

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  
 BOPer 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.