

LOVE IS _____

Written by

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Network Draft
July 24, 2017

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FADE IN:

EXT. FRONT YARD - DAY (2027)

An ELDERLY JEWISH WOMAN, in her late 80s, with the spunk of her braless twenties, speaks directly into an iPhone camera.

PEARLY

Not rushing to have babies-- They listened to me and got to know each other first-- that's how they did it. Keep going, kiddos!! Oh, and I need your new address, you're missing some epic Christmas Cards.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY (2027)

A HANDSOME MAN, with signs of success and struggle sits next to his trendy twenty-something DAUGHTER.

SEAN

Man, I'm so happy for those two. It's been a journey.

MIA

Are you crying? Oh God, Daddy, you're just suppose to say Happy Anniversary. They're not dying.

He laughs a little, then pulls his daughter to him and kisses her temple.

INT. COFFEE HOUSE (INSOMNIA) - DAY (2027)

A YOUNG BARISTA, slash owner joyfully makes a latte.

BEN

I may only see one of them from time to time, but I always make two drinks-- a green tea for her and a black coffee for him. Relationship goals for sure.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY (2027)

A SEXY BOHEMIAN WOMAN of (75), who proves that black doesn't crack, sits in her reading nook.

CAROL

Numerologically speaking they were only guaranteed great sex, but never really to last thirty years-- two tops. Four if they had sex every day. But hey, their love defied the stars and the haters.

She laughs out joyfully at her use of the lingo.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY (2027)

A REGAL BLACK WOMAN, with locs arranges some flowers.

ANGELA

Peonies. It's always peonies-- her birthday, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, "Just because," "I miss you," "I'll be home soon," "Congratulations on your award," "Congratulations on your new show." And he always writes the note. I think that's evidence soulmates exist.

QUICK CUTS TO:

PEARLY

(blows kiss)
Happy Anniversary!

BEN

(toasts his coffee)
Happy Anniversary!

SEAN

Happy Anniversary!

MIA

We love you!

CAROL

Happy Thirtieth you two!

ANGELA

(offering peony arrangement to camera) Happy Anniversary!

CHYRON: 2027

INT. DOCUMENTING SET - DAY (2027)

The set is a three walled box of rich jewel toned teal blue. YASIR, a handsome man of sixty-two years is dressed in a grey casual James Perse ensemble. He's seated on a vintage leather sofa eating sunflower seeds.

YASIR

What the hell we doing again?

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

We're documenting your thirtieth anniversary--

YASIR

Who said it was our thirtieth? It's been thirty two years.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Nuri said it was thirty.

YASIR

She's getting senile in her old age.

NURI (O.S.)

Oh Goody, now I can ignore half of what you say.

NURI (56), enters the set and sits next to Yasir. Her vibe sparks, like her style. She too is in a grey monochromatic scheme, but with a pop of sparkle from her silver sequin pants.

NURI (CONT'D)

(to camera) I'm ready.

YASIR

What the hell you got on?

NURI

Clothes.

YASIR

Your name ain't Gladys Knight and I damn sure ain't no Pip. You have to change, we look too matchy.

NURI

Says the man who wore his Grown Man Garanimals.

This is Nuri and Yasir. A couple with the ease of years journeyed together. We just witnessed Nuri's first win.

YASIR
Nuri, for real.

NURI
No. (then) Did you notice the blue wall?

YASIR
Yeah. Nice touch.

NURI
(referring to the off-camera director) He's got a director's eye like you.

The documentarian tries to get them back on track.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)
So, how do you get to thirty years of a life together?

YASIR
Tequila and weed.

NURI
(laughs) Time out. No. We are doing the PG-13 version of our love story.

YASIR
Then woman, why the hell am I here?

NURI
Promise to behave and get through this.

YASIR
If this is a negotiation, we need to revisit me having my own cow.

NURI
(exasperated) Yasir, the city told you we're not zoned to have a cow.

YASIR
Oh. So, I can rescue a dog, but I can't rescue a cow?

Nuri gives up and just shakes her head.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)
Why do you want a cow--

NURI
Stop. No. Do not engage him.

YASIR
See, man it's about sovereignty...

Nuri throws her hands up and stands.

NURI
Fine, I'll change.

As she walks off set and Yasir grins with victory and pops a few pollyseeds, we:

FADE TO BLACK:

Over a 30 second card, we see the title **LOVE IS** _____ written over an outtake of Nuri and Yasir on set. In the blank area different descriptive words scroll through the space. Yasir fluffs out the back of her hair. Nuri picks lent out of his beard. And as the couple settles back into their seats, the scrolling words land on "Love is Nuri and Yasir."

Over this, we HEAR:

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)
How did you two meet?

FADE IN:

INT. DOCUMENTING SET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

We're back on set. Nuri is in a new outfit-- just as stylish, not as much sparkle. Yasir is by her side.

NURI
We met in nineteen, ninety-seven--

YASIR
It was ninety-six.

NURI
Well yeah, but we barely met then.

YASIR
Woman, did we meet in ninety-six or not?

NURI
Yeah, but that doesn't really count.

YASIR

Mark your calendars folks-- It was the year twenty-twenty-seven when all of a sudden facts were no longer truth.

Nuri stares Yasir down for a beat.

NURI

After all I do for you?

YASIR

Yeah, but you ain't done it in a while.

Nuri backs up and takes a good look at Yasir.

NURI

Oh, so you don't remember?

Yasir cracks a smile, then on a dime looks to camera:

YASIR

We met wherever and whenever the hell she said I met her.

NURI

Like I was saying...

WE CROSSFADE TO:

CHYRON: 1997

EXT. MELROSE AVE. - DAY (1997)

NURI (27), bops down the trendy street peering into the storefronts. Important note: her hair is very short and trendy. Think Halle Berry's infamous crop.

NURI (V.O.)

We met in January nineteen ninety-seven. Sunny. MLK weekend. I was shopping for furniture. Yasir and Sean were trolling for girls.

Nuri approaches two black men walking in her direction. We hear their conversation well before we can spot them on the street.

SEAN (PRE-LAP)

You were scaring them.

YASIR (PRE-LAP)

I did not scare them.

SEAN (PRE-LAP)
No, I saw the fear--

YASIR (PRE-LAP)
They were perplexed maybe.

SEAN (PRE-LAP)
It was fear.

YASIR (PRE-LAP)
Stupefied.

We now see them-- one is 33-year old YASIR, the other is his best friend, SEAN. Besides being the same age, they both are handsome and charming, but only one is in fashion, Yasir looks broke. It might be the fact that he is passing off underwear as shorts.

SEAN
They were terrified and I am stupefied. Not sure why you thought it was okay to walk out of the house like this.

YASIR
Well, look man it's your money. I appreciate it too. I do. But I don't need work out shorts when I got these. They're fine.

SEAN
They're not.

Just then, Nuri passes by and looks up catching Yasir's eye. They smile at each other as Nuri keeps walking past them down the street. The guys turn to admire her ass filling out her stretch pants.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Hey, that's that girl.

YASIR
What girl?

SEAN
It's 'light-skin, long curly hair.' From the coffee shop. She cut her hair and she's clearly doing squats now because... damn. (then, snapping fingers) Nuri. Her name's Nuri.

YASIR

Negro, you remember the name of a woman you never actually met?

We freeze on Yasir's perplexed face, as we hear:

NURI (PRE-LAP)

Now that I think about it, you are right--

DOCUSTYLE CUT TO:

INT. DOCUMENTING SET DAY (2027)

We're back with Nuri and Yasir.

NURI

We have to tell it from the beginning otherwise the "light-skin long curly hair" references make no sense.

YASIR

People don't believe fat meat is greasy until they get diabetes and high-blood pressure.

NURI

(laughing) We met for the first-first time at Insomnia Cafe. It was nineteen, ninety-six. Yasir was there with his best friend, Sean. Likely talking about women.

CUT TO:

CHYRON: 1996

INT. INSOMNIA CAFE - DAY (1996)

Yasir and Sean are mid-debate about Sean's latest big idea.

YASIR

Women's draws? The future?

SEAN

Alright, don't believe me. More millions for me.

YASIR

It's like saying men's socks are the next billion dollar business.

SEAN

Look, everybody's got to eat and so everybody's got to go to the bathroom, which is the opportune time to realize you need new underwear.

YASIR

I thought you brought me here to meet some girl you like.

SEAN

(checks his watch) She's usually here by now. I'm telling you she's beautiful-- Asia up top and Africa at the bottom.

YASIR

With light skin and long curly hair?

SEAN

I bought in, bruh. I bought into America's image of beauty.

YASIR

What? It was a sale? Buy the light skin get the curly hair for free.

SEAN

You understand.

Just then, Nuri walks in, weighed down with a computer bag and a purse and bushels of long curly hair.

SEAN (CONT'D)

Oh snap, there she is.

Nuri walks toward them... and then right past them.

YASIR

Nigga, she walked right past you.

SEAN

I said I wanted you to see her. I never said I knew her. Need a refill?

YASIR

Nah man, I need my hour back.

Sean shrugs and then crosses to the counter while Yasir sits there miffed.

Then he turns his attention to Nuri and watches her methodically pull out her "office." Yasir then crosses to Nuri, who is busy setting up her computer.

YASIR (CONT'D)

Hi.

NURI

Hi. Do you need to share the plug?

YASIR

No, I just came over to meet you.

NURI

(blushing) Oh. Ok.

YASIR

Yasir.

NURI

(all smiles) Nuri.

YASIR

Where are you from?

NURI

LA. (can't help herself) By way of Kansas City.

YASIR

So, you're from Kansas City?

NURI

(bright) And LA.

YASIR

If you say so.

NURI

I do say so.

He catches the attitude she just shot back. They both regroup, then:

NURI (CONT'D)

What about you? Where are you from?

YASIR

Bay area.

NURI

But you live here now?

YASIR

No, I just drove a friend down to do some California Dreamin'.

NURI

We come in by the boatloads.

YASIR

(re: her computer) You're a writer.

NURI

Yes. Although I'm not getting paid as-- But, yes. I am a writer.

That was more for herself. And he likes that.

YASIR

Practicing the power of positive thinking?

A connection.

NURI

Yes. You read that book?

YASIR

No, it's easier to pretend that dreaming is for losers.

They share a laugh.

NURI

What if you were a loser, what dream would you be chasing?

He hesitates.

NURI (CONT'D)

I'm a stranger. You can tell me the truth.

YASIR

Directing. Writing. Telling our stories.

She smiles.

NURI

Well, we have that in common.

YASIR

It was nice meeting you.

And just like that he walks away.

NURI

Oh ok... yeah, you too.

She is dumbstruck and looks around to see if anyone else saw his abrupt exit. The cafe is busy and unaffected. She returns to her work as Yasir crosses back to Sean who is busy applying chapstick.

YASIR

Her name is Nuri.

SEAN

How you spell that?

YASIR

Nigga, I don't know. Sound it out.

SEAN

Cool, Nur-ree. I'm ready to talk to her now. Odds are in my favor-- pretty women don't reject two men in a row. They don't want to come off like bitches.

We follow Sean as he follows Nuri out the door.

EXT. INSOMNIA CAFE - CONTINUOUS

When Sean gets outside there is no one in sight. She's gone. Because no one walks in LA she should be easy to spot. He looks left down the empty block; he looks right down the empty block. He looks left again, a HASIDIC JEW rounds the corner with his GRANDSONS.

SEAN

Excuse me, did you see a light-skin woman pass you with long curly hair?

GRANDSON

A what? A what skin?

SEAN

A light skin? A yellow-bone? A high-yella? A mulatto?

They all shake their heads "no." Sean rounds the corner to check that block. A FAMILY of HASIDIC JEWS are headed for him.

CUT TO:

INT. INSOMNIA CAFE - SAME TIME

Yasir is where we left him, sipping his coffee, when Sean re-enters.

SEAN
Yo, she disappeared.

YASIR
And just when you put on your 'seal
the deal lip gloss.'

We freeze on the moment as Yasir laughs at his friend who wipes his shiny lips.

DOCUSTYLE CUT TO:

INT. DOCUMENTING SET - A NEW DAY (2027)

Older Sean, who we saw at the open, is now in the hot seat.

SEAN
I didn't want Nuri anyway. Adding
her to my plate would have just
been more women, more problems.

After a beat, we hear Yasir LAUGHING off-camera.

SEAN (CONT'D)
Ok, fine. Maybe I regret putting
on my man lipstick that day. Can't
get those sixty seconds back.
Those sixty seconds changed the
course of my life, hell all of our
lives. (then) Don't include that
part. Spilled milk. Cut it out,
ok?

CUT TO:

INT. DOCUMENTING SET - NEW DAY (2027)

Yasir is alone on set, mid-thought.

YASIR
Look, what's for you, is for you.
God knew that if Sean got her
number that day, we wouldn't be
sitting here now. So, whether I
knew it or not, whether she knew it
or not, she was already mine.

DOCUMENTARIAN
Pre-destined, huh?

Yasir thinks for a minute... then sincerely offers:

YASIR
Nuri saved my life.

Is he welling up? Oh shoot, is a brother about to cry on camera? Yasir removes his glasses and the camera zooms in to catch the evidence... but that's when Nuri runs through the set screaming, never stopping.

NURI
Oh my God, YA! A bee! Ya, get it off me! It's a bee, it's a bee, it's a beeeeeeee!!!

DOCUMENTARIAN
Oh my God, is she allergic?

YASIR
No.

And just like that Yasir laughs, wipes his eyes and gets up to go help his wife.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCUMENTARY SET - MOMENTS LATER

Yasir and Nuri are back on set, getting settled to resume their interview. Nuri is back to her bubbly self.

NURI
Oh my goodness, he saved my life!

The irony is not lost on Yasir, who smiles to himself.

NURI (CONT'D)
Ok, so how do I look? Good?

YASIR
Great.

NURI
Okay, next question before he gets grumpy.

On the dichotomy of their love, we:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. DOCUMENTING SET - DAY (2027)

Nuri and Yasir are where we left them. Yasir checks his watch.

NURI

I think we found our way back to each other when...

YASIR

When I finally accepted that I wanted the dream.

NURI

Yeah, after he met me that first time, he actually read *The Power of Positive Thinking*.

YASIR

Then I moved to LA.

NURI

(with attitude) And in with Ruby.

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Who's that?

NURI

A mean girl ruled by jealousy and insecurity and pettiness, posing as a yoga instructor and supportive girlfriend.

YASIR

Who, had she not stayed on her path-

NURI

Of being hateful.

YASIR

--wouldn't have lead me to you.

NURI

Which is why we named our last three dogs Ruby. To remember we love the bitch.

CHYRON: 1997

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - DAY

In the middle of an unkempt one-bedroom Hollywood apartment, Yasir sits at the dining table/kitchen island/desk/laundry folding station typing on his IBM think pad; his trusty "Shaft" coffee mug by his side. RUBY (30), Yasir's on-and-off acerbic girlfriend, enters dressed in yoga gear. He can tell she's not in a good mood.

YASIR
Good morning.

RUBY
Hey.

A beat, then:

YASIR
I think I figured out the ending.

RUBY
I think I did too-- if you don't get a job soon, we're done.

There is stunned silence, then:

RUBY (CONT'D)
It's taken me three months to say that. I was brave today. Your turn.

YASIR
Ruby, I'm on my third interview at the bookstore.

RUBY
What happened to your lead on rewinding tapes at Blockbuster? You can't get that job?

YASIR
We're fine. I have two more unemployment checks coming, and I have these.

He hands her two concert tickets.

RUBY
Concert tickets?

YASIR
We need a night out.

RUBY
Please tell me if I rub these two tickets together, they will turn into the kind of paper my landlord accepts.

YASIR
Our landlord.

RUBY
My name is the only one on the lease.

YASIR
Stop trying to push me away, and let's celebrate our accomplishments.

RUBY
What have we done?

YASIR
We made it out of our hometown. You have a yoga business.

RUBY
I have business cards and leotards.

YASIR
Nothing happens overnight. I'm tired of you making me feel like I'm doing something wrong by going after what I want. I just figured out the ending to my third script and I want to celebrate that.

She studies the tickets for a while, then:

RUBY
Seriously, just scalp them, and give me the rent money instead.

Yasir takes a moment to digest his hurt feelings.

YASIR
If you want me to move out, say that. But if I'm going to be here, you're going to at least be nice to me.

He walks out of the room, leaving her to ponder this strained relationship, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STUDIO LOT - THE NEXT DAY

A red Jeep Wrangler with Missouri "Show Me State" plates drives up to the security gate. After a beat, the gate arm raises and the red Jeep drives through, as the SECURITY GUARD happily waves at Nuri, back with her short cropped hair.

NURI (PRE-LAP)

I'm sorry, I am educated. I am bringing a career-- not a job- to the table. Students loans are pretty much paid off. Homeowner. Why am I wrong if I require a brother to match my efforts as a prerequisite for marriage?

Her car passes by the long row of expensive cars and she turns to drive into the six-story parking deck.

MALE WRITER (PRE-LAP)

I'm saying he can have a house, a car, a career, all of that. I'm just saying he also happens to have some kids.

INT/EXT. PARKING DECK - CONTINUOUS

Nuri drives up the crowded parking structure... and up and up and up, until her Jeep reaches the top of the deck. She parks in the first available spot and hurries to gather her things, chirp her car and race to the stairwell.

NURI (PRE-LAP)

Now he has more than one? Nope. No. I don't want a man with kids. Kids equal debt. Kids equal less time for me...

EXT. STUDIO LOT - CONTINUOUS

The overhead shot catches Nuri running out of the parking structure and across the lot into an office building. Essentially she's an ant in the machine of Hollywood.

WOMAN WRITER (PRE-LAP)
Kids equals a baby mama who will
take her misery out on you.

We HEAR GROUP LAUGHTER.

CUT TO:

INT. MARVIN PRODUCTION OFFICE - NURI'S OFFICE

We find Nuri mid-conversation among her colleagues, crowded
in her office, debating the merits of dating men with kids.

NURI
Exactly. I'm not bringing baggage.
He can't bring any to the
relationship either-- not even a
doggy bag.

WOMAN WRITER
Because you might not like steak.

NURI
I don't like steak.

WOMAN WRITER
Yeah I'll take "I can do bad all by
myself," before I take on BeBe's
kids.

MALE WRITER
You can have sex all by yourself
too?

ANGELA
(wiggles her fingers) Happily.

They all CRACK UP. A younger, eager guy named WILL steps up.

WILL
Umm guys did you know that Norman
is in the writer's room?

MALE WRITER
Aww hell.

The group slightly panics, grabs their scripts and hustles
down the hall.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. MARVIN WRITER'S ROOM - DAY

This is the "think tank" for the debatable hit TV comedy, Marvin. The white-board clad room filled with junk food, used legal pads, nerf guns and a worn-out sofa is home to ten black writers-- eight men, two women. Nuri is chewing on her pen while one of the writers we saw earlier pitches to NORMAN (40), the boss. Think Craig Robinson.

MALE WRITER

So, after the store manager sees that Marvin marked felon on his job application, Marvin says: "That was research so I would know how to help prevent store theft by actually stealing a few things."

NORMAN

Ok, that's kinda of not funny. Next.

Norman shoots a nerf ball at that writer, further killing his spirit.

MALE WRITER 2

What if the store manager sees he marked felon and off their judgemental reaction Marvin says, "April Fools!" But it'll be March. And we can show that with a calendar on the wall or something.

NORMAN

Ummm that's a thinker. We'll lose the audience. What else we got?

Marvin shoots him with a nerf ball. While the other writers think hard, Nuri nervously speaks up:

NURI

Norman, what if we lost the prison joke?

NORMAN

So, now you want to cut jokes?

NURI

It's not just a joke. It's a choice that now defines our main character as a convict.

Norman taken aback, sits back in his seat and stares at Nuri for a moment, making everyone uncomfortable, especially Nuri.

NORMAN
Anybody else agree?

No one answers. Nuri is out there on there on her own.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
So, brothers ain't convicts now?

NURI
Not all.

NORMAN
Who in here been to jail?

There are awkward eye exchanges around the room, but no one raises their hand.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
Oh, so I'm the only one? (waves them off) Man, forget you higher-learning, two-parent home Cosby kids. (THEN) Alright, Nuri said my joke area was whack.

NURI
No, no, I didn't say that. I was just--

NORMAN
What joke replaces it, Nuri? I mean you do agree we should have some jokes in this little comedy we doing?

NURI
I don't have it right now, but--

NORMAN
Oh, and I don't have your check right now, but how about that?

NURI
This morning, Angela and I were saying-

ANGELA (32), the other woman writer in the room snaps back.

ANGELA
Angela who? Cause' Angela Robinson can speak for herself. And let the record show she currently has no comment.

NURI
Ok, I was just saying--

NORMAN
Absolutely nothing. If you're pointing out problems with no solution, you're a critic, not a writer.

NURI
April Fools!

Norman laughs, A COUPLE OF CRONY WRITERS laugh in allegiance.

NORMAN
That house you just bought flashed in front of your eyes, didn't it? (laughs) Fannie Mae called you and was like, "Get some clarity, Halle Barely."

Crony writers laugh again.

NORMAN (CONT'D)
Shoot, I'm popping all the yuk yuks up in here today. Makes me ask myself why I hired y'all.

His PAGER BEEPS. Norman checks it and then to the sober room:

NORMAN (CONT'D)
For real, for real, if my psychic comes up with better jokes, I'm firing everybody.

Norman exits, leaving the writers dejected. Angela turns to Nuri.

ANGELA
If I lose my job to Miss Cleo, you and me are going to fight. Our boss is the star's play cousin. This is nobody's dream job--

Just then the door opens and Angela flips her script:

ANGELA (CONT'D)
I love Marvin. He's a comedic genius.

They realize it's WILL (23), the writer's production assistant we saw earlier, entering with their lunch.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Boooooo, it's just Will. (THEN)
What took you so long today?

WILL
I got caught up in traffic.

ANGELA
It's LA. Like this script, your
excuses need a rewrite.

Will starts passing out their lunches.

WILL
Hey, I just heard we're getting MLK
weekend. Three days off.

MALE WRITER 3
I have a dream that one day you
will get my lunch order right.
Damn, man.

ANGELA
(re: her lunch) Oh my God, Will,
I said I wanted my salad tossed.

MALE WRITER 2
(laughs) She wants her salad
tossed.

ANGELA
I'll take a night of that too, but
right now I want my salad
professionally mixed.

NURI
My lunch is perfect. Thank you,
Will.

CUT TO:

INT. NURI'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Nuri and Will make out throughout her unfurnished house. The only thing in evidence is a sweet writer's desk and a chair, outfitted perfectly. They exit frame. After a moment, Nuri returns and takes a seat at her desk. She calls out to Will.

NURI
I promise I will only work two -
three hours tops.

She opens a to-go box and takes a bite of her food, then dials her cell phone.

NURI (CONT'D)
(into phone) Hey, it's Nuri.

ANGELA
(through the phone) Please God don't let this be a phone call to come into work.

NURI
No. And sorry to disturb you. I just need an honest answer and I know you will give it to me.

ANGELA
(through the phone) What's up?

NURI
Do you think I'm getting fired?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. ANGELA'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Angela is at her kitchen table in front of her computer dressed in a silk robe and a full face of makeup. Basically, not the woman we met earlier at work.

ANGELA
No, girl. I'm more likely to die alone. I've spent the last three hours trying to take the perfect picture of myself with this stupid web camera I spent way too much money on, so I can impress the serial killer I plan to meet on Match.com?

NURI
You're online dating?

ANGELA
You can't knock it out of the park if you don't swing.

Nuri doesn't respond.

ANGELA (CONT'D)
Hello? Hell-o?

NURI
I'm sorry I was judging you.

ANGELA
Yeah, but I'm not up worrying about my job.

NURI
Oh my God, don't say that.

ANGELA
Look, it's simple you got to be in the game to win it. So if you keep swinging, so will I.

NURI
I needed to hear that, thank you. Seriously.

ANGELA
We stay on the phone any longer, this could get weird.

Angela practices her sexy poses and the "beyond office" friends hang up. We stay with Nuri as she Ad-Libs new prison jokes.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOOKSTORE - EARLY MORNING

It's one of those large corporate behemoths that sells books, coffee and toys. Yasir waits outside of the bookstore. After a minute a BOOK STORE MANAGER unlocks the door.

BOOK STORE MANAGER
(mispronounces) Yasir?

YASIR
It's Yasir.

BOOK STORE MANAGER
Come on in.

INT. BOOKSTORE - MOMENTS LATER (1997)

They are seated near the front in the NEW RELEASES section. Yasir and the Manager are mid-interview.

BOOK STORE MANAGER
So, what are the last books you read?

YASIR
James Baldwin--

BOOK STORE MANAGER
I mean recent.

YASIR
Ummm I just like to--

BOOK STORE MANAGER
Did you read Harry Potter?

YASIR
Haven't gotten around to that--

BOOK STORE MANAGER
Tuesdays With Morrie?

YASIR
No.

BOOK STORE MANAGER
Anne Rice's, The Violin?

YASIR
I don't make reading about white
people a priority.

BOOK STORE MANAGER
They're vampires.

YASIR
Are they black?

BOOK STORE MANAGER
Hello The Color of Water? A
riveting book. Black author. James
McBride.

YASIR
Oh, The Color of Water: A Black
Man's Tribute To His White Mother?

BOOK STORE MANAGER
Well thank you for coming in so
early in the morning. You are
among several great candidates and
we will let you know soon.

YASIR
Is there anything else I can do to
let you know I'm capable of doing
the job?

BOOK STORE MANAGER
 Oh, we know you can do the job.
 It's stocking books. Today was
 more of a chemistry round. (then)
 You were great.

On this, we:

CUT TO:

INT. NURI'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT MORNING

Nuri is sound asleep. After a moment of watching her, a
 vivacious woman in her (40s), whispers gently into her ear.
 This is CAROL, Nuri's mom.

CAROL
 It's nice to see you finally moved
 something in here.

Nuri wakes up screaming, waking up Will.

NURI
 Mom?!

CAROL
 Well, I certainly picked the
 perfect mattress-- you two barely
 moved when we opened the door.

NURI
 We?

Pearly, a spunky Jewish woman in her (50s), steps forward.

PEARLY
 Hi, Nuri. I love your house.
 Congratulations. Where should I
 put this?

She holds out an orchid.

NURI
 Mom! What are you doing here?
 Will, get up.

WILL
 Ummm, I don't have on any clothes.

NURI
 (sotto) Why not?! All we did was
 dry hump.

WILL
That's all you did.

PEARLY
Maybe I should wait outside.

Pearly steps out the room.

CAROL
Look around Pearly and then we'll go. Make sure you see the garden in the back-- it's adorable.

Carol turns to face her daughter, who points her mother to turn back around. Will fishes for his underwear at the foot of the bed and gets dressed. Nuri comes around to face her mother.

NURI
Give me your key. Clearly you have abused your privileges.

CAROL
Oh, I'm just showing you off. Plus she's your neighbor, you need to know her. (THEN) What are you doing here anyway? Why aren't you at work?

NURI
It's MLK day.

CAROL
Oh, that's right. I should probably listen to a speech or hum 'We Shall Overcome.' Do we cook a roast?

NURI
Maybe just go to the parade.

CAROL
Oh God, no.

WILL
All clear.

Carol turns around with her gaze on Will. She's impressed.

CAROL
So, who are you?

NURI
Don't tell her anything.

WILL

Will. My name is Will. We work--

CAROL

Oh gosh, you're the young guy at her job who gets lunch for everybody?

WILL

Yes. I mean, I do other things--

CAROL

When's your birthday?

NURI

Mom?!

WILL

February ninth.

CAROL (CONT'D)

(to Nuri) Oh honey, he's an Aquarius. He's already in love with you. I told you no Aquarius men unless you're serious.

NURI

He's not in love with me.

WILL

Well, actually...

CAROL

(to Nuri) I told you this would happen.

NURI

(to Will) I told you not to fall in love with me!

CAROL

She's a Gemini.

WILL

Love is not something you can control.

CAROL

It's also something you will never have if you don't make room for it. Does he know about the other guys?

WILL

What?

NURI

Mom, I already gave him blue balls, give him a break.

CAROL (CONT'D)

His balls are not my concern dear,
and clearly they are not yours.

WILL

How many guys are there?

NURI

Two-- three total including you.
But I'm just dating-- I'm not
serious about any of you.

CAROL

So she doesn't end up like me. I've
been married four times and only
have heartbreak and debt to show
for it.

WILL

(to Nuri) Is that why you wouldn't
sleep with me, because you're
sleeping with those other dudes?

CAROL

No, no, no. What my daughter
doesn't owe you is an explanation.
This is her body. Her choices.

NURI

I only sleep with the one from New
York-- who I rarely see, minimizes
any interference with work.

CAROL

Smart.

WILL

But I thought--

CAROL

(to Will) Have you two ever gone
out on a proper date?

WILL

No. We just usually have take...
out. (then) Damn.

CAROL

Sweetheart, I suggest you call your
mother for further direction. (to
Nuri) In honor of Martin Luther
King's birthday, I want my daughter
to expand her dream to include a
life outside of work. Work is
making you emotionally unavailable,
which makes you look like a user.

(MORE)

CAROL (CONT'D)

My baby is not a user, she's just running a little scared. So, Mommy and Dr. King are going to help you. He died so you could have this day off from work. So, you can explore the rest of who you are. Explore your new neighborhood. See what else is out there.

NURI

I don't think that's why he died, Mom. I need to explore these joke pitches.

CAROL

I know you don't like this-- but this is what love looks like. Me making you look in the mirror. If you had one. You don't have any furniture in your house, Nuri! (she turns her daughter to face Will)
Lunch date with Will or a sofa sectional?

CUT TO:

EXT. MELROSE AVE. - FURNITURE STORE - A LITTLE LATER (DAY)

Through the window we see Nuri, by herself, in front of a pretty velvet pink sofa.

NURI

(giddy) I'll take it.

EXT. MELROSE AVE. - A LITTLE LATER (DAY)

Nuri exits the furniture store, happy and bopping down the trendy street peering into more storefronts. "NO DIGGITY" by Blackstreet blares out of her Walkman headphones.

SEAN (O.S.)

Yo, Ya, there goes that girl.

We turn around to see Sean and Yasir standing outside of a different store, looking at Nuri as she approaches. This is the moment we saw earlier in Act One, only this time we can see Sean has a baby girl, MIA, strapped to his chest in a Baby Bjorn. Nuri makes eye contact with Yasir. They smile at each other, but she keeps walking past them. ON THIS, WE:

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. FURNITURE STORE - MOMENTS LATER

From inside the store we can see Yasir and Sean looking through the window at Nuri.

CUT TO:

EXT. MELROSE AVE. - CONTINUOUS

SEAN

Yep, that's her. 'Light skinned and long curly hair' minus the long curly hair.

YASIR

You have to appreciate any woman brave enough to cut her hair, but when a light-skinned woman cuts her hair, it's basically a rejection of her light-skin privilege and a public pledge aligning her identity closer to her blackness.

SEAN

Or she may have just wanted a haircut. Mia, don't let these men put you in a box or play with your box.

YASIR

Come on, man.

SEAN

What? You got to let them know early otherwise she's gonna wind up like her mama.

Sean starts to walk on, but Yasir enters the store.

INT. FURNITURE STORE - CONTINUOUS

Yasir approaches Nuri, who is inspecting a piece of furniture.

YASIR

Hey. Nuri?

Nuri turns around, a bit thrown off by his familiarity.

NURI
Umm... Hi?

YASIR
We met a year ago.

She thinks he's cute, but really has no idea who he is.

NURI
Oh, yeah?

YASIR
Insomnia Cafe.

NURI
(lying and smiling) Oh, yeah.

YASIR
Yasir.

NURI
(He's cute) Hi.

YASIR
(She's cute) Hi.

Yasir notices her looking at Sean who has now entered the store with Baby Mia. She recognizes him and then takes another look at Yasir.

YASIR (CONT'D)
That's my friend, Sean.

NURI
Yeah, I see him at Insomnia a lot.

YASIR
What have you been up to?

NURI
I just bought a new house.

YASIR
Wow. Congratulations.

NURI
Thank you. Shopping for furniture.

YASIR
Cool. You still writing?

She takes a closer look at him, impressed he still remembers that about her.

NURI

Yeah. I'm a staff writer on that new TV show, Marvin.

YASIR

(jealous) I don't watch much TV.

NURI

(ouch) That's what people say when they don't like your TV show. It's ok. It's not for everyone.

YASIR

(fuck it, be yourself) Yeah, you're right, I don't like that show.
(then) You like jazz?

NURI

(lying) Uhh, yeah-- of course.

YASIR

I have two tickets to see Wynton Marsalis' Jazz Opera, Blood On The Fields. Would you like to go?

NURI

(this is a little fast) To the concert?

YASIR

(don't reject me) They have a great line up-- Cassandra Wilson--

NURI

Oh my God. I just got her new CD. How random is that?

He smiles, happy that sometimes things go your way. He looks her in the eye.

YASIR

I don't think it's random at all.

She blushes under his direct eye contact. She has to look away.

YASIR (CONT'D)

Here's my number. Call me soon so we can make arrangements.

She blushes again and he enjoys watching her. He hands the SALES CLERK back her pen.

YASIR (CONT'D)
 Have a nice day. I look forward to
 your call.

And with that he's gone. The sales clerk looks to Nuri.

NURI
 Was he wearing underwear?

SALES CLERK
 Yeah, I'm pretty sure those were
 Calvin's.

NURI
 He was too confident to be broke,
 right?

SALES CLERK
 Fingers crossed you landed a trust
 fund kid.

CUT TO:

EXT. MELROSE AVE. - SAME TIME

Yasir exits the store where Sean waits for him.

SEAN
 So, what are we telling the evil
 woman back home who's expecting you
 to give the magic beans back, and
 bring home the cow?

YASIR
 Tell her someone was finally nice
 to me.

Yasir walks off, leaving Sean to have a moment with Baby Mia.

SEAN
 See Baby, this is why you won't be
 dating any broke dudes. In fact
 we're about to go buy you a book.

Yasir doubles back and confronts Sean as if he accused him of
 something.

YASIR
 I have loaned her plenty of money.
 If it wasn't for me she wouldn't
 even be here. I encouraged her to
 move. I packed her up.

(MORE)

YASIR (CONT'D)

I drove her out here. When I need someone, where is she?

SEAN

Mia, this is what trifling Negroes look like when they feel guilty, and about to cheat on you.

YASIR

I understand why Ruby is frustrated with me. I'm frustrated with me.

SEAN

You're writing a bad R&B song, come on stop before I throw panties at you.

YASIR

That girl in there was broke and chasing a dream last year. Today she's working in Hollywood, and just bought a house and buying furniture. It can happen.

SEAN

(covers Baby Mia's ears) You know what you need. You need a girl between the ages of nineteen and twenty-two. They're still bubbly, they love when you guide their opinions and they consider Taco Bell dinner.

YASIR

I don't need another woman, I need a win. Because if something doesn't happen soon--

SEAN

You're going home to Mommy?

YASIR

I was going to posit it less pathetically than that, but basically yes.

A beat, then:

SEAN

Is Ruby worth it? The insults, the struggle, the pain. If not, move on so she can find her somebody, and you can find yours.

Just then Nuri exits the store and Yasir watches as she walks down the street. He never takes his eyes off of her.

YASIR
Is Candice worth it?

SEAN
Man, I don't know. I don't really know her, we just have a baby together.

Nuri disappears into another store.

YASIR
Welp, you're guaranteed to have a longer relationship than the rest of us out here trying to figure this shit out.

On this, we:

CUT TO:

INT. MARVIN WRITER'S ROOM - A FEW DAYS LATER

Nuri eats her lunch alone and flips through a script, taking notes. KEITH (28) pokes his head in the room. The young executive screams Perfect Guy-- College educated with a 401k, a VIP gym membership and a well-used Bible.

KEITH
There you are.

NURI
Hey. What are you doing over here, slumming with the serfs?

KEITH
Looking for you since I haven't seen you at church in weeks.

NURI
God knows my heart.

KEITH
Well look, good news, my frat brothers and their girls are all going skiing this weekend in Mammoth. There's an extra room for us. I know it's short notice, but I also know you've never been.

NURI

As long as I'm not assigned a script.

KEITH

That'll give me something to pray for.

NURI

Why would you pray for that? You don't want me to write a script? What do you know? What have you heard?

KEITH

Nothing. I just want you to go with me. That's all. As a representative of the network, we look forward to your first script.

NURI

You guys discuss me in your meetings?

KEITH

No more talk about work. Don't want anyone catching on to us. But I have something for you-- I'll have my assistant get it to you.

CUT TO:

INT. WRITERS ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

It's a short time later and Nuri is in her same seat, only this time talking with Angela.

ANGELA

No telling what that will be.

NURI

You don't think he would messenger over a ring, would he?

ANGELA

You think real highly of yourself.

NURI

I'm having that kind of week.

Will enters with all kinds of attitude and hands an envelope to Nuri.

WILL
You've got mail.

NURI
Thank you.

Angela picks up on the tense vibes between the two of them. Once Will exits, Angela looks to Nuri.

ANGELA
Was that sexual tension between you two?

NURI
No, just tension. (smacks her hand) I'm a bad kitty.

ANGELA
And you're going on a couples vacation with Keith?

NURI
(smacks her hand again) A really bad kitty.

ANGELA
And aren't you going to New York to see your boyfriend at the end of the month?

NURI
Ok, I'm a temptress. But I know Derrick has other girls out there. I'm just dating until he gets his shit together. (off Angela's judgemental reaction) I'm not having sex with all of them. And any hand jobs or dry humps are at least three days apart.

ANGELA
I should probably be taking notes.

NURI
Look, I'm not a ho, but I'm not going to be a hermit either.

ANGELA
This is not about me. I'm just trying to understand the guidelines of your ho harem.

NURI
 (opening the mail) Will is my TV-
 takeout-and-chill guy. Keith is my
 church-first-communion-brunch-guy.
 Derrick is my whirlwind-weekend-
 until-he's-my-hubby guy.

Nuri pulls out a clipping from the front page of the
 entertainment section. 'Wynton Marsalis' jazz opera sold
 out,' two concert tickets and a note... from Yasir.

NURI (CONT'D)
 (reading note) "Figured I missed
 your call. Look forward to seeing
 you Thursday." (THEN) Oh my God,
 then there's this guy.

ANGELA
 What?

NURI
 The super-romantic-new-guy. I
 forgot I said yes to going out with
 him.

ANGELA
 Who?

NURI
 (checks note) ...Yasir.

Angela snatches the note and newspaper clipping out of her
 hand.

ANGELA
 This negro sent you a press
 clipping (reading the newspaper)
 to 'the one-night only, sold out
 concert', a hand-written note and a
 ticket, no invoice?! Bitch, this
 is effort! This is the kind of
 effort Essence Magazine imagines
 for us... And you don't know his
 name?! And you forgot you had this
 incredible date?!

NURI
 (re: note) It's Yasir. And I'm
 very appreciative of the reminder.

ANGELA
 No. Throw him back. Enough
 already.

(MORE)

ANGELA (CONT'D)

(then) It's stingy women like you that ruin our men and make them run to white and Asian women. Which is exactly Will's next move-- he's definitely going Filipino. So, you're going to say sorry to him. And you're calling this guy right now and backing out.

NURI

Fine. I'll call him and see if he can meet me after work to get the ticket back. (then) You got me feeling like I should go to church on a Tuesday.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - LATER THAT DAY

Yasir and Sean walk into the apartment to find Ruby practicing Yoga. Ruby looks up, rolls her eyes and sighs.

YASIR

Oh, hey. I didn't think you'd be here.

RUBY

What? In my house?

Sean takes a step back to the door. Yasir cuts him a look.

YASIR (SUBTITLE)

Don't leave.

Sean rolls his eyes then is immediately distracted by Ruby's Yoga move.

SEAN (SUBTITLE)

You sure you want to let all that go?

Yasir looks at the move too; bottom lip a bit slack.

YASIR (SUBTITLE)

???

SEAN

So, what up, Ruby? (plops on the sofa) Or is it Shavasana?

RUBY

You two are some pervs-- just going to sit there and stare at my ass all day.

Yasir and Sean share a knowing look, then:

YASIR (SUBTITLE)

I'm sure.

SEAN (SUBTITLE)

Yeah it'll be a trade off, but get out.

Ruby gathers her mat and exits to the back of the apartment. After a beat, we HEAR the bedroom door shut.

SEAN (CONT'D)

I always thought staring was a compliment. Guess not.

Yasir grabs his house keys and heads out the door. Sean, left alone, shrugs and turns on the TV.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREET - NEXT

Yasir walks through the rough part of Hollywood smoking a cig.

INT. NURI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nuri sits at her desk with the phone receiver to her ear. We can hear the phone ring through the phone. After a minute, we faintly hear a MAN'S VOICE on the outgoing voice mail message then the ubiquitous BEEP.

NURI

Hey... It's me. Looking for you... to say Hi, how you doing? Didn't want anything... just to know how you doing. (then forcing a joke) And by me, I mean Nuri, just in case you've met a few other "Mes" out there in the NYC.

She hangs up. Sighs. Then she unfolds the flyer with Yasir's number on it.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREET - NIGHT

Yasir leans against a public telephone booth.

YASIR

Hello?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. BETTY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sitting on the edge of the bed at the far end of this cluttered shot-gun house, we see BETTY on the phone. Her hair is wrapped. Her TV is on. Her medicines and a liter of Pepsi litter her night stand. She holds the phone with her shoulder so she can pour her a large cup of ice-cold soda.

BETTY

So, who shot J.R.?

YASIR

How do you know something's wrong?

BETTY

Son, you're on a pay phone. I can hear the choppers, spot the PoPo and smell the stench of the homeless through the phone.

YASIR

What am I doing? For real. What am I doing out here?

Betty slurps her cold Pepsi. She bought herself some time because she knows she has to get this right.

YASIR (CONT'D)

Mom, for real?

BETTY

What boy, I'm thirsty. I understand you hanging on by a thread, but that don't stop me from being parched.

YASIR

(smiles a little) My bad.

BETTY

She getting tired of you?

YASIR

I know you told me so.

BETTY

Ah hell, my told you so is in the wind. You in it now.

YASIR

Tell me about it.

BETTY

Well hell, I don't know why she's rolling her eyes now and huffing and puffing and what not. She knew you were strange when she met you-- and that you like to go in a room cut off the lights and fold your legs up.

YASIR

It's called meditation, mom.

BETTY

It's called having nothing to do because you don't have a job.

YASIR

One day. I just found out I didn't get a job restocking books. I need one day before you come at me with the jokes.

BETTY

Word on the street is that you walking around town in your draws, and although that looks like depression, it tells me, and what it should tell you, is that you're definitely dedicated to your dream. But don't let your pipe slip out the bottom because then that's breaking the law.

He laughs, but he's crying. She knows it. Water gets in her eyes too.

BETTY (CONT'D)

You moved to LA after something. If it's her, make it right. If it's that movie making you been wanting to do, stay there and figure it out.

YASIR

But do you think I'm going to make it?

BETTY

I've told you, I've already seen it. I know you're going to get the Oscar, but it don't mean nothing if I'm the only one who believes it, baby.

YASIR

Thank you Mom.

BETTY

Now get off my phone. This is collect.

YASIR

I love you.

BETTY

I love you too. Bye.

They hang up. Yasir finds a genuine smile.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ruby is laying on the sofa watching TV. Yasir is in the kitchen trying to make a dent in the pile of dishes in the sink. The frustration he's sitting on is loud and clear as he knocks about in the kitchen. The noise disturbs Ruby.

RUBY (SUBTITLE)

What a fucking loser.

She then turns up the volume on the TV. He pauses to breath.

YASIR (SUBTITLE)

What a bitch.

As he returns to washing the dishes, the PHONE RINGS.

RUBY

Hello?

Ruby sits up.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Ummm, yes, hold on a minute.

Ruby calls out to Yasir.

RUBY (CONT'D)

It's for you. Nuri?

Awkwardness hangs in the air. Yasir takes the phone and crosses out of the room. Ruby's heart sinks a little.

INT. INSOMNIA CAFE - LATER THAT NIGHT

Yasir enters the crowded cafe and finds Nuri already seated at a table. She waves. He joins her.

NURI

Thanks for coming out.

YASIR

Thanks for getting me out of the house.

She slides the concert ticket across the table.

NURI

I was wrong to have accepted this. See, I have Daddy issues, and anytime a man offers me something nice I have a desperate reflex that says yes. But according to the LA Times you're supposed to take someone special... I don't qualify.

Yasir laughs.

YASIR

An in-person rejection wrapped in self-deprecating self-pity.

NURI

Excuse me, I shared a very vulnerable truth about me.

YASIR

This is America, home of divorce and unwed births. You're not alone.

NURI

I could have told you over the phone. I was trying to be nice.

Yasir snickers at the irony, then contemplates his next move.

YASIR

Are you interested in buying my two tickets?

NURI

I don't like jazz that much.

YASIR

Well, that's even more reason for you to go. Keep the ticket.

NURI

Well, who is going to be using the other ticket?

YASIR

Me.

She didn't see that coming. Although impressed...

NURI

Look--

YASIR

We don't have to go together.

NURI

But we will be sitting together.

YASIR

We don't have to talk. In fact people prefer you don't at a Pulitzer prize winning concert.

She laughs a little, but slides the ticket back toward him.

NURI

Please take your ticket back.

YASIR

I'm more interested in what will happen when I don't.

That catches Nuri's attention. They share some eye contact, she looks him over again, then:

NURI

Take it please. I feel bad. (then fishing) Maybe you can take your roommate?

He's impressed how she handled that.

YASIR

I already asked her. She doesn't want to go.

NURI

(she wasn't first choice) Oh.

YASIR

You have a beautiful name. What does it mean?

She laughs a little to cover the roller coaster ride this guy takes her on.

NURI

It means "the light." As in, see the light and take your ticket back. (he doesn't bite) My parents told me I'd never be lost if I allow the light within to guide me.

YASIR

My name is Yasir. It means rich.

NURI

You know all the right things to say.

YASIR

I chose it because I want to be rich in life, in knowledge, health, relationships.

NURI

I guess I went straight to money.

YASIR

I want some of that too.

They share a laugh.

NURI

I was born a Muslim, although after my parents' divorce, my mother journeyed us through all the religions.

YASIR

I was raised in the church. I converted five years ago.

NURI

I like going to church. The singing is nice and there's an open bar once a month.

YASIR

(please say no) You drink?

NURI
Is that a trick question?

YASIR
We all have our vices. I smoke.

NURI
(judgemental) You do?

YASIR
(is this the right answer?)
Sometimes.

NURI
(checks her watch) It's almost
ten. I better get going. Writers
are never really off the clock.

JUMPCUT TO:

INT. INSOMNIA - EVEN LATER

They're still together. She couldn't go home. In fact she's
now passionately talking with her hands, in mid-thought.

NURI
I threw the towel in-- I was like
forget it. I got my Teach for
America gig, but then I heard
myself telling these kids to follow
their dreams, but I wasn't
following mine. I quit the next
day, wrote a better script, stopped
going to the club and the network
parties and just wrote and wrote
and wrote and ate ramen.

A WORKER, who looks like the young barista slash owner we met
earlier, serves them food. He puts the bowl of soup in front
of Nuri and the turkey sandwich/soup combo in front of Yasir.

YASIR
I believe this is the lady's.

Yasir switches plates with Nuri. He smiles at her appetite.

NURI
Like I said, I ate a lot of ramen.

She then digs into her food with no concern of being judged.

NURI (CONT'D)

Basically, what I'm saying is you can't go back home. Stick it out. Get your scripts written. I'm happy to read them and pass them on to my agent. Don't give up. Hang in there.

YASIR

Thank you. (then) Oh hey, it's almost midnight. I know you need to get home to work.

Nuri has a moment of panic before:

NURI

Well, I also gotta eat.

Yasir is winning. He smiles because she chose to stay.

JUMPCUT TO:

INT. INSOMNIA CAFE - EVEN LATER STILL

Nuri and Yasir are now drinking coffee and tea.

NURI

I once met Muhammad Ali.

YASIR

Aww man, one of my greatest muses.

NURI

Yeah, there are pictures of me with him in Ebony Magazine. Well, me and a bunch of other kids, but I'm closest to him.

YASIR

Sly Stone used to baby sit me.

NURI

No way.

YASIR

Yeah, my mom used to open up for him, James Brown, and Ike and Tina.

NURI

Really? Wow. She still sing?

YASIR

No. (THEN) That stopped when she went to prison.

He's hoping she won't judge him.

NURI

Well, don't think you're special. Prison isn't particular to your family.

They share a small laugh.

NURI (CONT'D)

My father has been in and out since I was a little girl. (she tears up a bit) Oh wow, my eyes are sweating. (gathers herself) I've never told anyone that before.

YASIR

Hell, getting locked up is like Club Med for black people-- all inclusive package that includes round-trip transportation, meals, accommodations and a meditation room.

He makes her laugh. He enjoys watching her laugh. The worker stops by their table.

WORKER (BEN SR.)

Guys, it's four AM. Sorry, but we have to close.

The worker continues to put the chairs up. They sit there for a moment.

YASIR

I'm glad you came, even if it was just to reject me.

He goes to take the ticket and without thinking, she goes to grab the ticket back but instead grabs his hand. She allows her hand to rest on his. They let their eyes meet...

YASIR (CONT'D)

Life is funny. Here we are a year after we first met in this same cafe. I can't help but wonder what would our lives be like had we done this a year ago.

NURI

Maybe we weren't ready to do this a year ago.

They hold each other's gaze, then stand to exit. Right before Nuri gets to the door, Yasir intertwines his hand in hers. She loses her breath a little. His heart beats faster.

YASIR

Since the theme is a year from now, what if we had known each other a year already and it was time to say good bye, what would you say to me?

Nuri's eyes get wet and her voice cracks.

NURI

I can't say that.

YASIR

I think that you can and you should, because I feel the exact same way.

After a beat:

NURI

I would say that I love you.

YASIR

I love you too. So, let's cut out the bullshit and get on with living a life together.

NURI

Okay.

The worker opens the door.

WORKER (BEN SR.)

Here let me help you get on with that life.

They step outside and take that awkward beat before launching into that kiss they've been wanting to do all night. They kiss as the worker finishes cleaning up.

CUT TO:

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - SAME TIME

Yasir tip toes in and starts preparing the sofa to sleep on. Ruby enters wearing nothing but his old T-shirt-- a favorite.

RUBY

Hey.

YASIR

Hey. Sorry to wake you.

She watches him prepare the sofa. He looks happy.

RUBY

You can sleep with me if you want.

A beat, then--

YASIR

No, that's ok. Thank you.

RUBY

I only offered because you came in so late, it's almost time for me to get up anyway. You'd basically have the bed to yourself.

YASIR

I appreciate it, but I want to stay up and listen to some music anyway.

He slides on his headphones. Bootsy Collins' "I'D RATHER BE WITH YOU" bleeds out of the headphones. She says something but all he can see is her mouth moving and her attitude change. He slides off his headphones.

YASIR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, what did you say?

RUBY

I said, I hope Nuri doesn't mind that you have a kid, no job and no place to stay, because I think it's time you leave.

YASIR

Cool.

He puts the headphones back on, as we:

CUT TO:

INT. NURI'S HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

At the crack of dawn, at the first peak of the morning sun, Nuri wakes up with a big grin. She rifles through her CDs, puts in a disk and forwards it to song #6. She doesn't wait for the song to play before she goes to her kitchen and starts a pot of hot water for her morning tea. The music, Whitney Houston's "HOW WILL I KNOW?" pipes throughout her sun-filled home. Nuri in her t-shirt and socks slides and glides and dances over her hardwood floors and lands on her new blush pink velvet sofa. She is thrilled. After a beat, her TEA-KETTLE WHISTLE blows and it;

CROSSFADES TO:

INT. MARVIN SHOW SET - SHOE STORE - DAY

Nuri sits on stage with the other writers and Norman. They are watching the star of their show, MARVIN, perform a scene inside of a shoe store. He's being interviewed by a STORE_MANAGER.

STORE MANAGER

Says here you went to jail?

MARVIN

Oh yeah that's just the black man's boarding school. For the price of your freedom and self-respect you get room, board, an education, job training and the occasional knife fight to keep you sharp.

The studio audience laughs. Norman gives Nuri a "fist bump."

NORMAN

Way to get funny overnight,
Padawan.

NURI

Learning how to use my pain for
profit.

NORMAN

Oh snap, Padawan got a plethora of
overnight wit.

And just like that Nuri has her first work victory, we:

CUT TO:

INT. DOCUMENTING SET DAY - DAY (2027)

Back on set with Nuri and Yasir. Nuri looks to Yasir.

NURI

You never told me Ruby put you out
that night.

YASIR

Woman, you never told me you stole
my jokes.

NURI

Uh, excuse me brother, nothing
trumps me finding out you had a kid
long after I was already in love
you.

YASIR

Not my fault you fell for me
overnight.

NURI

Maybe that was your plan all along--

DOCUMENTARIAN (O.S.)

Do you guys need a five?

NURI

(reassure the magic for me) No, I
need some answers.

YASIR

(you know who you married) Well, if
you don't know by now.

Our couple sit there staring off in either direction
realizing that after thirty/thirty-two years they still have
some things to unpack. Yasir reaches to fluff out Nuri's
hair, she lets him. On this, we:

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW