child, not your punching bag.

SONYA

You're not a damn child!

SASHA

You know what the fuck I mean! I wasn't and still am not your punching bag. What happened to you as a child-

SONYA

I watched my mother get the shit beat out of her and then she would beat the shit out of me.

Sasha's brow furrows.

SASHA

And what do you want me to do about it?

SONYA

Understand! At least do that.

SASHA

And what else? Cause I'm still not seeing your logic. Like I said before, I am you child not a toy you can toss around and remember once in a while. My whole life, I thought you didn't like me and I would yearn for your approval. I remember I used to bask in any acceptance... But in reality you just were an abuser and also you lack empathy and morals. This isn't gonna be some Tyler Perry shit. Go get some therapy and stop feeling sorry for yourself. You are no longer the victim.

Sonya is glaring at Sasha.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I wipe my hands of you. Now move!

She tries to get by but Sonya blocks her.

Sasha pushes but Sonya is stronger than she seems. Sasha quick jabs her, flick her hand upwards.

Sonya stumbles back and grips her nose. She trips over her own feet and sprains her ankle.

Sonya YELPS out in pain.

Sasha stands over her. Her eyes are teary eyed.

SASHA (CONT'D)
(TREMBLING)
I want to help you, but I can't.

She steps around her but stops in the doorway and turns.

SASHA (CONT'D)
Also, I do forgive you for stealing my money.

SONYA
(holding her nose)
You mean the drug money from when I told yo ass to keep that shit out of my house.

SASHA
Yeah, exactly. Two wrongs don't make a right, but in this case. You can't do shit about it but take some of my earnings that I was using for school...
(SIGHS)

Sasha walks out and slams the door.

INT. SASHA'S ROOM - SHORTLY AFTER

Sasha ZIPS up her coat and grabs her suitcase.

She takes once last look at her room and pulls out her phone to snap a picture.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Sasha carries her suitcase down the steps, clashing with the wall every now and then.

Sonya watches her, she now has an ice pack on her ankle.

SONYA
Where are you staying?

SASHA
 I'm not telling you that. I don't
 think it would be healthy for me to
 have you knowing where I'm at or
 where I'm going.

She continues down the last few steps.

SONYA
 (exasperated)
 Will we-

Sasha turns around.

SASHA
 What?

SONYA
 Will we ever...will you ever
 forgive me?

SASHA
 (SIGHS)
 I'm sorry you had a bad childhood
 and your parents were abusive. I'm
 sorry that you couldn't break that
 pattern...I love you, goodbye.

INT. BROADWAY JUNCTION - DAY

Sasha walks up the stairs from the J line. She has a back
 pack with her.

It's wet from the snow melting, but it's freezing. There are
 small patches of ice inside the station leading to the J line
 and the L line.

As per usual, it's packed because of rush hour. Brooklynites
 rush and some even push some people to get out of the way.

Pigeons flock where they can and an Amish church choir sings,
 as Sasha walks towards the escalators.

As she waits to board the packed escalator, she sees a young
 mom struggle to take down her stroller down the steps and no
 one around her helping. Sasha quickly goes to her and picks
 up the other end of the stroller.

The mom smiles, and they walk down the long steps.

Sasha nods goodbye to the mom as the mom goes towards the A
 line.

Sasha opens the emergency gate and as soon as she goes through, a few young boys zoom through and officers from the small police station, NYPD Transit District 33, next to the turnstiles, quickly chase after them.

Sasha continues walking and doesn't hesitate not to look back.

EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sasha walks up Conway St, an eerily dead block with an old abandoned, tombstone making store and crackheads.

She makes her way across Bushwick Ave.

INT/EXT. EVERGREEN CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

Sasha walks through rows of dead human, buried beneath the cold, wet grass.

Most headstones are humble and small, others extravagant. Very little of them are buried in the ground. There are also very large and small tombs.

Sasha walks deeper into the cemetery. It's quiet but serene, even with the naked trees and melancholy décor.

She eventually stops in front of one of the small headstones, it's dark grey.

It reads from top to bottom: In loving memory, MALIK ZACHERY MURRAY, December 29th, 2002. "Beloved son and friend".

Sasha SIGHS.

She opens her backpack and takes out a small portal chair. She unfolds it and places it in front of the headstone.

SASHA

Oop, wait don't wanna be sitting on you.

She moves the chair over a little to the side.

Once she comfortably seated, she pulls out a large, stainless steel thermo-cup and another small thermo-mug, and places them on the ground.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I'm tryna be like you Mal, you know the vobes...wow I've really been hanging out with Joel too much...he's actually really cool. He was a dick freshman year but, homeboy did a complete three sixty after junior year.

She places the bag between her legs and takes out a small portable, battery powered heater.

SASHA (CONT'D)

I planned on being here for a good minute.

She fixes the heater to face upward and places it inside the bag, she adjust it so the heat is going directly onto her. She then picks up the small thermo-mug and opens it, the steam flows out. Sasha takes a sip.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Hot chocolate! I would've bought...brought you some but ya'know...you're dead and shit.
(she LAUGHS)

She closes the hot chocolate thermo-mug and places it next the heater. She picks up the large thermo-cup and opens that one revealing homemade chicken soup. Under the bottom of the cup is a small spork.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Mrs.King made this for me. She also taught me how to make it.
(blows on spork)
She put, carrots, celery, potatoes, tomatoes and get this, jumbo chicken wings and then de-bones them. It's ridiculous.

Sasha takes a few mouthfuls before closing and also putting that next to the heater. She picks up the small thermo-mug and holds it in her hands.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(SIGHS)
You would've liked her...
(sips)
So, everyone has been telling me to write about myself to the schools I'm waitlisted for. I didn't really know what to say but I did it.

She takes out a folded paper from her coat pocket and unfolds it.

SASHA (CONT'D)

It's not technically an essay but more of a personal, well-developed paragraph or whatever...don't judge me.

(CLEARS THROAT)

My name is Sasha Guard, I'm from Brooklyn, New York and I deserve to go to Purchase. I know that I have been waitlisted but that will not hinder me from my potential growth at this school, it is merely a bump in my future...The contents of this letter are not a biography of my life or my academic achievements, but a journal entry that I'm sharing.

EXT. MRS.KING'S HOUSE, FRONT YARD - DAY

We see Morgan, Joel and Justin in front of Ms.Kings house, filling up a small U-Haul truck with suitcases and various sizes of plastic containers.

SASHA (V.O.)

All my life, I've been told by people that I'm strong and I always pull through and that things will get better with time. And for a long time, I thought that meant just to sit back and wait for it to happen, that things would magically just get better without me actually having to do anything.

Mrs.King waves and points her fingers around the truck, instructing Morgan and Joel.

SASHA (V.O.)

But I've learned that I cannot depend on anyone or anything to do that. This realization was hard to swallow, growing up I always had my guard up and I had to protect myself somehow but in reality I was just scared. I was scared that life would always be that way for me, fighting and defending, but I don't want that label.

Mrs.King hugs everyone. She gets to Sasha and bear hugs her tightly. She squeezes Sasha's cheeks.

SASHA (V.O.)

Going to Purchase is part of the first steps in bettering myself, growing and expanding my mind. I've recently lost a best friend and I made a promise to him to try...to try and do better and make *myself* proud.

INT. MOVING TRUCK, HUTCHERSON RIVER PARKWAY - DAY

They're all seated in the truck.

Sasha looks out the window as Joel pulls in front of her house, oblivious.

He nods towards the house, Sasha shakes her head.

SASHA (V.O.)

As bad as it is, his death has made me realize that I am not truly alone, nor do I have to be. I don't have to be this sad, gloomy example of generation Z, because there are people who care about me--Okay Mal, bare with me here, I kinda went ya'know, non professional and just was talking.

Joel drives down the Hutcherson River Parkway. Justin seemingly SINGS off-key, nudging Joel to try to join him.

Sasha and Morgan are looking at a map of Purchase College.

SASHA (V.O.)

...Aside from the negative aspects of my life, I am an average person. I like to hangout with friends and play video games, I'm also into soccer, and I'm definitely interested in playing for the school. I'm really big on knowledge, even if it's something small like how Legos are created or existential questions, like "are humans inherently violent?".

(SNIFFLES)

(MORE)

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

I know the liberal arts program at Purchase will be a great path to take, in expanding my knowledge and understanding of the world. This program would give me the ability to not only choose a major in the future, but also allow me to take courses from different disciplines. I'm determined to find my place at Purchase, and I hope you would have me.

She finishes the hot chocolate.

EXT. EVERGREEN CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

SASHA

I think it needs some tweaking, but I'm set on this. I'm not tryna be a sob story but I am tryna make it seem like this school will be my Nirvana. My brother told me to send this too admissions...and Joel and Justin are coming with me to visit the school in a couple of weeks. Even if it doesn't work, at least I tried. That's what matters.

She puts away the thermo-mug and folds her hands. She shakes her head and props it up with her fist, staring at Malik's headstone.

SASHA (CONT'D)

Guess what I did, you would've been proud...I stood up to my mom. You-you-you, um-

She wipes her eyes.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(RAISES voice)

I'm sorry. I'm def' about to cry...

Beat.

You know, I didn't even get to say goodbye, a real goodbye before he decided to rip you from me! It's not fair. That's not fair, why does he get to living and-and he's the bad guy! Why do the assholes always win!

She SOBS into her lap.

Beat.

SASHA (CONT'D)
 (quietly)
 I just wanna talk to you again.
 This is bs.

She wipes her face, it's puffy and red. She goes into the front pocket and takes out some tissue and blows her nose.

SASHA (CONT'D)
 (shaking her head)
 I understand that this is gonna take some time and I understand that life will go on. Joel was the one to suggest that I come here and talk to you. He's really spiritual and stuff and you know me, Ms. Negative! At first I thought it was a cheesy idea, you know something to was claimed to help but never does. But this is actually really hard
 (CHUCKLES, wipes eyes)
 This isn't a one time thing either, I'll be back boo. But before I go...

She looks around. There's no one.

SASHA (CONT'D)
 (happily)
 Beetch, I got a spliffy.

She goes into the smaller front pocket of her bookbag and takes out a small, zip-loc baggie with a small but fat spliff. She picks up her thermo-cup and opens it. She takes a few bites before light the spliff.

SASHA (CONT'D)
 To you Malik, I love you boo.

INT. JOEL'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Joel's apartment is located on the 3rd floor in an old building on Bushwick Ave.

Inside is small but humble.

Sasha, Joel, Justin and Morgan all sit at Joel's diner table, next to a large window with those ugly, black NYCHA bars.

The light brown table is covered in an off white table runner and has small scratches in exposed areas, showing it's age. They all have empty plates in front of them.

Joel's MOTHER (50) average and thick, walks in with a big pot of *Arroz Con Pollo*.

JOEL
(in Spanish)
Thank you , mama!

MOTHER
(in Spanish)
Wait, wait!

She goes out and comes back in with a plate of Plantains and Chicharrons.

MOTHER (CONT'D)
(in Spanish)
Now, you can eat, Joel make sure
you serve your friends.

She leaves and comes back once more with ice cold cups from the freezer and fruit punch and a bowl of salad. She places them on the table and kisses Joel's cheek.

JOEL
(in Spanish)
Okay, thank you so much mama!

He nudges Sasha and Justin under the table.

EVERYONE
Gracias!

She leaves.

JUSTIN
Yo, ya mom just banged it on us.

JOEL
(stands up)
Yeah, I know!
(He starts fixing their
plates)
You know how some older women are.
I told her I had friends coming
over and we was gonna order out,
but she said she would hook us up,
plus she likes ya'll. She thinks
it's cute how we're going to school
together.

Everyone's plate is fit for Instagram.

They dig in.

JUSTIN

So Sasha, how did your visit go?

SASHA

It went—it went good. Out of all the times I've cried, that one felt the most relieving.

LAUGHTER.

SASHA (CONT'D)

But, yeah it felt good. Like I said goodbye? But it also doesn't feel like it...more like see you later-

JOEL

(to himself, funny voice)
Check you later! Check you later!

MORGAN

(SNORTS)
Is that from Dazed and Confused?
Ha!

SASHA

(smiling, shaking her head)
Yeah, anyway. It didn't feel like goodbye. It's also mad peaceful and quiet over there. Ten out of ten recommend.

JOEL

(chewing and nodding)
That's because back in the day, cemeteries were also used as public parks. They were used as public parks because they were basically the only big area of nature within cities.

SASHA

Well, thank you Mr.Know-it-all.

JOEL

(still chewing)
Also, it felt like you was gonna see him later cause he's always with you...

SASHA

It's corny but it's true. You be saying some really nice-

JOEL

AND! Because we're all gonna die one day and join our loved ones.

Beat.

Only Joel's eyes look up and he stifling a LAUGH.

Morgan is dying of laughter.

Sasha and Justin smile and shake there heads.

JUSTIN

Now we just gotta get through these last few months of school and then were free this summer!

SASHA

Ugh, school. We got this, after that well tackle crippling depression and anxiety.

JUSTIN

We really the "SadBois" bout to be the "mentallystablebois".

SASHA

Not even gonna hold you, that was trash-

LAUGHTER.

SASHA (CONT'D)

(points fork)

But, Malik would be proud!

FADE TO BLACK.

END.