MOTHERLESS BROOKLYN

Lionel & Laura - Sidewalk
EXT. BROOKLYN STREET - DAY

LIONEL and LAURA walk down the sidewalk.

LAURA
First they put up a notice says the house will be condemned. It’s not true, but that scares out about half, and they sell for cheap. Then they come in and take the nice old family homes, chop ‘em into four and rent em up. Folks who don’t leave, they harass -- turn the heat off, come in to do repairs and steal copper pipe instead. City sold property worth $15 million for $500,000 to take the “risk” of having to build the Federal projects. They haven’t even submitted plans, just milked it ‘til it really is a slum.

LIONEL
Slammer for Slum Lords, Bailey!
Ahh.

LAURA
Oh what, you’re one of those who thinks we’re just “agitating”? Making it up like some Negro propaganda conspiracy?

LIONEL
No, no. Look, look, look. I got a condition, okay? It makes me say funny things, but I’m not trying to be funny. I’m really not. I’m listening. Where’s everybody go?

LAURA
Mostly just disappear. Fade away. 200,000 in 2 years just from this part of Brooklyn. Mostly Negro. Latino.

LIONEL
Yeah, but Horowitz said they did it up in East Tremont too. Same thing.

LAURA
Yeah, they did it to a few Jews too but not systematic like this.

(MORE)
LAURA (CONT'D)
How many parks you think have been built in this city since he’s been Commissioner? 255. How many of those in Harlem, you think? One. You build a new beach for the “people”, but the ones with no cars -- the poor ones, the black and brown ones -- how are they going get to the parks and beaches? Public bus. Guess how high they just built the overpasses on the new parkway? One foot too low for a bus to clear.

LIONEL
C’mon...

LAURA
Look, forget whether it’s discrimination -- the Federal government and the City are being scammed! There’s supposed to be relocation services, company’s got a $2 million dollar contract to handle it, but nobody even answers the phone. Call the city, they say these folks are on the list for the new public housing, but then it never gets built.

LIONEL
You know more’n any secretary I ever met in my life.

LAURA
Secretary? Who told you that? I got a law degree, you know? I’ll pass the Bar first time I sit too.

LIONEL
Okay then, sorry.

LAURA
How are you gonna write about it all if you don’t even take a note?

LIONEL
What? “2 million for relocation services; bridges a foot too low for the buses; 1 out of 255 parks; $15 million in property for $500k; 200,000 people in Fort Greene alone”. That?

(MORE)
LIONEL (CONT'D)
I never forget anything, believe me. Like, not a single word.

She nods, impressed. He compulsively taps her on the shoulder repeatedly.

LIONEL (CONT'D)
I, I’m really sorry... I, I can’t help it.

LAURA
It’s okay. Just write about it, please? What happens to poor people in this city wasn’t news yesterday, and it won’t be tomorrow. But you’d think somebody’d care what happens to Brooklyn. It’s only the biggest city on Earth.

LIONEL
Where do you live?

LAURA
Harlem.

LIONEL
Hmm. This is me. You want me to give you a ride? C’mon, the trains’ll be mobbed. I’ll give you a ride. C’mon.

They get into the car. When Lionel starts the car, a jazz station plays.

LIONEL (CONT’D)
Bebop, Bailey in the Metropolitan BOPera House! Ahh, ugh. I’m Sorry.

LAURA
Don’t be sorry, it’s kinda funny.

LIONEL
Yeah. Well, hang around a little while and see what you think. IF.

LAURA
What is all that anyway?

LIONEL
I don’t know. I never got a name for it.

(MORE)
LIONEL (CONT'D)
It’s like a piece of my head broke off and got a life of its own and then just decided to keep joyriding me for kicks. Kicks and ticks! Licks and ticks! Sorry.

LAURA
It’s okay.

LIONEL
It’s like living with an anarchist, you know, but the funny thing is it also has to have everything in its right place, like things have to be ordered and lined up just right. Everything has to sound just right, or else it really puts me into knots until I fix it. Like, I’m talking to you right now, right? But that part of my head? It’s worrying. It’s worrying that the bills in my wallet aren’t lined up all in the right sequence and saying stop talking with this girl and deal with this! It’s not fair.

LAURA
Hey, we all got our daily battles, right?

LIONEL
Yeah, fair enough. Kiss her face all night, Bailey!

She laughs.

LIONEL (CONT’D)
Ugh. I really am sorry, I don’t mean nothing by it.

LAURA
It’s okay. Don’t be sorry. It’s okay.

They keep driving.