

MALCOLM & MARIE

Written by

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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.

MALCOLM

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.

MALCOLM

(smiles)

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
Not in a bad way. A good way. A
respectful way. But it's true.
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.
Lets 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 lets 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.

6 Walks back to the bedroom and slams the door shut.

6

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 LEGOS!

(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.

7

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

7

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.

8 INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 8

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.

9 EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS 9

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.

10 INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 10

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.

12 INT. LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

12

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.

14 INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

14

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

15

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 -

16 INT. BEDROOM / BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

16

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

17

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

18

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)

I dunno, I oughtta ask Marie. Maybe Marie knows the answer. Where's Marie? I need Marie. That's a cut! Marie where are you? Did you see that performance? What do you think? You liked it. Same here.

(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

19

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.

20 The OWL HOOTS AGAIN. 20

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:

21 INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 21

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 -

23

And then he finds his wallet by the bar. He pulls out his credit cards -

23

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
saw 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 wondering 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...

(touches 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 cliché. 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.

26

EXT. BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

26

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 lugging 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:

27

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

27

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.)

28

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

28

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