MALCOLM & MARIE

Written by

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INT. MALCOLM & MARIE’S HOUSE - NIGHT

A SERIES OF STILL SHOTS of the darkened house. (x12)

The lights are off. Clothes strewn on the floor of the bedroom. The bathroom. The empty halls.

OPENING CREDITS play over the images.

And then in the distance, a car pulls down the long driveway.

Headlights illuminating the house as it pulls past the windows and towards the garage.

The SOUND OF THE GARAGE DOOR opening.

The car pulls in. The GARAGE DOOR closes.

WIDE from one end of the HALLWAY, as the door opens, light spills in and MALCOLM, 35, enters with MARIE, 25.

He wears a nice suit and tie, she’s in a beautiful dress.

He hits the LIGHT SWITCH.

TRACK WITH HIM as he heads to the bar to make a drink and she walks to the bedroom.

CUT TO:

BEDROOM / BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

WE COUNTER MARIE as she enters the bedroom and into the BATHROOM, lifting her dress and pulling her tights down to pee.

CUT TO:

BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS

As Malcolm scoops up a single cube of ice and CRACKS OPEN A NEW BOTTLE of LIQUOR. (*Ask JD what he wants)

MALCOLM
You looked beautiful tonight.

CUT TO:

BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Marie pees on the toilet -
MARIE
What?

CUT TO:

BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS
Malcolm takes a sip of the drink and scrolls through iTUNES.

MALCOLM
(louder)
You looked beautiful tonight.

CUT TO:

BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS
PUSH IN: On Marie, deadpan.

MARIE
(louder)
I can’t hear you.

CUT TO:

BAR AREA - CONTINUOUS
As Malcolm still browses through playlists.

MALCOLM
You looked beautiful tonight.

She yells louder.

MARIE
Thank you.

As he presses PLAY on his PHONE and “DOWN & OUT IN NEW YORK CITY” by James Brown begins to play loudly throughout the house.

As MALCOLM heads down the hallway, singing and dancing along.

MALCOLM
(singing along)
I was born in New York City on a Monday.

CUT TO:
EXT. MALCOLM AND MARIE’S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

WIDE FROM OUTSIDE, as Malcolm leans in through the bedroom door, belting out the lyrics as Marie pees on the toilet. He continues down the hall - as Marie turns to look -

And WE TRACK ALONGSIDE THE HOUSE, to find Malcolm in the LIVING ROOM, singing, happy as can be.

MALCOLM
(singing along)
It seems I was out shinin' shoes
'bout two to noon / All the fat
cats, in the bad hats doing me a
real big favor / Got the fat cats,
in the bad hats laying it on real
good.

CUT TO:

INT. MALCOLM AND MARIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Malcolm, smiling and tipping his glass to inanimate objects -

MALCOLM
(singing)
Here’s a dime boy, give me a shine
boy.

As Marie walks into the KITCHEN.

She grabs a pot from a cupboard and fills it up with water.

Malcolm sings as he makes his way toward her and spins her around, and kisses her -

She looks at him and smiles, gives him a quick peck on the lips.

She turns on the stove. Throws a dash of salt in the water -

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
(singing)
Said I'm never never never gonna
get that way again / No, no, no,
no, not me / When you need a
friend, troubled mind / When you
need a friend, you got a troubled
mind / Ain't nobody gonna give you
one thin dime.

Marie kicks off her shoes, looks at Malcolm -
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I’m a little bit wavy.

She nods.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
(a beat)
But life is good.

He takes a sip of his drink, raises it.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Cause we fucking did it.

MARIE
Did what?

MALCOLM
I wrote and directed and premiered
a movie that knocked the fucking
audience the fuck out.

He’s lost in the memory of the night.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Did you see that audience? I
delivered a fucking knockout punch.
The last eight minutes straight
they were sobbing... And when the
credits hit, it was like a bomb
went off...

A beat. She just looks at him.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Man it feels good.

He breathes a sigh of relief -

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
It could not have gone better.
(beat)
Afterward, I talked to like six
critics... The white guy from
Variety, loved it. The white guy
from Indiewire, loved it. The white
girl from the LA Times, loved it.
She kept saying I’m the next Spike
Lee, the next Barry Jenkins, the
next John Singleton... And I just
looked at her and was like “What
about William Wyler?”
(...)

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
And you could tell for like three whole seconds she was thinking, “Was William Wyler black?”

(...)
And then she realized, “ohhhhh... that’s racist too.” And her whole face got so flushed... like so red. I was dying. And then she kept tripping over her words and like, saying the movie was so emotional that she couldn’t think straight.

(beat)
But what was interesting is you could see that because I’m black and the movie stars a black woman she was already trying to frame it through a political lens. And the reality is it’s about a girl who’s trying to get clean. Are there certain obstacles because she’s a black woman, fuck yeah..? But it’s not a film about race. It’s about shame and guilt and how that shit is inescapable... And it’s annoying that so many of these journalists can’t help but flex their fucking college educations -

MARIE
You have a college education.

M lang
Yeah but I’m not a fucking academic, I’m not elitist about this shit. I’m not trying to make a movie for the three people in my media studies class that I respect. I’m a filmmaker. And I want to be part of a larger conversation about filmmaking without always having white writers making it about race. I can already see the reviews, how this film is an “acute study of the horrors of systemic racism in the health care industry.” Instead of it being a commercial film about a drug-addicted girl trying to get her shit together.

(beat)
I mean these people are so fucking pedantic. We get it, you’re smart. We get it, you’re woke. We get it. We get it. We get it. Let us have some fucking fun.
MARIE
Malcolm... you’re writing the
Angela Davis Biopic right now.

MALCOLM
Yeah but that’s different. I’m
choosing to make a film that’s
fundamentally political.
(beat)
But not everything I do is
political because I’m black.

MARIE
I think Angela Davis might disagree
with you.

She starts to get the Mac & Cheese prepared. Pulls out the
milk. Grabs the strainer etc.

MALCOLM
But seriously if I decide to make a
fucking LEGO movie it’s not because
I want to tell a story about how
the building blocks of the American
Empire was slave labor.
(takes a drink)
I may just want to make a LEGO
movie.

MARIE
You don’t want to make a LEGO
movie.

MALCOLM
That’s true. But that first LEGO
movie was fire.

MARIE
And you’ve never gotten a good
review in your life.

MALCOLM
That’s also true.

MARIE
And you’re complaining about good
reviews that haven’t yet been
written.

MALCOLM
That’s true.
MARIE
So stop. It makes you sound like an asshole.

MALCOLM
Yeah...
(beat)
But you know what I’m saying though.

MARIE
Yeah but save it for another day.

MALCOLM
Yeah...

MARIE
And the only reason you’re complaining about the white girl from the LA Times is because she gave you a bad review.

MALCOLM
It wasn’t just a bad review. It was a dumb review. There’s a difference.

MARIE
Malcolm... you won. She’s comparing you to Spike Lee and Barry Jenkins.

MALCOLM
But she’s such a mediocre writer.

MARIE
Fine. Then you’re not the next Spike Lee or Barry Jenkins.

MALCOLM
I doubt she even knows who William Wyler is.

MARIE
I don’t know who William Wyler is.

MALCOLM
He did Best Years of our Lives. Ben Hur. He’s one of the most versatile filmmakers of all-time. He did Wuthering Heights and Roman Holiday.

She shakes her head, hasn’t seen any of them.
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
But it’s different, you don’t work
in film.

Silence. And then -

MARIE
You’re right, Malcolm. I don’t.

A longer beat.

MALCOLM
I mean, you know what I mean.

She nods. As Marie heads for the pantry and grabs the box of
Mac & Cheese.

He watches her for a long beat, turns away.

She opens it, throws the pack of cheese onto the counter and
pours the shells into the boiling water.

A long beat of silence.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Did you have fun tonight?

MARIE
It was nice.

(smiles)

MALCOLM
Nice?

She nods as he walks back up to her, holds her from behind.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
The entire night, while I was
talking to all these smiling,
sweet, rich people who one month
ago wouldn’t give me the time of
day... I’d look across the room and
see you. Marie.
(beat)
And I’d think, “God, she is the
most beautiful fucking creature on
planet earth.”
(beat)
And the sexiest. There’s truly no
one sexier.

He holds her and kisses her neck.
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Even Anthony said it.

MARIE
Hmph.

MALCOLM
Every time I’d see you...

He starts to kiss the back of her neck and shoulder.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
With your little glass of club soda
and cranberry, smiling and chatting
it up... I’d think to myself...

He kisses all the way down her spine to her ass.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
“God, am I fucking lucky.”

ANGLE ON: MARIE, unmoved.

MARIE
(dryly)
That’s so sweet.

He’s on his knees, slowly pulling her dress over her ass and
kissing her through her tights.

MALCOLM
And I just couldn’t wait to get you
home...
(he kisses)
And hold your cute little ass
(he kisses her again)
And kiss it...
(kisses her.)
And tell you that I love you...

He spins her around. His mouth just below her pubic bone,
kissing her over her underwear and tights.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I love you, Marie.

LOW ANGLE: As Marie looks down at him.

MARIE
Do you want salted or unsalted
butter?
MALCOLM
I’ll just have you.

She gives him a big smile.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
What was that?

MARIE
What?

MALCOLM
That smile?

MARIE
What?

MALCOLM
It was a fake smile.

She steps past him, pulls her dress down and opens the fridge to grab the butter.

MARIE
No it wasn’t.

MALCOLM
Yes it was.

MARIE
It was nothing.

MALCOLM
Bullshit. I can read you. I know when nothing is something.

MARIE
Maybe you can’t read me.

MALCOLM
No, I can fucking read you.

MARIE
C’mon I haven’t eaten all night.

MALCOLM
This is more than that.

She stops and looks at him, serious.

MARIE
Malcolm, it’s one in the morning, let’s just eat and go to sleep.
He lays back on the kitchen floor.

MALCOLM
Please Marie, I don’t wanna fight.

MARIE
Same here.

She pulls out a kitchen knife and slices a chunk of butter.

MARIE (CONT'D)
That’s why I’m making you Macaroni and Cheese.

MALCOLM
So you are angry?

MARIE
No.

MALCOLM
Was it the thing that Anthony said?

MARIE
No.

MALCOLM
The joke about you being a model?

MARIE
No.

MALCOLM
Cause I wouldn’t take it seriously. He’s old and from a totally different era.

MARIE
I didn’t take it personally.

MALCOLM
Promise.

MARIE
Promise.

MALCOLM
Was it Taylor?

MARIE
No.

MALCOLM
You sure?
MARIE
Yes.

MALCOLM
Cause I know you get weird around Taylor.

MARIE
I don’t get weird around Taylor.

MALCOLM
Well, you get meek.

MARIE
Meek?... Huh... Really?

MALCOLM
Well, you don’t talk a lot.

MARIE
That’s different from meek.

MALCOLM
I just mean that -

MARIE
Meek implies I’m shy or small or that she’s the fucking Queen of England -

MALCOLM
I didn’t mean it like that. I just meant -

MARIE
What?

MALCOLM
I just meant -

MARIE
What?

MALCOLM
That she’s a movie star.

Marie gives him a look.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
She’s about to become a movie star.

MARIE
(a beat)
Don’t jinx her, Malcolm.
He smiles at her.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Point is. I have nothing nice to say to Taylor. Which is the reason I don’t talk to Taylor.
(...) It has nothing to do with being meek.

MALCOLM
It’s just... She notices.

A beat.

MARIE
Really?

MALCOLM
Yes.

MARIE
How do you know?

MALCOLM
I just do.

MARIE
Really?

MALCOLM
Well she sees how you are with other people... you’re talkative, you’re funny.

MARIE
What can I say, I’m personable.

MALCOLM
Right. Which makes her insecure.

MARIE
What does? Other human beings with personalities?

MALCOLM
No. It’s the fact that you’re not yourself and she knows it.

Marie blows on a noodle to cool it down.

MARIE
She’ll survive.
Tastes it to see if it’s cooked through. It’s good.

Marie turns off the stove.

MALCOLM
You’re angry.

She dumps the noodles through the strainer.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
What are you angry about?

She pours them back in the pot.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
Marie?

Puts in the butter.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
Marie?

The milk.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
Marie?

Stirs in the packet of cheese. Malcolm gets more frustrated.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
Fucking talk to me.

She hits the spoon on the edge of the pot.

He gets frustrated and walks away as she pours it in a bowl and sets it down on the table.

MARIE
Trust me. It’s not a good idea. Let’s talk tomorrow.

MALCOLM
But I know you’re upset at me.

MARIE
It’s not a big deal.

MALCOLM
I can’t go to sleep knowing you’re angry.

MARIE
I’m begging you. Nothing productive is going to be said tonight.
MALCOLM
How do you know?

MARIE
Because I know you.

MALCOLM
What’s that mean?

She starts to walk out of the kitchen with a bowl of mac & cheese.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
What’s that mean?

But she doesn’t answer. He looks at the mac & cheese. He looks at her heading down the hall.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
What do you mean?

She turns back to him.

MARIE
You are literally incapable of deescalating a problem unless it’s work-related... And even then it’s fifty-fifty.

Marie turns and walks down the hall toward the bedroom.

A beat.

Malcolm follows yelling after her.

MALCOLM
Why is it that anytime anything good happens in our lives, you have to find something... Anything... The most minor fucking detail to harp on, to make ugly, to fucking ensure that there is no possible fucking reason to celebrate.

He opens the bedroom door -

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Marie takes off her jewelry -

MARIE
Really... you wanna go there?
MALCOLM

Yes.

MARIE

Ok.

MALCOLM

Alright. What is it?

MARIE

Your speech, Malcolm.

She puts her jewelry in a box. Picks up a bunch of clothes on the ground and walks out past him.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As Malcolm follows her toward the laundry room.

MALCOLM

Oh give me a fucking break. You are completely out of your fucking mind. When I said you’ll find the most minor fucking detail and turn it ugly... I fucking meant it.

She tosses the clothes in the laundry room.

MARIE

You didn’t thank me, Malcolm. That’s not a minor fucking detail. That’s a big one.

And back down the hallway.

MALCOLM

But I’ve thanked you a million times before. You know I’m thankful. You know I’m appreciative. And you know it was a fucking mistake, so why turn it into anything more?

MARIE

Because it is more.

MALCOLM

What?

She enters the bedroom, grabs a pack of cigarettes and walks back out towards the LIVING ROOM.
MARIE
It’s our whole relationship in a fucking nutshell.

A beat.

LIVING ROOM.

MALCOLM
You can’t be serious.

MARIE
I’m dead serious.

MALCOLM
Then you’re psychotic.

MARIE
And you’re hyperbolic.

She walks out the sliding door to go smoke a cigarette.

EXT. HOUSE PATIO BY TREE - CONTINUOUS

MALCOLM
I’m not. It’s psychotic to think that forgetting to thank you is symbolic of anything other than me legitimately forgetting to fucking thank you.

She turns to him.

MARIE
Malcolm, you thanked a hundred and twelve fucking people. You thanked your agents. Your cast. Your mother. Your gaffer. Your fucking third grade teacher and the usher who worked at the theater when you were eleven years old and saw whatever-the-fuck.

MALCOLM
I didn’t thank the fucking usher -

MARIE
You know what I mean -

MALCOLM
You don’t have to be sarcastic and petty and fucking obnoxious about it. I forgot to thank you.

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I AM SORRY. I am genuinely sorry. Which is why I apologized a hundred times during the movie. I couldn’t even focus on the movie I felt so guilty.

MARIE
That’s a shame. You’ve only seen it seven thousand times.

MALCOLM
- But every time I leaned over and said I’m sorry you said it was fine. You squeezed my hand and said “It’s fine. I love you. Don’t worry... It’s fine.”

A beat.

MARIE
Well Malcolm, I changed my mind. It’s not fine.

MALCOLM
How can you just change your mind?

MARIE
Honestly... it’s really fucking easy.

MALCOLM
That doesn’t seem a little crazy to you?

MARIE
Not at all.

MALCOLM
Really?

MARIE
Nope.

MALCOLM
Why?

MARIE
Because while I was sitting through the film, I was fine. And it wasn’t that big of a deal. But afterward, at the party...

(MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)
every single person from your
mother to Taylor came up and said,
“I know you’re probably a little
upset he forgot to thank you but I
know how much he counts on you.”

MALCOLM
Taylor said that?

MARIE
She told me not to read into it.

MALCOLM
What does that mean?

MARIE
That’s funny you say that... that’s
the exact same thought I had.

MALCOLM
I didn’t cheat on you.

MARIE
I didn’t ask.

MALCOLM
I’m just saying that.

MARIE
So am I...
(beat)
But let’s not digress. Because as
the night went on, I became less
fine with it. Because it’s not just
about you forgetting to thank me.
It’s about how you see me and how
you view my contribution, not just
to this relationship, but to your
work. Specifically, a movie you
made... about my life.

She stubs the cigarette out.

Walks back to the bedroom and slams the door shut.

I/E. LIVING ROOM / PATIO - CONTINUOUS

HOLD ON: Malcolm... Confused and caught off guard.
He walks toward the kitchen table, sits down.
Begins to eat the mac and cheese.
After a few bites.

He yells out.

MALCOLM
You know Marie... you are genuinely unstable.

He scarfs down more mac and cheese.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I’m not kidding. I’m actually concerned for your mental well-being.

He continues to eat his mac and cheese, until he finishes.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You are fucking insane.

He walks over and peers into the pot of mac & cheese.

Scoops out some more.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
In what fucking universe is the character of Imani based on you?

Suddenly, Marie comes walking back out to find him.

MARIE
Really?

MALCOLM
Obviously there’s certain similarities... But she’s not fucking based on you.

MARIE
Are you actually yelling and belittling me across the house because you’re too busy eating macaroni and cheese?

MALCOLM
What?

MARIE
(mimicking him)
What?

MALCOLM
I’m not.
MARIE
Don’t fucking lie. You’re literally getting seconds.

MALCOLM
I’m not.

MARIE
You realize how disturbing it is that you’re able to compartmentalize to such a degree that you can casually abuse me while eating mac and cheese.

MALCOLM
Abuse you?

MARIE
- Mac and cheese that I fucking made.

MALCOLM
Abuse you?

MARIE
Verbally abuse me.

MALCOLM
Thanks for the clarification. It’s kind of an important one.

(then)
But verbally abuse you? Give me a fucking break.

He takes another bite of the mac and cheese.

MARIE
If you’re gonna call me fucking insane and treat me like I’m crazy as least have the decency to do it without casually eating mac and cheese. How does that actually work? What’s it sound like inside your brain? Is it like “what a cunt. I wonder if there’s more mac and cheese. What a cunt? This is delicious. What a cunt? If I could direct commercials for Kraft Mac and Cheese I would.”

He just looks at her.
MALCOLM
You can say whatever you want, Marie... You can get pissed off that I didn’t thank you. That Anthony made a joke about you being a model. That Taylor said whatever the fuck Taylor said...

MARIE
It was mean.

MALCOLM
She’s an actor.

MARIE
And all night I had to look over and see you laughing with her and posing for photos.

MALCOLM
She’s the lead of my film.

MARIE
I know... I don’t care.

MALCOLM
It’s my job to make her feel comfortable.

MARIE
Not at my expense.

MALCOLM
Yes. Despite how the fuck you feel about it. It is my job.

MARIE
And you’d never fucking forget to thank her -

MALCOLM
- Jesus Christ.

MARIE
You wouldn’t.

MALCOLM
Cause she’s fucking psychotic.

MARIE
But that’s my point. You’d never forget to thank her because she’d flip the fuck out. She’d spend the whole night making you pay for it.

(MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)
So much so, that it would never happen again.

MALCOLM
So what you’re saying is that you’re not nuts enough?

MARIE
No. What I’m saying is, you spend your entire life catering to the feelings and whims of everyone but me. Actors, producers, crew members... Fuck, even fictional characters get more empathy and respect from you than I do...

(...)
That’s what’s so fucking odd about this whole thing. And I get it, Taylor is great in the film. But when you get up there and give an entire speech about Taylor’s ability to breathe life into the character of Imani without ever acknowledging that if I hadn’t lived my life, she wouldn’t exist.

MALCOLM
Imani is not based on you.

MARIE
Imani’s a twenty year-old drug addict trying to get clean. What was it, just pure fucking coincidence?

MALCOLM
Obviously you getting clean was part of the inspiration.

MARIE
At twenty.

MALCOLM
Yes. And you were able to provide genuine insights into what that felt like... But Imani’s not based on you. It’s an amalgamation of a lot of different things.

MARIE
Who?

MALCOLM
People.
MARIE
What people?

MALCOLM
A lot of different people.

MARIE
Mhmhm.

MALCOLM
My cousin. It’s you know... a lot of different people.

She takes a beat, studies him...

MARIE
I feel like once you know someone is there for you. Once you know they love you... You never think about them again.

MALCOLM
That’s not true.

MARIE
It’s only when you’re about to lose someone that you finally pay attention.

MALCOLM
Is that what this is?

MARIE
What?

MALCOLM
Is what you’re threatening? That if I don’t apologize I’m going to lose you...

MARIE
I’m not lookin for an apology.

MALCOLM
Then what do you want Marie... A screenplay credit?

MARIE
Don’t be cruel.

MALCOLM
No seriously. I know I spend hours and hours talking to you about work.

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Is it so much of a fucking nuisance that you’d like compensation.

MARIE
It’s not about credit, Malcolm. I don’t want fucking credit.

A beat.

MALCOLM
Then what is it?

MARIE
The film is beautiful. I’m proud of you. It took forever to make and it was fucking tough. But I’m curious about one thing? Do you think it’d be as good as it is, if we weren’t together?

A beat.

MALCOLM
No.

MARIE
That’s all I wish you said.

A long tense beat.

MALCOLM
Great... are we no longer fighting?

MARIE
It depends.

MALCOLM
On what?

MARIE
Whether you can manage to not say something hurtful for the rest of the night.

MALCOLM
I’m not that bad.

MARIE
The fuck you aren’t.

He looks at her and smiles... and then it turns into a laugh.

MALCOLM
Can I kiss you?
MARIE
No.

MALCOLM
You sure.

MARIE
I’m fucking positive.

He moves closer to her. He puts his arms around her.

MARIE (CONT’D)
Just don’t take me for granted.

MALCOLM
I don’t.

MARIE
You did.

MALCOLM
I’m sorry.

He kisses her...

MARIE
I’m the only person in your life who tells you you’re being an asshole when you’re being an asshole.

He kisses her again. She falls back on the couch.

MALCOLM
I know.

MARIE
And now that you made a film that a bunch of people like... The whole world is gonna be kissing your ass.

MALCOLM
You think?

MARIE
Yeah. I heard it all night.

(mimicking)
He’s such a genius, he’s so sensitive, he’s so attuned to emotion... I bet he’s romantic. He’s sweet right?

MALCOLM
What did you say?
MARIE
I said, “yeah when he’s not being an emotional fucking terrorist.”

She smiles at him, teasingly...

MALCOLM
Oooph...

He leans down to kiss her.

MARIE
No.

MALCOLM
Yes.

She puts her legs out to keep him at bay. He grabs her ankles as they play wrestle.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You think you’re tough, skinny bones jones?

MARIE
I am tough.

MALCOLM
You’re light work. I’ll fuckin eat your ass for breakfast.

He wins and sneaks in another kiss.

She looks at him. Her feet against his chest.

Pushing him back and forth, toying with him.

MARIE
Life is gonna get easier but it’s also gonna get harder.

MALCOLM
What do you mean?

MARIE
Don’t believe the hype, Malcolm.

MALCOLM
Yeahhh...

MARIE
And don’t push away the people who ground you.
He leans in and kisses her, passionately.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Self doubt is the key. Self-doubt is what will make you great. The second you start thinking you know what you’re doing. That you’re great. You’re brilliant. That there’s no possible way you could make a piece of shit...
(beat)
You make a piece of shit.

MALCOLM
That’s not gonna happen.

MARIE
But the scariest part is you’ll have no idea you made a piece of shit.

MALCOLM
Oh yeah...

MARIE
Yeah...it’ll be fake films about fake people with fake emotions...

He kisses her.

MARIE (CONT'D)
And you’ll start having dinner with the white girl from the LA Times.

He laughs... As he keeps kissing her neck and chest.

MARIE (CONT'D)
And talking about this one-take and that one-take... and how the camera moves in this but not that... and all the shit that no one actually gives a fuck about when they watch a movie.

He looks up at her as he kisses across her chest and down her stomach...

MARIE (CONT'D)
And the next thing you know you’ll be doing a press tour for your new LEGO film... Talking about how it’s actually for the failure of reconstruction.
As she mimics him, real serious:

MARIE (CONT'D)
I mean the original title was Forty
LEGOs and a Mule but the studio -

MALCOLM
You’re fucking hilarious.

MARIE
You think it’s funny but it’s
fucking true. I can see it now.
   (beat)
And all your new twitter friends
will be fucking quote tweeting your
ass... Handclaps and shit.
   (beat)
THIS. IS. WHAT. CHANGE. LOOKS.
LIKE. YASSS KING.

MALCOLM
Brutal.

MARIE
And then the rest of America will
be like what’s this negro doing
selling some bullshit with his
LEGOs. Get the fuck outta here. I
ain’t seeing that shit.
   (beat)
Protests! Boycotts! Cause you know,
you’re politicizing these LEGO’s!
   (beat)
And the studio’ll probably get
freaked out. You’ll probably get
freaked out.
   (...)
Start wondering if this hill of
LEGO’s is really worth dying on,
Malcolm.
   (beat)
But your new white girlfriend from
the LA Times with her SPF 50
brigade will come riding to the
rescue on some real soccer mom
shit. Tweeting at people left and
right. Who is in charge, here?
Because this is unacceptable! This
is censorship! It is everyone’s
moral obligation to buy a ticket to
the new LEGO movie written and
directed by a black man. Did you
hear me a REAL BLACK MAN!
   (MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)
Let’s all change the world by making it the biggest box office ever!
(beat)
And they’ll all take photos of their ticket stubs. And trolls will send them death threats. Which will only confirm that they’re doing the right thing by signal boosting a marginalized voice.
(beat)
And the next thing you know you’ll make a toy company a billion dollars. Congratulations Malcolm Ellis! You did it. Here’s a couple million dollars and a fruit basket. Just a thought... But have you ever considered making the Angela Davis biopic out of LEGOS?
(beat)
You laugh now but you could change the world.

Malcolm has been enjoying her little rant.

MALCOLM
You should never have given up acting.

A long beat.

MARIE
What are you saying, Malcolm? That I was brilliant as CONCERNED NURSE #2 and SKINNY GIRL IN ALLEY? That I had a future in this biz?

MALCOLM
I always believed that if you found a character that allowed you to be yourself, you’d be astonishing.

MARIE
Well, unfortunately... no one can really write me, except you.

A long beat of silence. As she gets up and walks outside.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

It’s the middle of the night.
And the air is chilly. On the table is an open pack of PARLIAMENTS and a BAR-B-Q lighter.

She lights a cigarette and starts to smoke.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON: Malcolm watching her through the window. Her back to him. Standing outside in her bare feet and red tights.

IN THE REFLECTION we can see MALCOLM take out his phone and press play on a song.

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON: MARIE’S FACE as she hears the OPENING CHORDS of WILLIAM BELL’S “I FORGOT TO BE YOUR LOVER”.

She smiles to herself, as she takes a drag of her cigarette. WE HOLD ON her for about ten seconds and suddenly a crack of emotion as she tries to hold back tears.

She glances over her shoulder to see Malcolm sitting in the LIVING ROOM.

She tries to keep her emotions in but can’t.

MARIE
Fuck.

She wipes the tears from her eyes and walks away from the house.

HOLD ON: Malcolm sitting in the living room, singing along.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON: MALCOLM moving his head to the song, softly singing along, a little drunk.

MALCOLM
Oh, I’ve been workin’ for you, /
  doin’ all I can /
To work all the time didn’t make me a man /
Oh, I forgot to be your lover /
And I’m sorry, /
I’ll make it up to you somehow, baby /

He looks up to notice that Marie is gone. He stands up.
MALCOLM (CONT’D)

Marie?

There’s no answer.

He walks closer to the window. Still no answer.

WIDE SHOT of the house from OUTSIDE as Malcolm walks out and looks out toward the hills and trees.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)

Marie?

No answer.

The wind blows through the grass and trees.

There’s something eerie about it.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)

Marie?

But no answer.

He begins to search for her. Walks alongside the house. The windows lit up, but no sign of Marie.

He heads toward the bedroom from outside –

INT. BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

THRU the SLIDING GLASS DOOR –

MALCOLM

Marie?

No answer. As he checks the BATHROOM. He turns and heads out.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)

Marie, if you’re playing... Stop it.

There’s total silence.

He walks out into the HALLWAY –

PEERS INTO THE STUDY.

There’s no sign.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)

Marie?
He’s getting more and more freaked out.

BACK OUT DOWN the HALLWAY,
AND INTO THE LIVING ROOM
Where he stops and looks around.
A beat.
We see MARIE as she rounds the corner, crosses and scares the shit out of him.
He fucking screams –
And she dies laughing.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
WHAT THE FUCK?

Marie can’t help but fall to the floor in hysterics. Malcolm doesn’t find it humorous at all.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
Why the fuck did you do that?

MARIE
I couldn’t help it!

MALCOLM
You’re so fucking immature.

Marie mimics his scream. Cracks up again.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
Why would you do that?

MARIE
I went to pee and you freaked out...

MALCOLM
Why didn’t you use a bathroom?

MARIE
Because I didn’t grow up with a backyard... And the novelty hasn’t worn off.

INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS
Heads into the kitchen and gets herself a glass of water.
MARIE
It’s funny... You’re the neediest man I’ve ever dated.
(beat)
I don’t mean that as an insult. Just a fact. But at the same time you’re the least jealous man I’ve ever dated. I could literally be hanging on some guy’s arm, and you’d never think it’s sexual.
(beat)
You’d just come up to me and say “what are you doing? I can’t remember anyone’s name at this party. I need your help. C’mon. Let’s go.”

MALCOLM
But whose arm are you hanging on?

MARIE
That’s the point. It doesn’t matter.

MALCOLM
Is this about tonight?

MARIE
Kinda.

MALCOLM
Kinda?

MARIE
I was just outside smoking and you were playing William Bell and trying to apologize in whatever emotionally obtuse way made sense to you. As if a song written fifty years ago about a different fucking girl could somehow make me feel better about our relationship. A relationship that, um —

MALCOLM
Most people would say lack of jealousy is a good thing.

MARIE
Not when it borders on indifference.
MALCOLM
What are you talking about?

MARIE
You can encourage me all you want to have a life but it’s all bullshit. You don’t want me to have a life that’s separate from yours. (beat)
You’re too fucking needy.

MALCOLM
I thought we were done fighting...

MARIE
Don’t be so sensitive. This isn’t a fight.

MALCOLM
Yeah right -

MARIE
It’s just an observation.

MALCOLM
Marie I don’t think you want to go here?

MARIE
Why’s that?

MALCOLM
Cause you don’t.

MARIE
Why’s that?

MALCOLM
And if you do, you’re not thinking clearly.

MARIE
I think I’m thinking clearly.

MALCOLM
You’re not, trust me.

MARIE
Well, I have a slight masochistic streak.

MALCOLM
But you’re not dumb.
MARIE
Oh my god, thank you.

MALCOLM
Don’t be a fucking brat.

MARIE
And don’t fucking patronize me and tell me I gave up something when you know damn well, that your work is all that matters and all you have time for.

MALCOLM
Oh you gave up a career so you could be an emotional support dog?

She looks at him.

MARIE
Fuck you.

MALCOLM
Be honest.

MARIE
Fuck you.

MALCOLM
You didn’t want it.

MARIE
FUCK YOU!

MALCOLM
You gave up. You got scared. You didn’t want to -

MARIE
FUCK YOU!

MALCOLM
- try and fail.

Marie leans in close -

MARIE
You are ugly inside.

MALCOLM
Marie, when I met you, you were a fucking pilled-out disaster.

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You were barely 20 years old, you couldn’t hold a conversation without nodding off or lashing out or breaking down. Don’t pretend like in the last five years you became so fucking enlightened that I forgot about the old you.

Marie turns away -

MARIE
Oh shut the fuck up!

She starts to walk out of the LIVING ROOM but Malcolm follows -

MALCOLM
(beat)
Of course I want you to have a fucking life. You know why, Marie? Because I’m terrified that if you don’t... you’re gonna hang everything on mine -

She slams the door to the bedroom - he opens the door to the bedroom -

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
- and when god forbid, I forget to thank you at a fucking premiere... You come home, start a fight and by morning you’re drinking on xannies and trying to cut your wrists with a pair of fucking nail scissors.

A beat of silence. She nods.

MARIE
I want you to leave this room.

MALCOLM
Too bad, Marie. And I get it. You have pain and disappointment and dreams... Like everyone else on planet earth.

She walks past him into the hallway -

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You didn’t get whatever jobs you wished you got. You’re embarrassed about being SKINNY GIRL IN ALLEY and fucking CONCERNED NURSE #2... Guess what? None of us are proud of the way we started off.

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I was doing token punch ups on straight to VOD rom coms. And under the table rewrites on movies that didn’t actually want to pay writers.

(...) But you keep on fucking working. You keep on trying. You work harder and harder because even if you’re not talented, which you are, you can still get somewhere. As long as you don’t have a fucking ego. You don’t have to be proud of everything you do. You just have to work harder than ninety-nine percent of people.

She leans against a wall and stares at him.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
But what’s bullshit. What’s a fucking cop-out. Is you acting like my work is so suffocating you can’t even breathe. That you don’t have any space. Look at this fucking rental house they put us in. Find a fucking room. Get to work.

(beat) And stop blaming me for your inability to get your shit together. I checked you into rehab. I went to group therapy with you. I fucking supported you every single step of the way. When you got depressed. When you were on so many meds you didn’t fuck for half a year. I was there for you... When you relapsed... I was there for you...

(beat) When we lived on 38th street and you went out to a meeting and didn’t come home... Because you were fucking someone else... I was there for you.

(beat) So don’t fucking go there, Marie. You’re not gonna win this one. Trust me.

She looks at him, emotional.

He goes to fix himself a drink -
MARIE
You were there for me. That’s true. And I was a mess, that’s true. But be honest about the real reason you were there for me.

(beat)
I was good material. That’s why you stuck around and fought for me and loved me. Because it was a story. It was a world of emotions you weren’t used to seeing so fucking close. And because I was 20 years old. Because I had never been loved the way you loved me, or thought you loved me, I didn’t realize what I was to you. A movie. A fucking tragedy. That you could continue watching as long as you were there for me. And tonight while sitting in the theater I watched the whole thing play out. So don’t pretend like it was a selfless act. It’s literally the basis of your fucking art. And it’s the reason all these people are calling you brilliant and brave and fearless.

She taunts him.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Tell me, Malcolm... How did you give voice to the character of Imani? How are you able to channel the voice of a young woman so well. So authentically...?

(beat)
“Well, Jennifer, that’s a good question. I guess I just stole it. Ripped it off. Not a literal theft but a spiritual one.”

(beat)
You’re a fucking fraud and that’s the real reason you didn’t thank me. You know it...

(...)
You have nothing fucking new to say. All you can do is mimic. Be a parrot. A goddamn cock-a-too.

(...)
God forbid you’re ever alone...

(...)
And have to dream up another original idea. What are you gonna do, Malcolm?

(MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)
What are you gonna write...? This?
(beat)
I don’t think so. You don’t have the balls. The gravitas, the fucking introspection to look at yourself, and your flaws and your shortcomings... And the fact that you may not be the next Barry Jenkins or Spike Lee... Cause those motherfuckers had something new to say... Something personal to say. Something true to them and their experience.
(beat)
You say your film is about shame and guilt. Whose shame? Whose guilt?
(...)
What the fuck do you know about shame and guilt? You’ve got two parents, no bad habits other than being a prick, and a college education. What the fuck do you know? Your Dad’s a professor. Your mother’s a therapist. Your sister works for a fucking think tank in DC. But out here, on the these streets, these smiling ass rich people think you know what it’s like to fucking scrap. Think you lived it... Give me a fucking break. You’re more privileged than the white girl who works for the LA Times, thinking she’s doing a public service by lifting your mediocre ass voice.

MALCOLM
Now you’re being cruel.

MARIE
Then try slitting your wrists with a pair of nail scissors...

She finally cracks, her eyes welling up.

MARIE (CONT'D)
It’s not something you’re gonna wanna survive though cause it’s embarrassing. Don’t worry, I’m not so petty that I’ll throw it out in a fight cause I’m angry.
MALCOLM
I didn’t mean it.

MARIE
Too late.
(beat)
It’s humiliating.
(beat)
And it’s cruel.
(beat)
And it makes me regret sharing so much with you.

She walks off into the bedroom, leaving him alone. And shuts the door.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE OF MALCOLM & MARIE
- Malcolm throws back his drink.
- Marie turns on the bath.
- Malcolm pours himself another drink.
- Marie turns toward the mirror and wipes her tears.
- Malcolm outside looking at the house, talking to himself.
- Marie unzips her dress from behind.
- Malcolm paces alongside the house, talking to himself.

MALCOLM
(mumbled, barely audible)
I’m keeping you from having a life.
Give me a fucking break. You don’t know shit. Fuck you. Pain in my ass. Bullshit ass nonsense -

- Marie steps into the bathtub -
- Malcolm stops and looks.
- Marie takes a deep breath.

SUDDENLY A LOUD KNOCK ON THE WINDOW outside the bathroom -
She looks up to see Malcolm, outside:
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
(through the glass)
What do you mean, mediocre?

Marie sighs and submerges her head underwater.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As we hear the sound of MALCOLM entering the bathroom, and walking up to her.

A long beat as we watch until she comes back up for air.

MALCOLM
Were you just trying to be mean? Is that why you said it?

She ties her hair up and moves sideways in the bath, her legs dangling out over the tub, dripping water on the tiled floor.

She looks up at him, towering over her.

MARIE
Out of everything I said, mediocre is what stuck with you?

MALCOLM
I just want to know if you actually believe it?

She looks at him, her head cocked.

MARIE
Guess...

MALCOLM
Answer the question.

MARIE
But what’s the question, specifically?

A beat.

MALCOLM
Do you not like the movie?

MARIE
I feel like that’s a different question.
MALCOLM
So you don’t like me and you don’t like the movie.

MARIE
I didn’t say that.

MALCOLM
That’s literally what you just fucking said...

MARIE
Malcolm, I feel like you’re being a little irrational.

MALCOLM
I’m irrational? I’m fucking irrational? This is the biggest night of my life and you’re trying to turn it into the worst. And I’m irrational.

MARIE
Look at you -

MALCOLM
Answer the fucking question, Marie. Do you think I have a fucking mediocre ass voice? That’s what you said. Those were your exact fucking words.

MARIE
Calm down.

MALCOLM
- I’m not calming down -

MARIE
Then I’m not answering the question.

15 INT. HALL / LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He walks out of the bathroom, yelling through the fucking house, like a lunatic.

MALCOLM
You fucking sit around all day doing nothing with your life and I’m mediocre??? I got nothing to say??? I’m a fucking parakeet, a goddamn cock-a-too...

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
What the fuck is you? You got something to say? ONLY CAUSE I’M SPEAKING FIRST! Only cause I’m actually saying something. Get the fuck outta here -

INT. BEDROOM / BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

He walks back towards the bathroom -

MALCOLM
You know what you are. A fucking vulture. Look at you... Just waiting for something to fucking happen.

She just looks at him.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I don’t want to offend you but you don’t have a life.

(...) You look good in your dress. Well, how lucky are you that I got someplace to go.

(...) You ain’t fooling me, Marie. No matter how much you decorate that ugly soul of yours.

(...) I know you. I remember you.

MARIE
Are you done?

MALCOLM
You’re so fucking solipsistic that you see yourself in everything. Even things you had nothing to do with. And god forbid I tell you the fucking truth. You notice the way Imani walks and you turn to me and say, “I wonder where you got that walk from?” And I smile and don’t say shit cause I don’t wanna hurt your feelings. But you tally it up, cause while I’m actually doing something, creating something, you’re on the sidelines trying to justify your fucking existence.

(imitating her)
I know that line. I said that. I did that. You took that from me.

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Shit, even the feedback you give comes with an I OWE YOU.

He walks in and sits down on the toilet across from her. Leans in close.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You wanna play dirty. Let’s fucking go. You wanna hurt me, I promise you Marie, I can hurt you ten times more. You’re a featherweight, a level one boss... I can fucking snap you like a twig.

She just looks at him, stoic. Her head against the white wall. Her mascara bleeding below her eyes.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Imani is based on you as much as she is on me. What she says to the nurse, that’s what I said to the doctor when my dad was in the ICU.

(beat)
The way she walks, that’s my ex-girlfriend Jess. So is the scene on the bicycle in the rain. It wasn’t based on the trip we took to Barcelona. It was Jess and I in Brooklyn on a Citi-bike. The way she ties her shoes with two loops, you’re not the first. That was Jayla. So is the joke about not giving handjobs... That’s an old, played out line every guy’s heard.

(beat)
When she makes the joke about how quickly she orgasms, that was Kiki. Who’s Kiki? A dancer I met outside of St. Louis on a roadtrip. I fucked her in the penthouse suite of a Marriot. Once on the bed, and once in the shower.

(beat)
I have a polaroid of her sitting in an empty heart shaped bathtub in a photo album back home in our closet.

(...)
But you’re an addict, right? That’s what makes you so fucking unique. That’s what makes your contribution so much more significant. Right? Right? Give me a fucking break.

(...)

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You’re not the first broken girl
I’ve known, fucked or dated. I
wrote my first script in a one
bedroom apartment with Lia, who I
thought loved hour long showers
until I found her passed out with a
needle in her arm. I got an email
from her sister two and half years
ago saying she passed away after
eating a bottle of Tylenol and
asking if I had any photos of her
for a slideshow they were putting
together.

(...)
Shit... Now that I think about her,
I should’ve thanked her tonight.

(...)
Same with Tasha. First girl I
really truly loved. First girl who
ever really broke my heart, never
cheated on me though, I’ll give her
that. Stopped drinking and got
married and got divorced.
Constantly DMs me photos of her 8
year old daughter and says she
wished she had a baby with me. And
I just send her back a bunch of red
hearts because honestly I have no
idea how to respond to that.

A long beat. Marie is slowly breaking.

MARIE
Are you done?

MALCOLM
I’m not even fucking close to being
done.

MARIE
Okay.

MALCOLM
Why, you want me to stop?

She’s doing everything she can to be stoic.

MARIE
No, Malcolm... Keep going.

MALCOLM
Why, because you’re enjoying it.
You know how fucking disturbed you
are...?
She tries to smile at him -

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You may have gotten clean, Marie. But you still haven’t figured out this part. Why you love being traumatized and hurt and fucking eviscerated. It’s not healthy. It’s not normal. And it permeates every aspect of our relationship. The way we fight. The way we talk. The way we fuck.

(beat)
I’ve dated some damaged people in my life but none of them wanted to be degraded and debased like you. It’s frightening and I promise you, nothing to be proud of...

(beat)
So stop smiling, you look like an idiot.

He gets up and walks out. Marie tries to hold it together - but she can’t.

And we watch as she breaks, tears running down her face. As she cries alone in the bathtub.

CUT TO:

17 INT. LIVING ROOM / HALL - MOMENTS LATER

As Malcolm fixes himself another drink he suddenly puts his glass down and walks back towards the bathroom.

MALCOLM
You know what I just realized, Marie. It’s not about justifying your existence. It’s not -

18 INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

He enters the bathroom to find her still in the tub.

MALCOLM
This whole thing is about you being so fucking selfish, and so fucking scared, that you want to break me down. Second guess everything I do. Am I mediocre? Can I do this job without her... Will it be honest? Will it be truthful?

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)

(beat)
God forbid I’m secure enough in my opinion that I don’t need you. That’s what this whole thing is about. Your whole fucking speech about self-doubt... You just need a reason to be needed. Because if you’re not, if I don’t need you... well then, why am I with you Marie?

A long beat.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Isn’t that what this is about?
Control. You want control...
Because you can’t imagine that the reason I’m with you is because I love you. I love you. I don’t need you. I just love you.

She starts to cry.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
That there is someone on this fucking planet who just loves you. Loves your broken, disturbed, junkie fucking ass enough that I willingly want to be with you. Want to love you. Want your opinion not because I need it but because I’m curious. Because I like the way your brain works. Because I want to know how you see the world. What you think. That I value you. Your opinion. Your love. Your instincts. And I’m grateful. Because everything you’ve been through made you, you. The woman I love. The woman I give a fuck about. The woman I’m up fighting with at 2 in the fucking morning on the best night of my life, because she’s relentless and fucking crazy. And I’m sorry, I fucked up. I apologized a thousand times... But really since the second we got home all I wanted to do is celebrate with you. Marie. My girl.

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT’D)
That’s all... You wanna know the
part of Imani that’s based on you.
The end, the part that makes it a
fucking tragedy... The part where
she loathes herself so much because
of all the shame and guilt that she
can’t let the good in. That’s the
part that’s based on you. Her
inability to fathom that someone in
this world loves her. Despite the
fact that she doesn’t love herself.
That’s you. That’s the part that
isn’t fiction.

He walks out of the bathroom and outside.

HOLD ON MARIE FOR A LONG BEAT.

As she continues to cry.

*(Maybe we watch Marie pull herself together and get
dressed?)*

CUT TO:

19

EXT. OUTSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Malcolm sits down outside and smokes a cigarette.

Lights it with the BAR-B-Q LIGHTER.

And grimaces as he takes a puff.

He sits there smoking and drinking.

Still frustrated from his fight with Marie.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

INSIDE THE KITCHEN. We see Marie enter. She looks at Malcolm,
outside. She’s wearing a kimono.

He doesn’t notice her.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Marie comes out.
Grabs the cigarette from Malcolm.

And sits down in the chair next to him. They sit there in silence.

She pulls out her phone and presses PLAY on “GET RID OF HIM” by DIONNE WARWICK.

Looks at Malcolm with a mischievous smile for about 20 seconds, but he’s lost in his own head.

BACKUP TRIO
We are your friends
And we got some good advice
Before you let him break your heart
You'd better think twice
He is the one who'll tease your cryin'
He's only out to break your heart
Him with his cheatin' and he's lyin'
He's gonna rip your dreams apart.

Marie retreats, looking away, as she continues to smoke cigarette.

A beat.

As Malcolm glances over at her and we can sense that he wants to reach out, and maybe hold her hand but doesn’t because of his pride or maybe because he’s not there yet.

DIONNE WARWICK
But I love him
And there's nothing I can do (Get rid of him)
Uh-uh (Get rid of him)
Oh, no (Do you mean to say you're still consider him?)
Ah-ha

As the music continues to play and they sit there, silently... Listening to the lyrics and not talking.

DIONNE WARWICK (CONT’D)
When you tell me that he's lazy
(Get rid of him)
You're just sayin' the things I know (Get rid of him)
You'd better tell me that I'm crazy
(Get rid of him)
But I'll never let him go
And they go back and forth, missing each others cues and glances, both yearning to connect and call a truce but not sure how the other feels.

The song playing off her phone speaker:

DIONNE WARWICK (CONT'D)
He will hurt you
And he'll break your heart in two
(Get rid of him)
Uh-uh (Get rid of him)
Oh, no (Do you mean to say you're still consider him?)
Ah-ha

TRIO
(Get rid of him)
(Get rid of him)
(Get rid of him)

DIONNE WARWICK
Oh, but I love him
And there's nothing I can do (Get rid of him)
Uh-uh (Get rid of him)
Oh, no (Do you really mean to say that you can still go on this way?)

(Get rid of him) No
(Get rid of him) Oh, no
(Get rid of him) Uh-uh
(Get rid of him)

I know he's out to break my heart
And he'll rip my dreams apart
But I love that fella so
And I'll never let him go

(Get rid of him) Oh, no
(Get rid of him) Oh, no
(Get rid of him) No

The song comes to an end.

A beat of silence.

Malcolm gets up and walks back inside.

Leaving Marie by herself.

A long beat.
Marie just sits there in silence.
And then the SOUND OF AN OWL.
She looks up at the tree.
A beat.
The OWL Hoots again.
Marie Hoots Back.
A beat.

The OWL Hoots again.
From BEHIND MARIE.
We hear Malcolm from inside the LIVING ROOM -

MALCOLM (O.S.)
Fuck.

She turns toward CAMERA.
Looks.
Another beat.

MALCOLM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Fucking piece of shit -

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON: Malcolm pacing in the LIVING ROOM talking to himself.
As Marie enters.

MARIE
What’s going on?

Malcolm looks at her.

MALCOLM
The LA Times review is up.

MARIE
What’s it say?
MALCOLM
I don’t know. The fucking internet -

A long beat.

MARIE
Is it good?

MALCOLM
Hold on -

MARIE
Who sent it to you?

MALCOLM
No one. I just found it.

MARIE
How come no one sent it to you?

MALCOLM
Marie. Stop! It’s loading!

A long beat. He stares at his phone.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
(muttering)
C’mon. C’mon, C’mon.
(a long beat)
Oh fuck me! There’s a fucking paywall.

MARIE
What’s the headline?

MALCOLM
I gotta pay a dollar ninety-nine a month. Jesus fucking christ -

MARIE
When was it posted?

MALCOLM
Twenty minutes ago.

MARIE
And no one sent it to you?

MALCOLM
Where’s my wallet?
MARIE
I don’t know.
(beat)
Why did no one send it to you?

MALCOLM
Maybe because it’s a bad review.

MARIE
Maybe because it’s two in the morning.

Malcolm starts to walk through the house looking for his wallet.

MALCOLM
Where is...?

MARIE
Don’t you have your credit card stored in your phone?

MALCOLM
No.

MARIE
Why?

MALCOLM
Cause I don’t. I don’t trust that shit.

MARIE
Really?

MALCOLM
Marie, stop it.

MARIE
Sorry -

A beat. He opens a bunch of drawers. Checks his coat pockets. But nothing.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Did what’s her name write it?

MALCOLM
The white girl?

MARIE
Yeah.
MALCOLM
Yeah.

A beat.

MARIE
Well, it’s gotta be positive if she wrote it.

MALCOLM
I mean I hope so - He gets frustrated.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Where is my motherfucking wallet???

MARIE
Don’t ask me, I don’t know.

MALCOLM
I wasn’t asking you. I know you don’t know - And then he finds his wallet by the bar. He pulls out his credit cards -

BACK INTO THE LIVING ROOM.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
This is bullshit. I’m entering my fucking email address - (beat) Oh, ok. Fucking dot com. Fuck.

He wipes the sweat off his forehead. His flash turns on. He holds up his credit card for his phone to scan.

MARIE
You said the conversation you had with her was great. That she called you the next Spike Lee -

MALCOLM
Yeah but you know - Billing Address? C’mon...

MARIE
If she thinks you’re the next Spike Lee she’s not going to write a mediocre review.

He looks at her -
MALCOLM
Ha, Ha, Ha.

MARIE
Poor choice of words -

MALCOLM
Maybe the William Wyler joke
bothered her. I mean it’s possible -

MARIE
Were you mean to her?

MALCOLM
No. I wasn’t mean to her. She’s a
moron. But I wasn’t mean to her.

MARIE
Did she know that you thought she
was a moron?

MALCOLM
No. Not unless she took offense to
the joke -

MARIE
A tip for the future Malcolm, don’t
make a critic feel stupid.

MALCOLM
I was kind. I was generous. If all
things were equal, it would have
been completely justified for me to
see her head off with a fucking
pocket knife.

A beat.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Ok. I’m in! I’m in!
(beat)
Where is it? How do you navigate -
Got it. Got it.

MARIE
Read it aloud.

MALCOLM
Of course.

Malcolm reads the review:
MALCOLM (CONT'D)

“Imani” review: A cinematic tour-de-force takes aim at the twin horrors of healthcare and racism in Malcolm Ellis’ rebellious, jazzy directorial debut.

(and then)
I fucking hate her. Who wants to see that film?

MARIE
Cinematic tour de-force is all I heard.

MALCOLM
You didn’t hear Jazzy?

MARIE
No, I also heard Jazzy.

MALCOLM
“Like the opening steadicam shot –”
(he interrupts)
It’s a dolly you fucking retard.
(reading aloud)
“ – through the streets of Bed-Stuy, we know one thing about our slender protagonist Imani –”

MARIE
What a strange self-conscious thing to say?

Malcolm smiles at her.

MALCOLM
“– She marches to her own beat. She sets the tone, the atmosphere, the vibe. She may slink and slide through half-way houses and inpatient hospitals. But make no mistake, as the title suggests, this is her film, her world, her turf... Until it’s not.”

MARIE
(jazzy and sultry)
And if you didn’t know by the rhythm of our white girls words, y’all in for a black film!

Malcolm looks at Marie and both snap their fingers as they laugh.
MALCOLM
Okay then synopsis... Boring. Boring. Boring. The only reason you know it’s 2 perf 35 is because I said it at the premiere. Positive. Positive. Positive. “Leading to a harrowing and indelible scene where Imani overdoses at a Chinatown market. And that’s where Ellis’s true target becomes clear. This is a film about how the American healthcare system treats women of color.”
(to Marie)
And at this precise moment every black person who subscribes to the LA Times just said “then why the fuck do I need to see this film?”

He shakes his head -

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Just because the film doesn’t star anybody who looks like her doesn’t mean it’s political.

MARIE
What’s the problem with political?

MALCOLM
Political films are exhausting.

MARIE
You love political films.

MALCOLM
Not the ones the white girl from the LA Times calls political.

MARIE
I’m sure she likes Do the Right Thing. That’s a political film.

MALCOLM
Made at a time when politics weren’t cool. And that’s what made it fucking revolutionary.

He goes back to reading.
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
"When Imani is placed under a 5150
(a term for people held against
their will for being a danger to
themselves and others,) after a
harrowing scene with a pair of nail
scissors-

(a beat)
(he looks at her)
- she’s placed under the care of a
friendly doctor played by blah blah
blah, TV show fame... but Ellis
knows the waters he’s wading into
and carefully, brilliantly subverts
the white savior trope by..." jesus
fucking christ.

He’s annoyed as he keeps reading -

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
"Later when Imani finds herself
begging an ex-boyfriend for a fix,
Ellis uses tight lenses - “
(to himself)
It’s the same lens.
(beat)
"Claustrophobia... Blah blah blah -
One begins to question his
intention in reveling in the trauma
of his black female heroine for so
long. It’s a scene better implied
than depicted, if not for the
restraint of his own picture, than
merely to separate itself from an
exhaustive history that depicts
gendered violence against Women of
Color."

He reels back, completely taken off guard -

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Are you fucking kidding me?... And
then the next line...
(reads the next line)
"It’s a genuine masterwork."
(yelling out)
I can’t read this shit anymore,
it’s too fucking moronic. The fact
that the LA Times would employ such
a half-wit is beyond me. First she
says that I brilliantly subvert the
white savior trope? She is a
savior. She is trying to save her.
So how did I subvert it?
(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You know how... by being black. Because if I was white, she would have said I fell for the trope.
(...)
But because I’m a man she can question my intentions, saying I’m reveling in the trauma of a woman... Better implied than depicted. What? Cause Taylor has her shirt off.

MARIE
I’m sure she doesn’t think the nudity was necessary.

MALCOLM
Nothing is necessary. Movement. Blocking. Lighting. Film versus Digital. This cut. That cut. None of it is necessary. It’s all what you want.

MARIE
Of course. Of course.

MALCOLM
But my problem with her even before she wrote this dumbfuck review is the same after reading this dumbfuck review... She’s not looking at the film, the ideas within it, the emotions and the craft. Cinema doesn’t need to have a message, it needs to have a heart, an electricity. Idiots like this reduce everything to zeitgeist political messaging and hyperbole. Films shouldn’t tow a party line, they should be messy and fucking confounding. They should disturb you and move you - you should walk away wandering what it actually fucking means... Morons like this sap the world of its mystery, they want everything spelled out with ABC blocks. And they’re terrified to embrace anything potentially dangerous because they’re constantly trying to predict the culture.

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
This fucking bobblehead shouldn’t be writing for the LA Times, she should be holding smiling sun placards on the local news cause all she is is a fucking weatherman. A weatherwoman. whatever -

MARIE
Look Malcolm, she did call it a masterwork.

MALCOLM
I don’t give a fuck. Unlike her, at least I’m consistent. You can’t hang everything on identity. You can’t say, I subverted this trope because I’m black, but fell into this one because I’m a man. Identities are constantly shifting. Does the male gaze exist if the filmmaker’s gay? And not straight? And to what degree? What if they’re asexual? What if they’re transitioning and you don’t know it? We can only look back at things and wonder what it may mean... Why did Ben Hecht and Selznick, two fucking Jews put so much time into Gone With the Wind?

He flies off the handle -

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Still no one can explain to me why in the fuck Billy Wilder made The Spirit of St. Louis and lionized that Nazi bastard Lindbergh. Or why Ida Lupino loved film noir and violent male characters. And why Ed Wood wore panties and made B films about Space Aliens. Or why Elaine May was fascinated by emotionally stunted men? Did she see herself in them? Did she hate them in life but want to understand them through work? Is the fact that Jenkins isn’t gay the thing that made Moonlight a more universal story? Or was being gay, the reason Cukor empathized with women more than men? It’s all a fucking mystery. What drives an artist? What drives a filmmaker?

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Why did Pontecorvo, a rich Italian Jew feel such a kinship with Algerian Muslim Guerrilla fighters that he made *Battle of Algiers*?

(beat)
Who the fuck knows? Is the reason I shot that scene the way I did because I’m a man? Is it because I’m straight? Is it because I’m desensitized to violence? Or is it because I believe that when we witness trauma on screen, the audience should also feel that trauma? This is the mystery of art, of film, of what drives someone to make something or say something... This is the core central tenet of all art, a shared human experience... It’s a conjuring. A mystical fucking medium.

And then:

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Now you can criticize the whole system, which like every system, is white as fuck. And in the film business, male as fuck.

(beat)
My whole life I grew up saying where the fuck are black filmmakers? Cause I’m bored as shit watching white English boys overcome birth defects to save the Queen from Hitler.

(beat)
You know what, just ban every film with a fucking postscript and we’ll be good.

(beat)
But to write shit like this and box people in, because you don’t have the love of film, the mind to actually critique the form, the medium, the technique, you don’t have the words to describe the emotion, or too much fear that you’re not gonna get the clicks... Or too much fear that the mob is gonna turn on you... Fuck you. Fuck you for inhibiting the ability for artists to dream about what life might be like for someone else.

(beat)

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Even when they come up short. Even when they can do better. Fuck you. (...)
You’re the reason they keep making shit... Safe, stale, stagnant, turgid fucking shit. And it’s not gonna get any better until people start rebelling against this kind of purist, moralistic, academic, nonsense. In the same way Spike Lee rebelled against the white system when he made Do the Right Thing.
(beat)
Normally, I’d wish death upon someone like this... Someone who lacks the imagination like this... But instead I’ll just pray she gets carpal tunnel until her hands atrophy and cramp and she can’t write nonsensical garbage like this anymore...

A beat. Marie looks at him.

MARIE
So this is what happens when you get a good review?

He looks at her and starts laughing. And she does too. And then the two of them both start cracking up.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I think you’re delirious.

And they can’t stop laughing.

MARIE (CONT'D)
You’re a true insane person.

MALCOLM
I know. I know.

He sits down on the ground.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I’m just so fucking tired of fighting.

MARIE
Well, that was a fight you had entirely with yourself...

He smiles. As she climbs on top of him...
MARIE (CONT'D)
Cause trust me, I’m not siding with Karen from the LA Times.

He smiles.

MARIE (CONT'D)
You are so insufferable, you know that? You think you’re the first writer in the history of writing to have a problem with critics?

MALCOLM
Of course not.

MARIE
Or that anything you just said was original?

MALCOLM
Well, we do live in a different time.

MARIE
But it’s all the same bullshit. Every single fucking person who’s picked up a pen in the last ten billion years has had the same complaint. Critics. Professional fucking critics. People who box ‘em in. Who can’t see past their identity. You think Shaw didn’t hate being dismissed as a woman’s playwright?

MALCOLM
I’ve never read Shaw.

MARIE
Not the point.

MALCOLM
But fuck these lazy ass critics.

She looks at him, mocking him –

MARIE
If you didn’t like fighting, you wouldn’t be a filmmaker.

MALCOLM
That’s true.
MARIE
You’d be a painter. Scratch that - you’d make pottery for a living.

MALCOLM
No one makes pottery for a living.

MARIE
But you my friend are a filmmaker. And making films, moo-vies, is the most mainstream, fucking capitalistic art form on the planet.

(beat)
No matter how many times Taylor tells E! News that she’s a communist.

MALCOLM
Did she?

MARIE
Or a Maoist?

MALCOLM
C’mon.

MARIE
It was something -

MALCOLM
She might have talked about the redistribution of wealth and lack of social programs -

MARIE
- while selling a film?

MALCOLM
Well the mental health system is -

MARIE
- for fifteen dollars a ticket.

MALCOLM
I’m just saying...

MARIE
- on E! News.

MALCOLM
It was Entertainment Tonight.
MARIE

See!
(beat)
And you wonder why Karen from the
LA Times is talking about the
Mental Health System in her
review...

CLOSE ON MALCOLM as he realizes that’s where she got it from.

MALCOLM
(quietly)
Oh fuck you’re right.

MARIE
Right?

MALCOLM
You’re right.

MARIE
Right? This is the business of
film. No one in this game is a
radical.

MALCOLM
Taylor’s pretty radical.

MARIE
She just likes to play one on TV.

MALCOLM
What’s that mean?

MARIE
That you, Taylor, the white girl
from the LA Times, you’re all just
a bunch of hookers and hoes.

MALCOLM
I’m a ho?

MARIE
All of y’all hoes.

He cracks up.

MARIE (CONT’D)
That’s why you’re so hellbent on
sounding smart... You’re trying to
compensate for being a fucking ho.
(beat)
(MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)
Instead of just realizing this is how the fucking world of ho-dom turns. You got an actress in a two thousand dollar dress talking about socialism on the red carpet cause she’s afraid to admit that – guess what? She’s just an actor. No shame in that. But there she is selling... and you know who’s buying?
(beat)
The White Girl from the LA Times?
You know why? Cause you can’t just love a film today, you gotta be doing a public service. You gotta be championing voices that are gonna change the world. Cause if she’s not, why else is her mediocre ass writing for the LA Times. This is some only in America ho ass shit. You’re all standing on the same street corner selling your ass and talking about a fucking revolution.
(beat)
So guess what - you gotta great review with an asterisk.
(a beat)
Boo fucking hoo.

MALCOLM
I love you.

MARIE
Don’t manipulate me.

A long pause. He looks at her and smiles. She sits up on him.

MARIE (CONT'D)
You know what turns me on...?

She whispers in his ear.

MARIE (CONT'D)
When I win.

She looks at him. He smiles.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Why don’t we just get into bed?

MALCOLM
Oh yeah?
MARIE
Yeah. Cause despite how deeply obnoxious and thoroughly narcissistic you are, I would like, for my own pleasure only, to have sex.

He kisses her... As they make out.

It gets increasingly more passionate.

Malcolm pulls away.

MALCOLM
Ok. Listen. I love what’s happening right now.

He kisses her.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I’ve been waiting for this.

MARIE
What.

MALCOLM
I just - thank God.

He looks at her.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I’m gonna get up. I’m gonna walk from here to the bathroom -

MARIE
Okay.

MALCOLM
Cause I really have to pee.

MARIE
That’s fine.

MALCOLM
I know you say that... This is so nice. I’ve been waiting for this all night. I could cry just thinking about how happy I am to be just kissing your sweet little face instead of you -

MARIE
What?
MALCOLM
I want to keep it all positive. So
you just stay right here. Don’t
move. Don’t change.
(beat)
I’ll be right back.

He kisses her again, as we watch him get up and walk to the
bathroom. He’s holding his breath, he looks back at her and
smiles. She smiles at him and then he disappears into the
bathroom.

WE HOLD ON MARIE. Who watches him for a long beat.

As something crosses her mind, her smile slowly fades.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Malcolm washes his hands in the sink. A smile on his face. He
opens the door and walks out to the living room to find

Marie in the same position as when he left.

Except she no longer looks happy.

MARIE
Malcolm?

A beat.

MARIE (CONT'D)
If I ask you a question will you
promise to answer it without making
me feel like shit?

We watch all the life drain out of Malcolm.

MALCOLM
What?

MARIE
Why didn’t you cast me?

A longer beat.

He sighs, stretches his arms, puts them on his head.

MARIE (CONT'D)
When you first wrote it, you wrote
it for me.
MALCOLM
Ok. Is this what this whole thing is about tonight?

MARIE
No.

MALCOLM
It feels like it.

MARIE
It’s not.

A beat.

MARIE (CONT’D)
I just was sitting in the audience and watching the movie. And so much of it is true. Like a lot of it. Whether you admit it or not.

(beat)
And it’s really hard to explain how strange it is to watch things that happened to you, play out in a work of fiction. To watch an entire audience gasp and laugh and experience my experience but with someone else in the lead.

MALCOLM
But Marie, it’s not just your experience, it happened to the both of us. When you overdosed, I was with you. We were together in the market, in Chinatown. The experience doesn’t belong to you.

(beat)
It belongs to everyone who watched it happen.

MARIE
That’s not even the fucking point -

MALCOLM
Now you say that -

MARIE
But it isn’t. It’s not even what I was going to say.

MALCOLM
Then what were you going to say?
MARIE
That at one point this was
something that we were going to do
together. And something changed. I
don’t even remember what? Or how? I
just know that I was sitting in the
theater watching the film and I
thought...
(beat)
Wow... I didn’t mean to give all of
this away.

Malcolm looks at her -

MARIE (CONT'D)
And I don’t want to get into all
the reasons you cast Taylor.
(beat)
It’s just, you’re so good at
fighting... You fought to make this
film. To make it the right way.
(beat)
Why didn’t you fight for me?
Because I would have been good, I
would have. Maybe even better.

He shoots her a look of real anger.

MALCOLM
So there it is.

MARIE
(hesitant)
What?

MALCOLM
The fucking truth.

A beat.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Leave it to you to spend the entire
night burning everything to the
ground only to reveal at the end
it’s because you’re jealous.

MARIE
I’m not jealous.

MALCOLM
Bullshit.

MARIE
I’m not.
MALCOLM
Of course you are.

MARIE
The feeling I have isn’t petty,
Malcolm. It’s deeper than that.
It’s sadder than that. It’s loss.
It’s mourning.

MALCOLM
- Give me a break.

MARIE
It’s the knowledge that I can’t
tell my own story anymore. That I
can’t articulate all the chaos that
lives in here...
   (touched her chest)
   ... because you already did. Taylor
already did. And I know it’s not
solely mine. It happened to us. I
get that. But the difference is you
were able to process it, to take
all that darkness and transform it
into something good... Something
that moves people... I can’t. I’m
stuck with it.

Malcolm sits down. Head low. Taking it all in.

MALCOLM
Yeah.

MARIE
I just wish that was something we
could have done together.

A long beat.

MARIE (CONT’D)
And to be brutally honest. Yes. I
could have done it better. Because
I lived it. I experienced it. And
not only would I have been better.
I would have made your film better.

She gets up and goes to smoke a cigarette.

MALCOLM
You gave up acting. And when I
finally got the film financed, I
asked you to audition. You said yes
but you were reluctant.
   (MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT'D)
You’re talented, Marie. But that’s not enough. You have to want it.

MARIE
Trust me, Malcolm. I wanted this one.

MALCOLM
Bullshit, Marie. You used to be able to blame the material. Say the writer sucked. The director sucked. They want this kind of a girl. That kind of a girl. And for the first time in your life... You had a role that was perfect, because it was very fucking close to you. And so the only excuse you had was yourself... And you didn’t try. That’s the fucking harsh reality of all of this. That same instinct that exists in Imani, in you, that instinct to do drugs, to self-sabotage... That didn’t go away.

(beat)
If you weren’t brilliant you’d be a cliche. You’d be another beautiful girl who threw away her twenties because she’s too proud to commit. Too good to work hard. Too cool to do something beneath her. This city is littered with people like you... The only difference is you have a talent that’s rare and unique.

(beat)
But guess what, there’s nothing more pathetic than wasted talent.

MARIE
I didn’t try because you didn’t want me.

MALCOLM
Oh now you wanna play victim. Now you wanna say you felt like I didn’t want it so you didn’t try. You are fucking intolerable.

He walks back inside, seething with anger, and heads to the -

BAR - CONTINUOUS

As he picks up the liquor and pours another glass.
Marie starts yelling from off screen.

MARIE
You egotistical, narcissistic lying sack of fucking shit. You didn’t want me. Because if you did, that means you would have had to share the stage. You wouldn’t be the sole author of this film. It would’ve had a lineage, that extended beyond you and your brilliance. Because you know I would have said, this shit happened to me. This is real. And suddenly people would have said... “is it him or is it her that’s talented?”

MALCOLM
If that’s the story you want to tell yourself be my guest.

MARIE
It’s about ownership. It’s about the illusion you wanna create, that filmmaking isn’t a collaborative effort, it’s you, only you and everyone else is just following orders. Because if they knew it was authentic because of me, you couldn’t swing your dick around.

He leans against the bar and sips his drink.

MARIE (CONT'D)
That’s why you didn’t cast me. And Malcolm, that’s also why you didn’t thank me.

MALCOLM
Oh authenticity!

MARIE
Yep.

MALCOLM
Isn’t that the word of the day.

MARIE
Well, it’s all I heard tonight. The movie is so authentic. How did you tell this story so authentically? He’s such an authentic filmmaker.
MALCOLM
You know why people love that word?
Because they don’t know what makes
something good.

MARIE
I think authenticity is key.

MALCOLM
Of course you do. Because that’s
all you have to offer. That’s why
everyone always talks it today.
It’s the only word that makes
people who don’t know shit feel
like they just might have something
to offer. No one knows or cares
about film anymore. They have
nothing to say about film anymore
but they love to talk about
authenticity. They can’t tell you a
single thing about film. About
Citizen Kane or Best Years of Our
Lives but what’s authentic, oh
snap, they know that through and
through.

(beat)
Authenticity doesn’t matter! Your
experience doesn’t matter!
Recreating reality is not what
makes something interesting, it’s
about your interpretation of
reality. It’s about what you have
to say about reality. Or what you
can reveal about reality. It’s
about perspective. Your
perspective. Not just transcribing
a conversation or setting up a
camera and hitting record. That’s a
fucking youtube video. That’s a
confessional. A memoir. A story
we’ve seen and heard a thousand
times before. Your experience, your
life, your struggle doesn’t matter.

(beat)
You being a drug addict? Boring!
You overdosing? Not interesting!
It’s about transferring the
emotional experience of a moment
into something cinematic and
moving.

(beat)
Good luck, Marie.
He walks into the living room. HOLD ON: Marie as her eyes well up with tears.

She takes a deep breath, walks into the bathroom, and just as she’s about to crack emotionally. She closes the bathroom door shut.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

PUSH IN ON MALCOLM as he sits there sipping his drink.

And Marie walks in. She looks visibly distraught. There’s a frightening energy about her. She walks over to the block of knives on the counter and pulls out a BUTCHER KNIFE.

She holds it in her hand and paces.

ANGLE ON MALCOLM watching her, nervous.

MALCOLM
What are you doing?

But she doesn’t answer.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Marie, what the fuck are you doing?

She looks at him, tears streaming down her face.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Marie put the knife down.

She holds the knife out.

MARIE
I think about killing myself every day. Whether I’m clean or not clean, there’s a darkness that is here. In me. And no matter how much I want to, I don’t think I’m ever gonna solve it.

(beat)
I want to destroy every good thing that has ever happened to me.

(beat)
I’m a piece of shit. I’m a liar. I’ve lied to everyone in my life that I love. I’ve cheated on you. I’ve fucked your friends. Stolen from your mother. I’m a thief. I’m a whore.

(MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)
And you know what the sickest part is... I don’t mind. I fucking deserve it.

Malcolm looks at her, totally still, an emotion rising in him.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I’ve never been clean and I never plan on getting clean.

She looks at him.

MARIE (CONT'D)
So tell me where are the fucking pills?

A long beat. She sets down the knife. And curtsies. Before walking out.

He watches her.

Marie yells back at him.

MARIE (CONT'D)
And that Malcolm is what authenticity buys you.

She walks down the hall and slams the door to their bedroom.

ANGLE ON Malcolm, emotional and moved by her performance.

A long beat.

And then he puts his hands out, confused.

MALCOLM
Well shit? Why didn’t you do that when you auditioned?

He walks over and picks up the knife and slides it back into the block.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Malcolm comes back in to the bedroom -
MALCOLM
You are without a doubt, the most excruciating, difficult, stubbornly obnoxious human being I have ever met in my entire life and God do I love you.

Marie just looks at him.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
I go from wanting to tear your fucking head off one moment to wanting to kiss your stupid beautiful face a thousand times the next.

A beat.

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
Should we get married?

MARIE
I’m not in the mood.

MALCOLM
Seriously. I feel like there’s no way we’re not gonna get married and divorced at least a couple of times in our life.
(beat)
We should start now.

MARIE
No.

MALCOLM
I’m really turned on Marie.

MARIE
I’m not.

They look at each other. Finally she smiles first.

MALCOLM
I knew it you fucking psychopath.

He grabs Marie and throws her on the bed, playfully.
MALCOLM (CONT' D)
You caused all of this madness, just so you could do this scene and do it better than Taylor and seed doubt in my mind for the rest of my life, that my first film could have been better.

As he pins her arms back.

MARIE
Not true.

MALCOLM
Bullshit.
She kisses him back. And rolls over on top of him. Kissing down his chest and then she sits up. Reaches her hand down and unbuttons the top of his pants.

A beat.

MARIE
You know what’s interesting about the white girl from the LA Times calling out that scene?

Malcolm takes a deep breath.

MALCOLM
Who cares?

MARIE
It was my favorite scene in the script - and I know I’ve said this before - but it was my least favorite scene in the film. The reason being I always saw it differently.

MALCOLM
Can we talk about this later?

A beat.

MARIE
But I think it’s worth looking back and wondering why that is? Don’t you?

MALCOLM
No.
MARIE  
(smiles)  
Not to strip you of your mystery 
and your Mage-like powers but just 
out of curiosity. Out of the 
pursuit of, I don’t know, being a 
better fucking artist.

MALCOLM  
(playfully)  
You are exhausting. You think 
you’re gonna be this exhausting at 
seventy? Or will you have exhausted 
yourself.

MARIE  
Depends on where you are.

MALCOLM  
Living with the white girl from the 
LA Times because at least I can win 
an argument with her.

She laughs...

MARIE  
But just think about it? Why did I 
see that scene so differently than 
you?

MALCOLM  
I don’t know, how did you see the 
scene?

MARIE  
It was less graphic.

MALCOLM  
So what, he doesn’t attack Imani? 
It was on the page.

MARIE  
No. He attacks her, I just never 
imagined you’d shoot her holding 
the knife with her top off –

MALCOLM  
It’s not like a Russ Meyer movie –

MARIE  
I don’t know who that is but it 
made the subsequent attack more 
graphic.
MALCOLM
It is graphic.

MARIE
I guess, I saw it more from her perspective.

MALCOLM
If it was from Imani’s perspective, it would probably be even more graphic.

MARIE
Fine, perspective is the wrong word. I guess, I wished you focused less on the violence and more on the repercussions.

MALCOLM
Why?

MARIE
Because I think it would have been more impactful.

MALCOLM
To you.

MARIE
And oddly, Karen from the LA Times.

MALCOLM
But that’s not what she’s saying. If she said that, I could respect it. But instead of articulating that, she reduces it to a gender thing.

MARIE
I’m not defending her as a great thinker, I’m just wondering if you were a woman would you have shot the scene differently?

MALCOLM
Yes. I also would have shot the entire movie differently, because I wouldn’t be me. I would be a woman. I would have an entirely different sensibility. But that’s not how you analyze film intelligently...

(MORE)
MALCOLM (CONT’D)
By the six hundred trillion choices
not made, due to an intangible and
purely hypothetical assessment of
one’s identity... But rather, the
choices actually fucking made.

MARIE
Again, I am not defending her as a
great thinker...

MALCOLM
Good. Cause she’s not, she’s an
idiot.

MARIE
I’m just wondering if the scene
wouldn’t be a little better if you
had a dash of femininity in you.

MALCOLM
Who gives a fuck!

MARIE
I do. Because I have to live with
you. And it just made me wonder if
the problem Karen has with you as a
filmmaker is the same as the
problem I have with you, as a
partner.

He throws his hands, exasperated.

MALCOLM
Well all said and done, Karen
thinks I’m a tour-de-force.

MARIE
Oh now you like her review.

MALCOLM
A fucking masterwork! That’s what
you’re looking at.

MARIE
I know you’re joking. I’m not.

MALCOLM
Well, that’s unfortunate, Marie.
Because I can’t keep arguing with
you.

MARIE
Because the more I think about it,
her problem is my problem.
MALCOLM
Which is what?

MARIE
That I’m with you. I’m here. I haven’t walked out. And I’m not wondering what other movies are playing. I got you. I’m on your side... And then, you take it a little too far.

MALCOLM
C’mon...

MARIE
We’re in a fight. Maybe the worst fight we’ve ever had. But instead of making your point and saying, it’s not based on you, it’s an amalgamation of a bunch of people... You gotta revel in it, you gotta twist the knife, you gotta put images in my head that you know and I know, will never, ever, fucking leave me.

MALCOLM
What?

MARIE
Kiki from St Louis. Kiki from outside of St. Louis.

He laughs -

MALCOLM
I was angry!

MARIE
The Penthouse of a Marriot? A heart shaped bathtub? You fucking cheeseball?

A beat.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Ew. ew. Ewwwwwwwwww.

He looks at her, laughing.

MARIE (CONT'D)
You moron, you could have won without that.

(MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)
You could have won without twenty percent of what you said. But you
couldn’t help yourself. It’s just who you are.... Because if I was
ever fucked in the Penthouse Suite of a Marriot outside of St. Louis,
in or around a heart-shaped bathtub, then you best believe, I
would never utter a single word aloud about it. I would never tell
my friends, I’d never wield it as a weapon in a fight, because I would
know that it would hurt me way more than it’d hurt you...

She gets up and walks outside to smoke a cigarette.

EXT. BACKYARD – CONTINUOUS

MARIE
And it’s bummer... Cause I like to
have sex, Malcolm. I liked having
sex with you. In fact, until
fifteen minutes ago, it was an
aspect of our relationship that I
genuinely had no complaints about.

She lights it and begins to smoke -

MARIE (CONT'D)
It was also sort of my only
remaining vice, that and
cigarettes... but lo and behold,
you had to take it just a little
too far and obliterate any and all
joy there was to be found in
fucking you.

MALCOLM
We were in a fight! The gloves were off -

MARIE
But none of it supported your
argument! It didn’t. It just
grossed me out. It just made me go,
"I can’t believe I have unprotected
sex with this nasty-ass, grimy
dicked fucking brute, fucking
animal, fucking barn-yard animal."
That’s what you are. A fucking hog.
A shit where you eat, hog of a
human being.
He laughs.

MARIE (CONT'D)
Oh you think this is funny? You think I’m kidding. You think because WE HAD a common enemy in Karen from the LA Times, that we’re all good? Think again... She’s like my spiritual sister.

(beat)
Because we are both seeking refuge from your assaultive, battering ram of a personality. Because of your limitations as a partner and a filmmaker, we are ducking for cover. And we may not agree on a lot of things, but sis and I, we’re in a fucking foxhole.

MALCOLM
You are absolutely the last person to talk. You have dated, you have fucked some of the strangest people on planet earth. You have 1) no type, which is always a red flag. 2) no standards, which is also a red flag. And 3) no discretion, which means everyone who knows you knows you’re a red flag and talks about how you’re a red flag.

MARIE
Here’s the difference, I’m not luging my balls around this house bragging about the places they’ve been... I don’t need to know all the details. I don’t need to know all the names, the places, the moves, that brought you to my doorstep. You’re here. And I loved you unconditionally.

(beat)
Why?

(beat)
Because I value mystery. The unknown. It’s what supports the tension of a relationship, and forces us to be the best version of ourselves.

(beat)
Because of the “what if” aspect...? What if there’s someone in his life who loved him better? Was smarter? Was funnier?

(MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)
(beat)
Woke him up with a blowjob and breakfast in bed everyday?

She takes a long drag of her cigarette.

MARIE (CONT'D)
What if I’m not the best girlfriend he’s ever had. What if he dreams about someone else?
(beat)
Dreams about better conversations? And a girl with hips and an actual ass, instead of this string bean body... I know a little bit about your type, but not so much, that I’m paralyzed with insecurity. And doubt... So every single day when I wake up, when I talk to you, when we go out, when I put on a fucking “Gucci” dress and hold your hand I’m trying to be the best girlfriend you’ve ever had.

She takes another drag.

MARIE (CONT'D)
So when you tell me that who I’m up against, is Kiki from outside St. Louis in a heart-shaped bath, it makes me give... a lot less of a fuck.

Malcolm tries to say something but Marie put up her hand.

MARIE (CONT'D)
I’m not done.

She pulls out another cigarette and lights it off the cherry of the one she’s smoking.

MARIE (CONT'D)
But what it also makes me realize is that the reason you don’t get jealous is because you don’t value that mystery. But the reason you don’t value it, the reason you don’t wonder if you’re the best fuck I’ve ever had or the most caring person I’ve been with. Or the smartest, or the most talented, or the kindest...

(MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)
Is because it’s inconceivable to you, that anyone on this planet is more interesting than you...
(beat)
Your lack of curiosity is merely an extension of your narcissism. Your megalomania. Your egotistical fucking view of the world.
(beat)
And as a result of never doubting your worth, you also never think to yourself, “how can I be a better partner?”
(beat)
You’re good. You’re set. The man I’m looking at, is as good as he’s gonna get. This is it. You yelling at me in a fucking bathtub about how you’re gonna snap me like a twig, is the best and the worst of who you will be in this relationship.

She takes another drag.

MARIE (CONT'D)
And that’s why you can forget me in your speech. Because you’re not afraid that I’m gonna come home and say “you lost me tonight,” I’m done. I’m walking out. Enjoy a life of weak-ass, brittle ass fucking women you can maul into submission until one day you wake up and have nothing to say because you spent your whole life shouting down every one else. And in turn, bent reality to your will... The beautiful part of life, Malcolm, is it’s unpredictability... The fact that things just happen, people can say shit to you that you disagree with, that you can fight about, that you can lose things and people that matter to you. That’s what gives life its poignancy... The fact that you are not in control, that you can’t design it from scratch.
(beat)
And if you steamroll every single person in your midst, day in and day out, you’re gonna end up living in a fictional fucking reality. And you’re gonna run out of material. (MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)

(beat)
Look at me, I’m the last fucking person standing. I’m the last fucking person to say up your fucking game. And if not for me, for your work. Because being a human being, and living life, is the only thing that can inform you as a writer, as a director as someone whose wish it is to spend their life interpreting life.

(beat)
If this is a fucking movie, I’m your last hope. I’m the person you grab onto and hold onto for dear life. That’s what we’ve been for one another. That’s who I am for you and you’ve been for me. Since the day we met. Since the day I overdosed in the market. Since the day you drove me to rehab, and since the first time I read your script... about me... About our relationship. About how drugs were destroying my ability to love you and your ability to love me.

A long beat. She gets emotional.

MARIE (CONT'D)

All I wanted tonight was a thank you! That’s it. Thank you Marie. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for making my life better. Thank you for pulling your life together. Thank you for reading a hundred drafts and watching a hundred cuts. Thank you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you for your notes. Your patience. Thank you for your perspective. Your experience. Thank you for the authen-fucking-ticity you can bring to this film. Thank you. Thank you for being a drug addict. Thank you for being clean. Thank you for the dumb shit. For buying toilet paper. And milk. And organizing all of this with the movers. Thank you for dealing with shit I don’t want to think about. Thank you for making coffee in the morning. I love you, Marie. Thank you. Thank you for making me smile.

(MORE)
MARIE (CONT'D)
Thank you for not bitching about
the mediocre sex we had during
shooting AND editorial. Thank you.
Thank you for allowing me to lazily
put my penis in your vagina with
little to no regard for your
pleasure. Thank you. Thank you for
the good sex. The cuddles. For not
breaking up with me when I’m an
asshole. Thank you for doing the
laundry. For choosing this suit.
For making my ungrateful ass some
fucking mac and cheese tonight
AFTER I forgot to thank you. Thank
you. Thank you for the mistakes you
made. The life you bring. Your
charm. Your intelligence. Thank you
for getting over this. For moving
on. For being you. Thank you. Thank
you for all the things I forget to
thank you for. And thank you for
looking so goddamn sexy in that
dress tonight. I love you. You make
me a better partner. You make me
look good. Thank you for
understanding that I’m not always
great at expressing how I feel. I
know it comes out more in my work
than in life. Thank you. I hope you
can live with that. Thank you
because I know it doesn’t always
feel good. Thank you. I love you. I
know I’m emotionally obtuse but I’m
grateful you don’t hold it against
me. Thank you for assuming the
best. Thank you. From the bottom of
my heart, thank you. I will love
you always, Marie. My Marie. Thank
you.

And there’s silence. As they sit there. She finally puts out
her cigarette and gets up.

FROM BEHIND
As Marie walks into the house and toward the bedroom –
Malcolm sits there for a long beat. And then gets up as well.

CUT TO:
INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

As they both get ready for bed.

MAYBE WE HEAR SCORE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

This should be a series of shots. All of which play out over the course of about eight minutes.

We should see Marie brushing her teeth in the bathroom... RACK TO Malcolm as he sits down on the edge of the bed and takes off his shoes and socks. He doesn’t notice Marie looking.

ANGLE ON: Malcolm as he looks back at MARIE who’s now spitting out her toothpaste into the sink.

She washes her face.

He undresses.

Hangs up his pants and shirt.

She crawls into bed.

Looks at him from behind, and reaches out her hand toward his back. Going to put her hand on him but just as it nears he gets up, not noticing.

As Malcolm pees in the toilet, he looks toward Marie. Laying in her slip, with her back to us. He turns towards CAMERA. As we hold on her in the distance. She turns her head toward us, looking at him.

He reaches down to flush the toilet and by the time he turns back towards the bed, she’s looking away again.

And this happens again and again.

Two people consistently missing each other’s cues.

Simple fleeting moments, that disappear within seconds.

(I’M RELUCTANT TO WRITE THEM ALL DOWN BECAUSE WE NEED TO FIND THEM WITHIN THE SPACE WE’RE SHOOTING.)

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Until finally they’re laying in bed together.

Malcolm finally leans over and kisses her.
MALCOLM
I’m sorry, Marie.
(he kisses her)
Thank you.

A beat.

MARIE
You’re welcome.

She reaches over and turns out the light.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN
Malcolm wakes up to see that Marie is missing. He panics.
Starts to look around the house. But she’s gone.
In the bathroom.
Hallway.
Kitchen.
Living room.
She’s gone.

MALCOLM
Marie?
He’s yelling for her. Louder and louder.
And then eventually he sees her, in the distance, on the hill.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN
WIDE looking through the bedroom window as Malcolm walks towards her.
He meets her and they stand beside one another as their backs are turned to us. They look off in the distance.
Maybe he says something to her but we can’t hear what it is.

CUT TO: BLACK