

FATHER FIGURE
(tentative title)

by
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Inspired by OEDIPUS REX

First Draft

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1 INT. LOS ANGELES, THE JUNGLE - WINTER, 1987 - LIVING ROOM 1

We hear the cartoon TALE SPIN on the television in the background as we scan around the living room of Shana, 8, and Michelle's, 36, one-bedroom apartment on Coliseum and Santa Rosalia in Los Angeles. We see cheap trophies for drill team competitions and spelling bees unceremoniously placed on the stand surrounding the 13" color television. On the walls there are pictures of family, a 1970s brown and orange abstract canvas painting, mirrors and an overhanging spider lamp missing bulbs. The sun shines through the bay window where there's a worn down window seat cushion to sit and look outside. Michelle sits on the couch, Shana between her legs, brick-like remote control in hand, trying her hardest not to wince, but instead to focus on the screen as her mother parts her hair and scratches her scalp with the comb. Shana laughs at the television, then:

YOUNG SHANA

Ow, mommy!

CUT TO:

2 INT. LOS ANGELES, THE JUNGLE - WINTER, 1987 - KITCHEN 2

The cartoon's theme song, signifying the episode's end, is heard in the distance as RUNNING WATER muffles its clarity. We see SHANA'S TOES curled up on the tiled kitchen counter top as Shana lies on her back, her little girl arms clinging to a towel at her chest.

MICHELLE (V.O.)

Cover your eyes.

We scan up to see SHANA cover her big brown eyes with the towel, and MICHELLE getting in one last claw-like scrub under the shampoo suds before moving the faucet's nozzle directly over Shana's hair to rinse. The suds wash off to reveal SHANA'S HAIR, dark brown, thick and kinky. Michelle takes the towel from Shana and wraps Shana's head like the Queen of Sheba.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Hop down.

CUT TO:

3 INT. LOS ANGELES, THE JUNGLE - WINTER, 1987 - BATHROOM 3

Shana sits on a stool in front of the bathroom sink and mirror.

Michelle negotiates a blow dryer and comb as she blows out one section of Shana's hair, the rest divided unevenly and braided in old, slave-time braids. Her mother pulls so hard as she comb-dries that Shana's body ricochets back and forth to maintain balance.

CUT TO:

4 INT. LOS ANGELES, THE JUNGLE - WINTER, 1987 - KITCHEN 4

Shana sits in a old orange film director's chair stretching her eyes to the living room to catch a glimpse of GEM (a cartoon) as Michelle, sitting on a stool, hovers over her. CURLS OF SMOKE sizzle from the oil on Shana's straightened hair and Michelle gently blows the smoke away. Shana covers the ear closest to the hot comb activity with her hand.

MICHELLE

Stay still.

We hear the sizzle of Shana's hair burning straight and see the hot comb moving dangerously close to Shana's little hand covering her ear for protection. Michelle resets the hot comb over the flame on the stove and parts another section, applies oil, removes and blows the hot comb to ensure that it's not too hot.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Put your head back.

Michelle grabs the tiniest piece of 'baby hair' at Shana's temple to straighten. As she begins to comb, Shana moves to see the television.

YOUNG SHANA

Ahh!

MICHELLE

Shana!

YOUNG SHANA

It was hot.

MICHELLE

If you were still you wouldn't've got burnt.

YOUNG SHANA

I was still.

MICHELLE

Sit back. Let me see.

Michelle assesses the damage done to her child's forehead and applies oil to soothe the burn.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Now you have to wear bangs.

Shana starts to protest, but stops herself, knowing that her complaints won't alter her mother's hairstyle decision.. Shana salutes GEM with a glance and then settles back into the chair, with her hand over her ear, watching life outside of the kitchen window. A hummingbird touches down on a bird of paradise growing from a bush outside the window. Michelle continues to press her daughter's hair. The bird flies from Shana's view.

YOUNG SHANA

Can I wear the yellow dress?

MICHELLE

That's a summer dress, sweetie.

YOUNG SHANA

I can wear a sweater.

MICHELLE

We'll see.

MONTAGE: GETTING READY

Michelle rolling young Shana's hair in sponge rollers.

Michelle ironing young Shana's clothes.

Young Shana trying to put clothes on while watching television.

Michelle cooking beans and franks.

5 INT. LOS ANGELES, THE JUNGLE - WINTER, 1987 - LIVING ROOM 5

Michelle sits on the couch with a tuperware bowl full of beans and franks. Michelle changes the cartoon, now the TRANSFORMERS, to MURDER SHE WROTE. Young Shana reveals herself from the bedroom with hat and gloves, dressed virtually for Easter Sunday.

MICHELLE

My, my, my.

Shana saunters into the room like a model.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

Well, well, well. You didn't dress up that nice when you first met me.

YOUNG SHANA

Mom! I was a baby! Do I look pretty?

MICHELLE

You are pretty. Are you hungry? You should eat before you go.

YOUNG SHANA

He's gonna take me out to eat. He said on the phone.

MICHELLE

Oh. Okay. Where are you guys going?

YOUNG SHANA

McDonald's.

MICHELLE

(catching her disgust)
Okay.

Shana sits in the window seat of their living room looking out of the bay window onto a rather busy street for a residential area. Cars whiz by - Thunderbirds, old VW Bugs and Pintos - and she diligently looks on knowing that one of them will be her much anticipated 'date'.

MICHELLE (CONT'D)

A watched pot doesn't boil.

YOUNG SHANA

(beat)
He said 12 o'clock. What time is it now?

MICHELLE

You tell me.

Shana looks on the wall at the face of the clock and counts.

YOUNG SHANA

Five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three. Eleven twenty-three.

MICHELLE

So how many more minutes do you have to go?

YOUNG SHANA
School was yesterday.

MICHELLE
How can you be sure you didn't miss
him if you can't tell the time?

YOUNG SHANA
You could tell me.

Michelle gives young Shana a look that says, "That's not going to happen."

MICHELLE
I'm not going to always be around
to tell you. You got to do it
yourself.

Young Shana stares at the clock, figuring.

YOUNG SHANA
Thirty-seven minutes to go.

MICHELLE
Good. So that means you have just
enough time to straighten up your
room before you go, right?

YOUNG SHANA
I suppose so.

MICHELLE
You 'suppose so' do you?

Reluctantly, Shana leaves her purse and gloves and returns to her room. Michelle picks up the purse and looks inside, curious. Chapstick. An Eau 'd toilet in a much too grown up scent. A Los Angeles Dodgers baseball card. Lemonheads. Michelle looks up at the clock and then out of the window at the cars whizzing by with, 'You better show up,' written all over her face.

CUT TO:

6

INT. PS 188 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, MANHATTAN, WINTER 2008

6

SHANA, now 27, stares out of the classroom window at cars whizzing by coming off of FDR drive and the Brooklyn Bridge looming in the distance. STUDENTS sit busily at their desks. She looks up at the clock on the wall that reads 12:37pm.

SHANA
Okay class, what time is it?

STUDENTS
 (in unison)
 Lunch time!

SHANA
 That's right. Stack your pictures
 on the desk here and put all of the
 crayons in the bin. Ade, can I see
 you at the front of class, please.

ADE (8) approaches Shana.

ADE
 Yes, Miss Mitchell.

SHANA
 What happened to your math homework
 today?

ADE
 I forgot it.

SHANA
 That's an unacceptable excuse, Ade.
 It's your job to complete *and*
 return your homework -

ADE
 But I did it - !

SHANA
 It's not enough to complete the
 work, you have to turn it in in
 order to get credit. Do you
 understand?

He stands in silent defiance.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 Do you understand, Ade?

ADE
 Yes.

SHANA
 (dismissing him)
 I'll expect it, as well as
 tonight's homework, in the homework
 box tomorrow morning.

Ade goes to straighten his desk and grab his coat. Shana
 sighs.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 (playing the game)
 Alright everyone. Line up, in... -

The entire room of students freeze in anticipation of her command.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 Rainbow order! Rainbow order!
 Rainbow order today!

The children scramble. Two children in red coats start to argue over who stands first in line. Other children join the argument. ONE CHILD protests to Shana that she has been pushed by another student. The children's voices crescendo into momentary chaos.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 If you can hear my voice, clap
 once!

A few students clap.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 If you can hear my voice, clap
 twice.

A few more students clap.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 If you can hear my voice, clap three
 times.

All students clap, save Ade and BRITTANY (8). Ade is showing Brittany his PSP, a portable video game system.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 Ade!

Ade looks up.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 Bring that to me. Now.

ADE
 I'm puttin' it up.

SHANA
 Do you want to go to Ms. Meyer's
 office, again?

He is quiet.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Do you want to be written up again,
Ade?

ADE

No.

SHANA

Then give it to me. Now.

Ade complies.

SHANA (CONT'D)

(to Ade)

I am confiscating this. These are
not allowed in class. You'll get
it back when your parents come to
your parent teacher conference. Or
the end of the year. Which ever
comes first.

Shana places the PSP in her file cabinet, along with her
purse, and locks it.

ADE

(under his breath)

It's not fair. It's lunch time.

SHANA

I'm sorry, Ade, did you say you
wanted to spend lunch period in
principal Meyer's office for
bringing a video game to school?

ADE

No, ma'am.

SHANA

(to Ade)

That's what I thought.

The BELL rings.

SHANA (CONT'D)

(to the rest of the class)

We're late. See what happens? Do
you know what being late means? It
means less time for you to spend at
lunch.

The children moan and give looks of death to Ade.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 How many people want to go to
 lunch?

All the students raise their hands, Ade does as well, albeit slowly. A few raise both hands.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 Well, we can't go down to lunch
 unless we can accomplish this task
 as a team. How many people are
 ready to behave as a team?

All the children raise their hands.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 Everyone, silently, line up in
 rainbow order.

The students pseudo-silently arrange themselves, occasionally shushing each other. Shana walks them out of the classroom, single file, and down the stairs to the indoor cafeteria where they break for lunch. Shana greets school staff: THE CAFETERIA LADY, THE SECURITY GUARD. Once the students have been passed on to the proper supervising authorities, she walks toward the staircase to return to her classroom.

7 INT. P.S. 188 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MANHATTAN - STAIRCASE 7

Shana rounds the corner to the first landing where Ade stands facing Brittany with his pants unzipped and partially lowered showing her his penis.

ADE
 (to Brittany)
 Touch it.

Shana stares in horror.

SHANA
 Ade! Brittany!

The children stand like deer in the headlights.

CUT TO:

8 INT. P.S. 188 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MANHATTAN - MAIN OFFICE 8

PRINCIPAL MEYER, escorts both children out of her Principal's office to sit in the main office foyer. MS. JACOBS the office assistant, sits at her desk behind the counter.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

They are not to speak to one another, and they are not to move, Ms. Jacobs. If they disobey, please let me know immediately. Make arrangements for them to have lunch in detention with Mr. Reirden. When their parents call back, let me know as well.

MS. JACOBS

Will do. Have a seat Brittany. Ade, back so soon?

The children sit.

FADE TO:

9 INT. P.S. 188 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MANHATTAN - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE 9

Principal Meyer shuts the door and snickers. Shana lets out a nervous laugh of relief.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

It's not funny, but, my God! Last year, it was girls showing each other their underwear -

SHANA

When I was in Houston, it was middle schoolers having oral sex, stabbing each other -

PRINCIPAL MEYER

Out of control. Out of control.

SHANA

My mother used to say it's something in the water.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

In the water, in the chicken, it's in something.

Principal Meyer begins to eat casually.

SHANA

It *is* something.

PRINCIPAL MEYER
 (laughter subsiding)
 All the more reason for the
 students not to be left unattended.

Shana looks at Principal Meyer in dismay.

PRINCIPAL MEYER (CONT'D)
 (while chewing)
 Now, Ms. Thompson, how is it that
 Ade and Brittany ended up on that
 stair case landing alone?

SHANA
 They were not alone. They were -
 we were walking - I was escorting
 them to the cafeteria, they stayed
 behind -

PRINCIPAL MEYER
 Yes, but *how* were they able to stay
 behind? How was that possible?

SHANA
 (beat)
 I have 34 eight year olds. Thirty -
 four. I'm not going to see or
 notice every little thing -

PRINCIPAL MEYER
 But that's your job, Miss Mitchell.
 It's your job to notice when
 children are missing. They might
 not have broken that down to you in
 your one month Teach for America
 training, but you are legally
 responsible for the welfare of each
 of your children while they are
 under your supervision -

SHANA
 I am fully aware of the legal
 responsibilities of my position.

PRINCIPAL MEYER
 Then you should be equally aware
 that I have to document this.

Principal Meyer takes another bite and begins to look in her
 file cabinet for the appropriate claim forms.

PRINCIPAL MEYER (CONT'D)
 On my lunch break.

Shana is shocked.

SHANA

Principal Meyer -

PRINCIPAL MEYER

I have to, Shana. What if one of the students captured this incident on their cell phone and publishes it to You Tube. What if one of the other students witnessed the event and tells their parents and they make a big to-do about it? What if Brittany cries abuse and her parents decide to sue us?

SHANA

They won't.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

You don't know that.

SHANA

This...incidents like these happen all the time. They happen. Children explore their curiosities -

PRINCIPAL MEYER

Try telling that to a judge -

SHANA

And Ade, his behavioral misconduct has been uncontrollable. I've sent him for disciplinary action at least once a week. I have that documented.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

Miss Thompson, are you blaming the student?

SHANA

No. I'm pointing out that I've sought support with this situation, because Ade's behavior is disruptive to the learning environment of the other thirty-three children under my instruction.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

So you're blaming me?

SHANA

No, I'm saying, you've seen me, I have given him warnings, citations, detention -

PRINCIPAL MEYER

What happened in his parent-teacher conferences?

SHANA

Neither of the parents have bothered to show up to the conference. There's no support from the home. (beat) Suspend him.

Principal Meyer stops writing.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

I reserve suspension for violent crimes.

SHANA

Then what else can be done? What else am I supposed to do?

PRINCIPAL MEYER

(beat)

I'll have Ms. Jacobs call the parents into a principal's meeting. We'll meet, figure the best course of action, and go from there. In the mean time, I'm going to need you to fill this out, Miss Thompson, and I'd like for you to submit all of the "documentation" you have accumulated with respect to Ade's behavior.

Shana looks at the documents.

PRINCIPAL MEYER (CONT'D)

I have to document what happens.

Shana stares at Principal Meyer. Finally:

SHANA

I will get this back to you by morning.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

Thank you. I'll see you at the parent meetings.

Shana exits.

PRINCIPAL MEYER (CONT'D)

Lord, help us.

CUT TO:

10

INT. - SHANA'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM

10

Shana's messy bachelorette apartment. The television is on, clothes are thrown about, her desk is overflowing and cluttered, flowers sit, dead and brittle, in a vase whose water has evaporated long ago. There are old 70's and 80s photographs un-artistically framed and mounted on walls. There is evidence of an older woman underneath Shana's layer of single life. Formal china, a big Bible, old fashioned place mats. A record player and Ray Charles Albums dusted over. Shana sits, eating take-out with chopsticks, looking at her laptop. We see THE SCREEN with several windows open, mostly work related Word documents (lesson plans and 'documentation'), except for one: e-HARMONY.COM. She glances at the TIME on her cable box. She opens the e-Harmony window and logs on. She opens the profile of a very attractive professional man, late 20ish. She initiates a chat. The computer makes a SOUND to signify her online presence. She looks at the TIME. We hear the SOUND of her chat being responded to. It's e-Harmony man. He greets her.

SHANA

(typing)

Hi! Punctual. No. Right on time.

She presses 'enter' to post her reply and silently reads his response. Shana's eyes light up.

SHANA (CONT'D)

(typing)

Absolutely. I'd love to. It's time.

She presses 'enter' to post her reply. She bites her nails. She reads. She jumps up.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Yes!! Yes!!!

Excited she has a little party with the characters from LAW AND ORDER: SVU, they don't seem to notice. She returns to her laptop.

SHANA (CONT'D)

(typing calmly)

Next Friday's good. Where?

11

INT. P.S. 188 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MANHATTAN - SHANA'S
CLASSROOM

11

HAROLD (52), a beautiful, well groomed man dressed classically, defying age classification, sits in a much-too-small elementary school seat leaving his bent knees virtually in his chest. Ade plays in the 'play corner' with leggos at the other side of the classroom. We see the clock strike 3:16pm - sixteen minutes past the scheduled meeting time. Harold taps his fingers on the desk. Shana's eyes close in on his hands. Big. Clean. Beautiful. Harold wipes his face and rubs his eyes. No ring, but definitely an imprint where a ring used to be. Shana notices his nose. His mouth. His teeth. His tongue. Harold coughs and the spell is broken.

SHANA

(clearing her throat)

I'm not sure what's keeping Principal Meyer, it's strange of her not to be prompt, or not to call, but we'll just go ahead and get started, and she can jump in whenever she arrives. I know your time is precious.

HAROLD

I did leave work early.

SHANA

And I thank you for making the effort to attend this very important meeting about the progress of your son.

Shana hands Harold a series of documents.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Here are Ade's test and homework grades for you to peruse. If you notice, his test scores are on a steady decline in all subjects, and he's had quite a few unaccounted for assignments that he claims to have completed, but has never submitted. Here are his attendance records, and you'll notice, since October, he has had quite a few absences and truancies.

HAROLD

I am aware of his attendance. Things have been hectic - there have been a lot of changes -

SHANA

And in the last 60 days, Ade has also accumulated more and more detention time and citations for behavioral misconduct, the incident with Brittany being the most recent, and he continues to fail to return the letters we send home with him to have signed by you that outline the specifics of his infractions.

(showing him the documents)

Have you seen any of these citations?

Ade pretends not to hear.

HAROLD

(looking at Ade)

No.

SHANA

Mr. Mitchell, it is difficult for us to enforce Ade's compliance when you do not serve as an enforcer in the home. It is imperative that you maintain a high level of involvement in Ade's student life in these foundational years -

HAROLD

Hold on one second. Ms. Mitchell, I am very, very, involved in every aspect of my son's life. Let's make that very clear.

SHANA

I don't mean to offend you, Mr. Mitchell, but the many efforts I have made to connect with you and your wife regarding Ade -

HAROLD

Any efforts you made were superceded by the needs of my son and my dying wife. But now that she is gone, I'll be sure to respond to your notices at a speed that is to your satisfaction. Now if this what you called me away from my desk for -

Harold stands.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

- Ade!

Ade begins to put the leggos away. Shana stands.

SHANA

Mr. Mitchell. Wait. Wait. (beat)
I'm sorry. You have my condolences
regarding your wife.

Harold is stoic.

SHANA (CONT'D)

I had no idea, really - please -

Harold doesn't respond.

SHANA (CONT'D)

I know how difficult it must have
been to lose your wife. (beat)
Let's start again. Please.

Shana gestures for Harold to sit. He sits, knees to chest.
Shana sits. Ade notices, and takes the leggos back out.

SHANA (CONT'D)

I am sorry about your -

HAROLD

Thank you.

SHANA

I wished I had known that this -

HAROLD

It really isn't your concern, Miss
Mitchell. You are his teacher.
Teach him.

SHANA

Without having had that
communication from you, without
that context, it makes it difficult
for me to teach him. Last Friday's
incident with Brittany and all
those that preceded it take on a
much different meaning in this
context. Mr. Mitchell, without a
doubt, Ade is intelligent and more
than capable.

(MORE)

SHANA (CONT'D)

We call these meetings because we care about his current academic performance, because we want to honor his potential, not because we want to attack you or violate your privacy. I just don't want him to fall behind.

HAROLD

Is he in danger of falling behind?

SHANA

Yes. If he doesn't pass the state exams, if he doesn't bring up his grades, given the history of his behavior I'll be forced to recommend that he repeat the second grade.

HAROLD

What?

SHANA

I really don't have much say in the matter. There's a ruberix. I'd have to -

HAROLD

Okay. Okay. Just -

Harold looks at Ade playing. Ade continues to pretend not to hear.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

So, what do you recommend? What are our options?

SHANA

First, ensure that he completes and returns all missing and forthcoming assignments. And, if you can't help him study for tests, a tutor might be an order.

HAROLD

A tutor?

SHANA

He needs some one-on-one assistance.

Ade approaches.

ADE

Can I have my PSP back? You said
if my daddy ever showed up, I
could.

Harold gives Shana a look.

CUT TO:

12 INT. P.S. 188 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - TEACHERS LOUNGE - NEXT DAY

Early Friday morning, before school begins. MARIE (28) and Shana stand in the teacher's lounge making cups of coffee and preparing for a day of teaching (making copies, scavenging supplies, etc.).

MARIE

Hazel Shana Thompson!

SHANA

This man looked at me, sincerely,
longingly, and said, 'Would you be
willing?'

MARIE

You cannot tutor that boy.

SHANA

What was I going to say? No?

MARIE

Yes.

SHANA

He can't afford it -

MARIE

He can send his son to school in
\$200 shoes, but he can't afford
Kaplan?

SHANA

Ade does not wear \$200 shoes -

MARIE

What he can afford or not afford is
not your problem.

SHANA

I'm supposed to let him fail?

MARIE

Do you tutor all the kids you have
in danger of failing?

SHANA

I give help at lunch for -

MARIE

Do you go home and offer one-on-one
assistance to -

SHANA

He's the only kid I have in danger -

MARIE

It's a conflict of interest, Shana -

SHANA

Then you could tutor him for me -

MARIE

What do I look like teaching kids
off the clock?

SHANA

That's what I thought.

MARIE

What if Meyer finds out?

SHANA

How would she find that out, Marie?

Another teacher walks in. They quiet their conversation.
Shana and Marie busy themselves. The teacher exits.

MARIE

This boy must be blackmailing you -

SHANA

This boy is about to get me fired.
Both my warnings are because of him
-

MARIE

She gave you another warning 'cause
of -

SHANA

It's all about covering her own
ass. I should've just pretended I
didn't even see it.

MARIE

(gasping)

That would make you an irresponsible teacher.

SHANA

That would make me a teacher with one year to go before loan forgiveness.

MARIE

You're crazy.

SHANA

I'm just being real.

The ladies gather supplies in silence. Then:

MARIE

(beat)

What are you going to do, once you're done?

SHANA

Not be here.

MARIE

I know that's right.

SHANA

I'm ready to move on to the next phase. I want a family and a house. Dating is not fun to me. I'm ready.

MARIE

Trying to put down roots?

SHANA

Not this instant. Not here. Maybe if I go back to L.A. Depends on my mom.

MARIE

How is she?

SHANA

It is what it is.

They finish getting their mail, copies and supplies.

12A INT. P.S. 188 -- HALLWAY

12A

Shana and Marie exit the teacher's lounge and walk down the empty halls toward their classrooms.

SHANA

Actually I think he's a good kid.
I think the problem is that he
hasn't had the chance to really
grieve. The father, he looks like
one of those, "Real men don't cry,"
kind of men.

MARIE

(realizing)
Oh, okay. O-kay. Now it all makes
sense.

SHANA

What?

MARIE

Was he cute?

SHANA

Who?

MARIE

The father.

SHANA

He was - old - too old - old to
have an 8 year old son -

MARIE

Aw suckie, suckie -

SHANA

I mean he was attractive, but -

MARIE

Now I understand the tutoring and
whatnot. A single father -

SHANA

No, Marie, I don't think so -

MARIE

And an older man this time - done
with all the tail chasing, ready
for something real. He's probably
looking for a mother for his bad
ass son. Are you ready for that?

SHANA

First of all he's one of my parents
-

MARIE

Oh, so you see the conflict in
that, but you don't -

SHANA

Second of all, he's still very much
in love with his wife. You can see
it all over his face.

MARIE

Isn't she dead?

SHANA

Dead is in the eye of the beholder.

MARIE

I bet you he's all lonely. Tired
of holding it together for his son.
All he wants a shoulder to cry on
and a vagina to fall into -

SHANA

Not mine.

Marie cackles. They arrive at Marie's classroom.

MARIE

Do your thing, but I'm gonna tell
you right now: If people find out -
at least get the boy out of your
class. Be careful dating the
parents. Even the old ones come
with drama.

SHANA

He's not old.

MARIE

Mmmmmmmhmmmm.

SHANA

I'm just going to tutor the boy. I
don't need to prey on broken-
hearted widows. I have a rich
social life.

MARIE

Right.

FADE TO:

13 INT. - SHANA'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT

13

Shana looks through her closet to get ready for her date.

MONTAGE: GETTING READY (TAKE TWO)

Shana presses the baby hair at her temples.

Shana rolling her hair.

Shana ironing her clothes.

Shana dressing while watching television.

Shana looking at herself.

Shana changing into a better, "I-look-hot-but-I-didn't-even-try outfit".

Shana looks at the TIME

Shana putting on her make-up and perfume

Shana grabs her coat, scarf, hat & gloves and exits.

14 INT. NIGHT OF THE COOKERS - BROOKLYN, NY

14

Shana sits at the bar with patrons, and two empty cocktail glasses in front of her. The restaurant is bustling and the live jazz band is blaring over the conversations. Shana pulls out her Blackberry to check the time. Three minutes after 8pm. She clicks onto her e-Harmony page to cross reference all of the single looking guys with his photo, just in case. No matches. She looks out of the store front window onto the street. The cold wind blows and challenges pedestrians. It's a strange De Ja Vu moment from her looking out of the bay window, waiting for her father as a little girl. She checks the time again. 8:05 pm. He's late. The restaurant floor bubbles with new patrons. The jazz band has finished their set.

BARTENDER #1

Did you want a menu?

SHANA

No. No. I'm going to close up.
How much - ?

BARTENDER #1

26.

SHANA

Okay.

Shana pays the bartender \$30 and, just as she goes to exit, E HARMONY GUY walks through the front door of the restaurant. Though he doesn't look exactly the way he did in his profile picture, he's fine. He arrogantly grins from the side of his mouth to signify that he noticed her notice him. Shana walks toward him. He smiles, not so much at her as at his own reflection in her eyes. He opens his arms to embrace.

E HARMONY GUY

Hey.

Shana embraces him and whispers in his ear.

SHANA

You're late.

He begins to explain, but we cannot hear his words. We can only see his mouth as he whispers his blase reply to her accusation into her ear. Shana looks up to the ceiling and then to the door. They finish their embrace and e-Harmony guy approaches the hostess to secure a table. Shana puts on her coat and exits the restaurant. Shana flags an unmarked cab and is gone. E-Harmony guy turns around and is confused to see she is no where to be seen.

CUT TO:

15 INT. - SHANA'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT

15

Shana enters her apartment, kicks off her shoes, takes off her earrings, and unbuttons the top button on her pants. She takes down her hair, grabs a bag of chips and sits before her laptop formulating things to type to e-harmony guy. She turns on her computer, opens the web browser, goes to e-harmony and toys with cancelling her subscription. Instead she changes her e-Harmony profile: she extends the ages of men she's interested in from 26-32 to 37-45. Back to the drawing board.

CUT TO:

16 INT. P.S. 188 -- SHANA'S CLASSROOM

16

Monday. It's snowing. Shana looks at the TIME.

SHANA

Okay, class, what time is it?

STUDENTS

Clean up time!

SHANA

That's right. Put the markers and crayons in the bin and line up with your belongings ...

All the students freeze in anticipation of her instructions.

SHANA (CONT'D)

- According to your birthday month, in reverse order! December at the front of the line and January at the back.

The students line up chaotically, the BELL rings and she escorts them down the stairs, being careful not to let any of them drift off. They arrive at the indoor Gymnasium where the children break for after school activities, or to parents/caregivers waiting to retrieve them. She greets school staff: THE CAFETERIA LADY, THE SECURITY GUARD.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Ade!

Ade, playing with his buddies, looks up, rolls his eyes, and crosses to Shana.

ADE

I wasn't doing nothin'.

SHANA

I didn't say you were. You ready?

ADE

For what?

SHANA

We start tutoring today.

ADE

But it's snowing. We have to start tutoring another day.

SHANA

Tutoring starts today. Your father should be here in 3 minutes.

ADE

Oh. (beat) You're coming home with me?

SHANA

Yep.

ADE

Oh.

CUT TO:

17 EXT. P.S. 188 -- SCHOOL STEPS

17

The front entrance of the school is bustling with children joyfully leaving, parents, guardians, and grandmothers retrieving young students. In the neighboring playground, bundled up children try to get in one last bout of fun (snowball throwing) before they have to depart. A bunch of much too young looking kids wait, bundled up so much that only their eyes show, at the bus stop. Traffic zooms to and from the FDR just one block away, much too fast for the day's precipitation. The Brooklyn Bridge looms in the near distance. Harold stands beside his silver Saturn SUV. He is illegally parked. Some other faculty members exit the school entrance just as Harold begins to flag Shana and Ade down, waving his arms. Shana notices the teachers, but tries not to make eye contact.

HAROLD

Ade! Ade!! Miss -

SHANA

Coming!

Shana walks over to the car with Ade, trying to stay out of the sightline of the faculty members.

SHANA (CONT'D)

I didn't realize you'd be waiting
right in front -

HAROLD

I didn't want to miss you.
(to Ade)
Let Miss Thompson sit in the front.

ADE

But -

SHANA

I can sit in the back -

HAROLD

No, no. Ladies sit in the front.

Ade sucks his teeth. Harold holds the door open for Shana and she gets in. Harold takes the driver seat.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
All buckled up?

ADE
Yeah.

SHANA
Yes.

HAROLD
Let's roll.

Harold pulls the car away from the curb and Shana looks to see if anyone noticed her get into the car. Maria, in the faculty lounge, catches a glimpse from the window. She shakes her head.

18 INT. HAROLD'S BROWNSTONE, BROOKLYN - FOYER

18

Keys jiggle on the outside of the door. The door opens. Ade, Harold and Shana enter the foyer.

HAROLD
Home sweet home.

ADE
I got to go, I got to go, I got to go -

HAROLD
Shoes, shoes!

Ade drops his book bag, kicks off his snow boots and runs past them to the bathroom. Harold and Shana remove their shoes.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
This is it. Our humble abode.

SHANA
It's beautiful.

HAROLD
Thank you. This was our dream house.

SHANA
A fantasy for some.

HAROLD

Here, let me help you.

Harold takes Shana's bag and escorts her to the kitchen. Passing by the parlor room we see Afrocentric abstracts, a piano, an entertainment center and sectional couch. The room looks typically bachelor messy. There is a PAINTING of a photograph of Harold, his wife and a much younger Ade - a happy family - hanging on the wall. They walk past the bathroom and you can hear the WATER RUNNING from the toilet flush and faucet.

19

INT. HAROLD'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN

19

HAROLD

And this is it. Study central.
Did you want something to drink or
snack on? I was going to order
Thai for dinner tonight.

He offers her the Thai menu.

SHANA

Oh, no, I'm fine, thank you. I
brought my own.

Shana shows him her tuperware container, the same kind we see Michelle eat from at the beginning of the film.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Water would be nice.

HAROLD

No problem.

Harold turns to get a glass. Shana cracks open the container.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

Smells good.

SHANA

Left overs.

Harold turns to pour the water. Shana checks out his body. Up and down, and back up again. Who says the body declines with age? My God. Harold turns and gives her the glass.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Thanks.

HAROLD

So, what's the subject for the day?

SHANA

Well, it's math on Monday's and Wednesdays. Reading and language skills on Thursdays. So, we're doing multiplication today.

HAROLD

Ah, I remember my multiplication days. Those tables, do they still use those?

SHANA

We do. We do.

Harold hands her the glass.

HAROLD

I just want to say thank you, again, Miss Mitchell, for your willingness. I know we didn't start off on the good foot. But, it's very important to me that Ade stay on track, despite -

SHANA

No problem. Given the circumstances, I'm glad that I can help. I can imagine what it must be like for him - for you both.

HAROLD

Yeah.

SHANA

And, please, call me Shana.

Ade enters. He runs to the refrigerator and grabs a Capri Sun.

HAROLD

Shana.

ADE

Shana.

HAROLD

No, she's Miss Mitchell to you.

ADE

Even at home?

HAROLD

Yes.

Ade grabs his bookbag and sits at the kitchen table.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

You ready.

ADE

Yeah.

HAROLD

Alright. I'll leave you two alone.
I'll be in the front room if you
need me.

Harold exits. Ade is less than thrilled, and non-verbally defiant.

SHANA

Alright. I have a game for you.
Let's play a game.

ADE

I thought we were going to study.

SHANA

We're going to use the game to
study.

Shana whips out a deck of cards and removes the face cards, save the aces.

SHANA (CONT'D)

We're going to see how fast you can
do your 1 multiplication tables.

She places an ace card onto the table.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Whenever I flip a card over on this
deck, you shout out the answer to
one times whatever that number is
on the card. You have to keep up
with my pace, so if I go slow, you
go slow. If I go fast, you go
fast. If you keep up, you win. I
you don't I win. Ready?

ADE

That's a ace.

SHANA

For us it's a one.

ADE
 Okay. Wait. If I keep up I beat
 you?

SHANA
 Yep.

ADE
 Are you going to go really fast?

SHANA
 You have to play to see. Ready?

ADE
 Okay.

They start to play the multiplication game, and once Ade gets
 the hang of it they go very fast. Shana stops.

SHANA
 You were going faster than I could
 go!

ADE
 I know.

SHANA
 Okay. Now that you've got the hang
 of it, lets try the 2s.

Shana picks up the ace and places a 2 in its place. She
 shuffles the cards. She places the entire deck in front of
 Ade.

SHANA (CONT'D)
 Cut 'em.

ADE
 What?

SHANA
 When you play cards the dealer
 always has to let another player
 cut the cards, to make sure nobody
 cheats. Those are the rules.

ADE
 Oh.

SHANA
 Just pick up as many of them as you
 like and put them here.

Ade cuts the cards. Shana reassembles the deck.

ADE
 (after a moment)
 I think my dad cheats.

SHANA
 He does?

ADE
 Mmmmmhummm.

Notes from the piano in the parlor pour into the kitchen.

SHANA
 Your dad plays piano?

ADE
 He's learning.

SHANA
 He's pretty good.

ADE
 He's just practicing.

SHANA
 Alright. Here we go.

MONTAGE: Family Frustration

Ade fumbles to maintain his pace in the game with his 2 multiplication tables.

Harold fumbles to follow the music as he plays the piano. Harold gets frustrated that he can't make his fingers obey. His frustration is out of proportion with the activity. He starts to play the keys roughly.

Ade gets frustrated. Shana slows her speed, but Ade still can't keep up. Ade gets angry and pushes the pile of cards onto the floor. Ade starts to throw a tantrum unfit for the circumstance. He starts to pull at his own ears, as though he was trying to pull them off.

ADE
 Ahhhhuggghhh!

Harold stops playing and hurriedly goes to the kitchen.

SHANA
 Ade -

ADE
 No!

SHANA

Ade, stop it, listen -

ADE

Don't talk to me! Ahhhuggggghhhh!

SHANA

Ade -

ADE

Don't tell me what to do, you're
not my mom!

Ade goes under the table and sits with his back facing the kitchen door. Shana goes under the table after him. Harold enters the kitchen's threshold. He starts to interject, but stops himself.

SHANA

Ade.

Ade cries vocally, in irreconcilable frustration, but doesn't reply. Harold restrains himself from interrupting.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Ade, what happened? Tell me what happened.

ADE

(after a while)

You were going too fast.

SHANA

Okay. I'm sorry for going too fast. Okay?

Ade continues to cry.

ADE

But why did you start screaming and crying?

ADE (CONT'D)

(beat)

I don't know.

SHANA

You were doing such a great job. It was your first time playing, and you were learning. Sometimes we don't get new things really fast, but with practice, we can.

(MORE)

SHANA (CONT'D)

Remember when your father started to play the piano, what he sounded like?

ADE

Yeah.

SHANA

And now he sounds better, right?

ADE

No.

Harold laughs silently.

SHANA

Okay. But you know, that if he keeps practicing, he'll sound better, right?

ADE

(beat)

My mom sounded better.

SHANA

She did?

ADE

Yeah.

Ade starts to grieve and mourn his mother. He falls into Shana. Shana sits in surprise at first, then her empathy overtakes her. She can't hold it together. She lets herself mourn with him. Harold cries in the doorway, paralyzed.

SHANA

Shhh. It's going to be okay. I promise.

FADE TO:

20

EXT. HARLEM - 125TH STREET AND ST. NICHOLAS

20

Tuesday, evening rush hour. Shana exits the AC/BD subway station and walks down 125th street with her i-pod playing her life's soundtrack. We see, through Shana's eyes, the fossilized gum and hawked spit on the side walks. She gets harassed by some WEST AFRICAN WOMEN for hair care service, and some YOUNG MEN hanging out. POLICE roll by, and YOUNG WHITE PEOPLE stand out as they walk home with their ipods through a sea of Black legacy and culture. We see the STREET VENDORS, haggling with CUSTOMERS for shea butter, incense, soap, books, etc.

Animated FIVE PERCENTERS ornately dressed, deliver messages of fire and brimstone to a small crowd around a single speaker and microphone. Shana stops in POPEYE's and buys 2 biscuits and honey. People walk at lightening speed to go wherever they are going - to get out of arms reach of everyone else. Shana, continuing her journey, biscuits in hand, notices PHOTOGRAPHS on a makeshift, tired, and otherwise counter-productive sales display. They show great African American public figures in action. Despite its presentation, Shana stops at a POSTER OF MUHAMMMAD ALI.

SHANA
(to the vendor)
How much?

CUT TO:

21 EXT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??)

21

Shana enters with her new poster, and greets the RECEPTIONIST and hands her the biscuits. They hug. As the woman peeks into the bag, Shana grabs some tape from the desk. She walks down the hall to the elevators. She exits the elevators and walks to a room, opening the door. There sits Shana's mother MICHELLE, older now, atrophied and suffering from well-developed Multiple Sclerosis.

SHANA
Hey mommy.

Michelle doesn't reply.

SHANA (CONT'D)
So quiet in here.

Her mother looks, but doesn't register that it is her daughter. Shana turns on the radio a little louder than would be comfortable.

SHANA (CONT'D)
Got you something.

Shana shows Michelle the poster of Muhammad Ali.

SHANA (CONT'D)
I thought I'd put it on the wall to remind you that you're the greatest.

Shana dances as she tapes the poster onto the wall. There are already lots of pictures she's posted on previous occasions of the two of them at various stages of life, letters, post cards, etc. It's a wonderful wall collage.

SHANA (CONT'D)
There. You like it?

Michelle is silent.

SHANA (CONT'D)
Mom? You like it?

Michelle is silent. Shana turns down the music. Shana looks out of the window. She goes to her mother and hugs her. She takes out some toiletries and begins to do her mother's hair. She stops.

SHANA (CONT'D)
Mom, who am I? What's my name?

MICHELLE
(slurring)
Muhammad Ali.

SHANA
No, mommy, stop playing.

Michelle stares off. Shana finishes her hair, takes her mother's bib and ties it around her neck. She unveils the dinner the hospital provided as if they were in a five star restaurant.

SHANA (CONT'D)
(in her best French
accent, which isn't very
good)
Vois la! Zee, mashed potatoes, zee
green beans, zee meat loaf, zee
apple sauce. Bon appetite!

Shana begins to feed her mother. Her mother eats with difficulty.

SHANA (CONT'D)
Mommy? They treatin' you alright
in here? You miss being at home
with me? We're going to move you
to the other place real soon.
They've got sky lights, and patios
in every room.

Michelle doesn't respond. She barely chews slowly, methodically, unconsciously. Shana wipes Michelle's mouth.

SHANA (CONT'D)
Mommy, I need you to tell me
something. I need you to tell me
about my father.
(MORE)

SHANA (CONT'D)

(beat) Please, mommy, it's time.
It's been long enough. I'm an
adult now. (beat) Just a name,
mommy. Can you tell me his name?

MICHELLE

(after a while)
Muhammad Ali.

SHANA

(frustrated)
No, mommy. It's not Muhammad Ali.

Michelle's eyes glaze over. Shana walks over to the wall collage and takes a picture down. It's a late 70's photo with Shana as an infant, being held in her dad's arms, with her mom standing beside them, under the dad's arm. The father's head is cut out of the picture. Shana takes the photo and places it before her mother.

SHANA (CONT'D)

I need you to tell me.

DISSOLVE TO:

22

EXT. P.S. 188 -- SCHOOL STEPS

22

Wednesday, after school. Kids pour out of the entrance. The sidewalks bustle with the transition from in school to after school or home. Shana and Ade walk together, away from the school's front entrance.

SHANA

What does your dad do?

ADE

He works with banks.

SHANA

Oh. What does he do with the banks?

ADE

He says he tells people yes they can have some money, or no they can't have some money.

SHANA

Oh, so he's in charge?

ADE

Yep. I'm in charge too.

SHANA

Of what?

ADE

I'm the quarterback.

SHANA

Wow. I used to be the quarterback.

ADE

You can't be the quarterback!

SHANA

Why not?

ADE

Girls don't play football.

SHANA

Some of them do.

Ade considers. They walk.

ADE

Why is your last name Thompson?

SHANA

Because my mommy's last name is Thompson.

ADE

My mommy's last name is Frances-Mitchell.

SHANA

That's because she married your daddy. It's not the name she was born with.

ADE

What name was she born with?

SHANA

Probably her daddy's name.

ADE

Just Frances?

SHANA

Mmmmmmmhumm.

ADE

Why don't you have your daddy's name?

SHANA

I... it just worked out that way.

Ade considers.

ADE

I'm going to change my name to Frances-Mitchell. Then I'll have my mom's name like you.

SHANA

(spotting the silver Saturn)

You should talk about that with your dad. There he is.

Shana looks at the time on her cell phone: Harold is punctual. Harold stops, gets out of the car, hugs his son, takes Shana's bag. Ade opens the door for Shana. Shana climbs in. Harold opens the door for Ade and Ade climbs in. Harold closes the door, hops in and drives off. Principal Meyer notices from the school steps.

23

INT. HAROLD'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN

23

Ade sits at the table getting a few last seconds in with his PSP before his study session.

HAROLD

Alright, guys, you're all settled. I'm going to run for dinner. It's either McDonald's or Burger King -

ADE

Taco Bell!

HAROLD

Taco Bell it is. Would you like anything, Shana?

SHANA

No. I brought my -

HAROLD

Right.

He searches for his keys. He finds them. Harold starts to exit.

SHANA

(beat)

But how about I make you both a meal.

HAROLD
I'm sorry?

SHANA
A meal. Food. Home cooked.

HAROLD
Oh, no, I -

ADE
Spaghetti?

SHANA
Sure. If you all have the stuff to
make spaghetti, I'll make
spaghetti. We'll make spaghetti.

Ade begins to look for the ingredients.

HAROLD
Shana, I appreciate -

SHANA
It would be my pleasure. It's
better than Taco Bell. It'll be a
part of today's lesson. You know,
the measuring -

HAROLD
Miss Thompson -

SHANA
Shana. It's fine, really. Ade and
I will make it together.

Ade runs to Shana with a box of spaghetti.

ADE
I found it!

SHANA
Great! Let's see what else you
have in here.

Harold stands and watches for a while. Shana retrieves spaghetti sauce, some frozen ground turkey. She moves around the kitchen like she's at home. She continues her search in the spice rack. Harold throws in the towel and exits.

ADE
I like spaghetti.

SHANA
Great.

Harold returns.

HAROLD
Are you sure -

SHANA
I'm positive. Come help us.
(challenging him)
You can cook, can't you?

HAROLD
(accepting the challenge)
Oh, I can throw down.

SHANA
Really?

HAROLD
My barbeque baked chicken is the
best in all of Brooklyn.

ADE
It's alright.

SHANA
I'll have to try it some time.

Harold and Shana's eyes lock. Shana pulls away, she can't believe she just said that.

SHANA (CONT'D)
I need onion. Do you have an
onion?

HAROLD
Onion powder.

SHANA
No, a real onion.

HAROLD
Let me see.

Harold goes to retrieve the ingredient.

ADE
(whispering)
My dad loves spaghetti.

SHANA
Does he?

ADE
And cake.

SHANA

Does he like cake, or do you like
cake?

ADE

(considers first, then:)
We *both* like cake.

SHANA

Okay. We'll make a cake too.

MONTAGE: THE FIRST SUPPER

Shana and Ade measuring ingredients.

Harold chopping vegetables.

Ade figuring how much of an ingredient to incorporate
according to a math equation.

Ade making a big mess with the milk.

Shana preparing meatballs.

Harold and Ade having fun, stirring the cake batter.

Ade setting the table.

Shana and Ade falling in (maternal) love.

Shana bringing the food to the table.

Harold pouring drinks.

Shana and Harold becoming familiar and curious.

Harold eyeing Shana's body.

Shana, Ade and Harold praying over the food.

Shana, Ade and Harold eating with laughter.

This meal turns into several meals, and many more meals go
by.

Shana visits and feeds her mom. Michelle declines.

Ade doing well in school. Shana showing a bit of favoritism.

Harold picks Ade and Shana up from school. He kisses Shana
on the cheek to greet her. Teachers notice. Parents notice.

At home Shana is like family. She tutors and they cook.

Harold puts Ade to bed.

24 INT. HAROLD'S HOUSE -- KITCHEN

24

Weeks later. Shana washes the dishes and cleans up.

HAROLD

No, no, no, no, no -

SHANA

What?

HAROLD

Let me -

SHANA

It's fine -

HAROLD

I feel like we're taking advantage of you. You come to tutor and we've got you cooking and -

SHANA

I don't mind, really -

HAROLD

Don't you want to go home?

SHANA

(beat)

Yeah. I mean, if you've got it from here - I could go. I have lesson plans to prepare for tomorrow. Let me just -

HAROLD

(back pedaling)

Do you need a ride?

SHANA

No, no, I'll take the train.

HAROLD

To the train station?

SHANA

No, I'm okay.

Burnt, Shana gathers her things.

HAROLD

Wait. I'm sorry. Stop.

Shana stops.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
I didn't mean it to sound like
that. Let me back up. Rewind.

He does a little rewind move. Shana laughs.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Dinner was really good - great. It
was great. Thank you.

SHANA
No problem.

HAROLD
I've got to re-learn how to cook.

SHANA
I thought you could 'throw down'.

HAROLD
I can. I used to. My wife, she -
I've got to brush up, that's all.

SHANA
Understandable.

HAROLD
I've never really told you thank
you.

SHANA
You just did.

HAROLD
No, not for that first night you
were here. Seeing you and my son
under the table, that made me
realize that he, that we have a lot
more healing to do. Thank you.

SHANA
You're welcome.

HAROLD
And thank you for all the work
you've been doing to make sure he
doesn't fall behind.

SHANA

Don't thank me for that yet. We'll see how well he does on the state tests. But he's improved dramatically in class.

HAROLD

He's not showing his penis to any more little girls.

SHANA

No. No penis showing that I know of.

HAROLD

In my day, you showed your penis to your cousins.

They laugh. Harold starts up some dish water.

HAROLD (CONT'D)

But he doesn't have any cousins or siblings to flash.

SHANA

Penis flashing has been outlawed for some time, even within the family structure.

HAROLD

Really?

SHANA

Uh, yeah. How old are you?

Shana realizes this was harsh, but let's it hang in the air anyway. She's curious.

HAROLD

(beat)
How old do I look?

SHANA

35.

Harold just looks at her, unimpressed.

SHANA (CONT'D)

45?

HAROLD

I'm 49. Fifty next month.

SHANA
Wow. You look good for your age.

HAROLD
Ow.

SHANA
No, I mean -

HAROLD
That's alright -

SHANA
I meant, you look good. You look good.

Shana decides to let that one linger as well.

HAROLD
(beat)
How old are you?

SHANA
27.

HAROLD
No!

SHANA
What?

HAROLD
You look so much older.

SHANA
What!?

Harold laughs.

SHANA (CONT'D)
Ha, ha.

HAROLD
I take it you don't have any kids.

SHANA
I have 34 kids.

HAROLD
Of your own.

SHANA
With 34 kids I don't need any kids of my own.

HAROLD
I understand.

They stand, looking at each other. Finally, Shana goes for her belongings. He doesn't stop her. She stalls. It's awkward. She walks toward the front door. They stop at the threshold of the parlor room. The family portrait looms in the background.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Is it illegal to hang out with your son's teacher?

SHANA
It's not illegal. Why, did you want to hang out with your son's teacher?

HAROLD
Yeah.

SHANA
Okay.

HAROLD
Okay.

CUT TO:

25 INT. P.S. 188 - TEACHERS LOUNGE - COPY ROOM

25

Shana stands at the copy machine with Marie as she makes copies of classroom activities and homework assignments. She and Marie sip their coffee.

MARIE
I don't want to hear it!

SHANA
Who else am I going to talk to about this?

MARIE
Hearing it makes me an accomplice.

Marie tries to "run" from the conversation.

SHANA
(tantalizing Marie)
He asked me out.

MARIE
He did?!

SHANA
Now you wanna hear.

MARIE
What did he say?

SHANA
He said, "is it illegal to hang out
with your son's teacher -

MARIE
What a cornball.

SHANA
It was sweet.

MARIE
He is old -

SHANA
It was nice.

MARIE
So I guess, his age doesn't bother
you any more?

SHANA
Nope.

MARIE
I told you. You got to give me my
props.

SHANA
For what?

MARIE
For what? It was because of me
that you even had the presence of
mind to get with him.

SHANA
Because of you?

MARIE
Yes, heifer, because of me, and I
charge a finder's fee.

SHANA
You're crazy -

MARIE
Ten percent. You think I'm
playing.

SHANA

Let's wait to see if the product
does what it says on the package
before we go singing its praises.

MARIE

So, you saw his package did you.

SHANA

No.

MARIE

What are you waiting for?

SHANA

There's no rush.

MARIE

Yeah, right.

SHANA

Even if I wanted to, which I don't,
it wouldn't go down this soon.

MARIE

Why not?

SHANA

Why?

MARIE

The longer you wait the more
chances you have of the drama in
the way.

SHANA

Don't try to jinx me. There is no
drama.

MARIE

You already got drama.

SHANA

What drama?

MARIE

People see. People talk.

SHANA

Who?

MARIE

I told you to get that boy out of
your class.

SHANA
 (beat)
 Meyer knows?

MARIE
 I don't know.

SHANA
 (beat)
 Whatever.

MARIE
 Be easy, Shana.

CUT TO:

26 INT. P.S. 188 -- SHANA'S CLASSROOM

26

Shana walks up and down the rows of desks while the students take the state exam. Number 2 pencils scratch away into the scantron sheets, and students are more serious and focused than is normal; perhaps more serious and focused than 8 year olds should be. Ade raises his hand. Shana approaches him.

SHANA
 (whispering)
 Yes?

ADE
 (whispering)
 I need help.

SHANA
 What's wrong?

Principal Meyer enters the classroom with an OFFICIAL LOOKING GUEST in a suit and sees Shana standing over Ade.

ADE
 (pointing to the block of
 text in his test question
 booklet)
 What does this word mean?

Shana looks at his little finger pointing to the word.

SHANA
 Ade, I can't tell you that. You
 have to do it on your own.

ADE
 But I don't know. I need help.

SHANA

Let me see.

Shana examines the passage. Principal Meyer and the suit looks on.

SHANA (CONT'D)

You have to try to figure it out by reading the entire sentence. What do you think it means?

Ade begins to read the whole sentence aloud.

SHANA (CONT'D)

To yourself.

Ade reads the sentence to himself. He begins to get frustrated.

ADE

I don't know what it means.

SHANA

Calm down. It's okay. Just guess.

Ade looks at his scantron.

ADE

A? Is it 'A'?

'A' is the wrong answer. Shana struggles not to tell him.

ADE (CONT'D)

It's 'A'?

Principal Meyer and the suit looks on. Shana finally looks up to see her.

SHANA

(more full voiced)

I can't tell you that, Ade.

Shana walks away from Ade. Ade is betrayed. Shana approaches Principal Meyer and the suits.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Good morning, Principal.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

How are things going?

SHANA

Good.

PRINCIPAL MEYER
Good. This is Assistant
Superintendent Deirdre Floyd. Ms.
Floyd this is Ms. Shana Thompson.

SHANA
Oh, hello.

They shake hands. Ms. Floyd looks onto papers on her clip
board.

FLOYD
I'm sorry, I have here you name is
Hazel Thompson.

SHANA
Hazel Shana Thompson. I go by
Shana. My middle name.

Ms. Floyd makes a notation on her page.

PRINCIPAL MEYER
Ms. Floyd's here to audit our state
exam procedures, to make sure -

FLOYD
How are things going?

SHANA
Good. Good.

FLOYD
Are you the only teacher in this
classroom?

SHANA
Yes.

FLOYD
No aides?

SHANA
No.

Ms. Floyd makes a notation on her page.

FLOYD
Were you helping that student.

Both Shana and Principal Meyer are stunned by the question.

SHANA
He had a question -

FLOYD

Do you help the other children
well?

SHANA

When they have questions, yes I
attend to them as well.

(beat)

I wasn't helping Ade with the
answers, Ms. Floyd.

FLOYD

I didn't say you were.

Principal Meyer gives Shana a look and Shana restrains her
knee-jerk reply. Shana maintains her composure as best she
can.

FLOYD (CONT'D)

Nice meeting you, Ms. Thompson.

SHANA

Likewise.

Ms. Floyd exits, and Principal Meyer follows only after
giving a look to Shana that says, "you embarrass me." Shana
watches them go. She returns to her desk and looks at Ade.
He has been watching the entire time. Their eyes meet. He
is furious and hurt. He puts his pencil down, crosses his
arms on the desk and lies down, refusing to finish the exam.

CUT TO:

27

INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??)

27

Shana walks almost into the glass door as she is reading a
book with her headphones on. She laughs at herself, stops
her i-pod and puts the book into her bag. Shana enters the
hospital and greets the RECEPTIONIST. They hug.

RECEPTIONIST

Good book?

SHANA

Real good.

RECEPTIONIST

Must be. Got you thinkin' you can
walk through walls.

They laugh. Shana hands her a Popeye's bag.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

You're the reason I can't fit my
skinny girl jeans.

SHANA

You want me to bring healthy snacks
instead.

RECEPTIONIST

Girl, no.

She peeks into the bag.

SHANA

They're hot out of the oven. I saw
them take 'em out.

The woman takes a bite. She is in ecstasy.

SHANA (CONT'D)

How's she doing?

RECEPTIONIST

Good as can be expected. Sleeping
alot. We had an incident
yesterday. Had to take her out,
clean up the whole room. Elmira
was here. I'm glad Elmira caught
it, 'cause them other folks will
have 'em sittin in their own piss
and shit for hours before they
clean it up. I told Elmira to
watch out for her.

SHANA

Thank you.

RECEPTIONIST

A spot open up for her yet?

SHANA

No, not yet. Not yet.

CUT TO:

28 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??) - MICHELLE'S ROOM 28

Shana enters her mother's room. The dinner is sitting,
covered at the doorway. The television and the radio are
playing at the same time.

SHANA

Hey, mommy.

Michelle is silent. Shana turns off the radio. Shana looks at the wall collage and sees the family PICTURE with the headless man. She looks closely at her mother in the picture and mourns her mother's current condition. In the photograph she was so vibrant, so happy, so healthy. She takes her attention to the headless man and begins to become angry that her mother withheld such an important piece of information. Shana looks at the man's body, the way he holds her as an infant. She FLASHES BACK to waiting for her father as a child looking out of the bay window. She snaps out of it. She looks at her mother. She takes the picture off of the board as if to show her mother again. She can't muster up the energy to ask today. She restores the photo. She takes out her mother's hair contraband, and approaches Michelle. She begins to do her mother's hair.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Mommy, guess what? You'll never guess.

(beat)

I met a man. I want you to meet him.

CUT TO:

29

INT. CITY CRAB, RESTAURANT - NEW YORK, NY

29

Shana stands in the waiting area of the restaurant. She looks at the TIME. 7:53pm. She's getting worried that Harold won't be on time. She tries to calm herself. She goes to the bar. The bartender approaches.

SHANA

Cranberry juice, on the rocks,
twist of lime, shaken, not stirred.

The bartender laughs, and obliges her request, performing as though she ordered a fancy drink. Shana struggles not to look at the TIME.

BARTENDER

Do you want to pay now, or are your
going to be having dinner?

SHANA

Uh -

Harold walks up from behind Shana.

HAROLD

She'll be having dinner.

HAROLD

Like me?

SHANA

Fathers. Real fathers.

HAROLD

Wait. There are a lot of good men out there. A lot of good men trying to do right. A lot of husbands. And a lot of fathers holding it down for their families.

SHANA

(beat)

You're right. You're right. I just - you're right.

They drink.

HAROLD

So then?

SHANA

So, then my mom moved us back here to be closer to my grandmother as she got up in age. Oh! I hated New York.

HAROLD

You hated New York?

SHANA

It was such a culture shock. It was dirty -

HAROLD

I came in the late 80s, *that* was dirty.

SHANA

All the people. The subway. The snow. The humidity. I hated it. I missed California. So, when the time came, I applied to USC and got in. \$90,000 later, I still didn't know what I wanted to do, but Sally Mae wanted her money. So, I signed up with Teach for America. They sent me to Texas, and when my mom finally told me, about her condition, I put in for a transfer. Been here ever since.

HAROLD

You ended up in the very place you were avoiding.

SHANA

'Life be that way sometimes.'

HAROLD

Are you going to leave when your mother -

SHANA

Probably. Maybe. I don't know.
(beat) Why'd you leave the city of angels?

HAROLD

Oh, I was running.

SHANA

From what?

HAROLD

Everything. Family -- everything. At the time I was in sales. Pharmaceuticals. I had the opportunity for a transfer, so I took it. I came here, but it didn't work out like I imagined it would. I was good, but they weren't giving up management positions, and at a certain point, at a certain age, I wanted to stop having to convince somebody that my products, and by extension my very self, was worthy of their money every quarter.

SHANA

So you got into mortgage lending?

HAROLD

That's before I realized it was essentially the same thing, especially if you're in business for yourself, not attached to the big banks. Convincing someone that your interest rate is better than the other guy - nothing but sales.

SHANA

Ran right into the thing you were running from.

HAROLD
Exactly. But then I got married,
had a baby. Didn't want to run
anymore.

SHANA
Do you miss her?

HAROLD
Yeah. This is definitely not the
way I thought it would end up.

SHANA
Is it ever?

HAROLD
I guess not.

They drink and sit in silence.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
This is the saddest date I've ever
been on.

They laugh.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Let's get out of here.

Harold signals the waiter.

FADE TO:

30 INT. HAROLD'S SATURN

30

Shana and Harold sit in Harold's Saturn, double parked,
outside Shana's apartment. Harold doesn't put the car in
'park', Shana notices.

SHANA
Thank you.

HAROLD
No problem.

They look at each other. Shana's hoping for a good night
kiss. She plays with the idea of initiating it.

SHANA
Wanna come in? It's a mess, but -

HAROLD
I think you're beautiful, Shana.

SHANA
Thank you, Harold.

HAROLD
And I really thought I was ready.

SHANA
I understand. I totally -

HAROLD
I just need a little more time. I
need to go slow.

SHANA
Okay. (beat) I'll see you Monday.

Shana opens the door and goes to get out of car and is ricocheted back into the seat. She forgot to take off her seat belt. They laugh.

SHANA (CONT'D)
Shit.

HAROLD
You can stay if you like.

Shana unbuckles herself.

SHANA
No, no, I think I've provided
sufficient entertainment for the
evening.

Harold laughs. Shana exits the car. Harold watches her go. She looks back and smiles goodbye. Harold smiles.

CUT TO:

31 INT. P.S. 188 -- PRINCIPAL MEYER'S OFFICE

31

Principal Meyer sits at her desk, reading a report. Shana knocks and walks in.

SHANA
You wanted to see me?

PRINCIPAL MEYER
Yes. Please.

Principal Meyer gestures for her to sit.

PRINCIPAL MEYER (CONT'D)
 Brittany's parents were not happy with the outcome of the penis incident, and they took it to the PTA, who, in turn, launched an investigation. After talking to other parents, staff and students they have found cause to accuse you of negligence in the Brittany/Ade scandal because they have found you to be in direct violation of the Teacher Code of Conduct Conflict of Interest Policy.

Principal Meyer hands the open report to Shana.

PRINCIPAL MEYER (CONT'D)
 They say you're engaged in a romantic relationship with the father of your student Ade Mitchell, and Brittany's parents are accusing you of nepotism at the expense of their child's safety and well-being.

Shana is silent.

PRINCIPAL MEYER (CONT'D)
 Tell me this is not true and I will have your back.

Shana is silent.

PRINCIPAL MEYER (CONT'D)
 God damnit, Shana.

Principal Meyer looks out of the window.

PRINCIPAL MEYER (CONT'D)
 Did we catch you helping Ade with the answers on the state exam today?

SHANA
 I did not help Ade with the answers in any way. I would not do that.

PRINCIPAL MEYER
 Who knows what you would do.
 (beat)
 I'm removing Ade from your roster effective immediately until this issue is resolved.

(MORE)

PRINCIPAL MEYER (CONT'D)

And your presence has been requested at the PTA meeting for direct questioning from their board tomorrow.

Principal Meyer hands Shana another paper. Shana reads.

SHANA

Tomorrow's not good for me.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

Excuse me?

SHANA

My mom - I have unchangeable, personal plans tomorrow. I can't make it.

PRINCIPAL MEYER

You've been ordered to appear.

SHANA

By who?

PRINCIPAL MEYER

By me.

The women stare off. Shana stands.

SHANA

I will be happy to answer their questions at some other time.

Shana stands and exits.

CUT TO:

32 INT. P.S. 188 -- HALLWAY 32

Shana runs through the hallways and staircases to her classroom. Open doors, children's sounds and hallway display cases fly by in ambiguity.

FADE TO:

33 INT. P.S. 188 -- SHANA'S CLASSROOM 33

Shana arrives at her classroom. An aide is already escorting Ade, bookbag and coat in hand, out of the classroom.

SHANA

I need to talk to him for a moment.

AIDE

But -

SHANA

Just for a second. Just gimme a second

Shana pulls Ade a distance from the aide. The aide stands by. Marie walks down the hall and stands with the aide.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Hey, Ade.

ADE

What's wrong? I wasn't doing nothin'.

SHANA

You didn't do anything wrong.

ADE

Then why I gotta leave?

SHANA

Because -

Marie interjects.

MARIE

Because your classroom is too crowded to take the state test, and my room is not crowded enough. We were hoping you would help us to have more people. Can you come help us?

ADE

Yeah.

MARIE

Thank you so much.

ADE

You're welcome.

Marie starts to escort him away.

ADE (CONT'D)

You okay, Ms. Thompson?

SHANA

Yep, I'm okay.

ADE

I can stay if you want me to.

SHANA

No, no, sweet heart. It's good that you go help Ms. Sanchez.

ADE

I'll be back. It will only be for a little while.

He hugs Shana. While they hug Shana whispers:

SHANA

Listen. I'm not going to go home with you today, okay. I have to run some errands. Don't wait for me after school, okay?

ADE

Okay.

SHANA

Tell your father for me?

ADE

Okay.

Ade and Shana let go of their embrace.

MARIE

Come on, Ade.

SHANA

Do your best on the test.

ADE

Okay.

Marie and the aide walk away with Ade, to Marie's classroom down the hall. Shana breaks into angry tears as she watches him walk away. Marie ushers him into the class and looks back down the hall at Shana's body, heaving.

34

INT. HAROLD'S HOUSE -- PARLOR ROOM

34

Harold closes the door to Ade's bedroom after tucking him in for the evening. He returns to the parlor room where Shana sits on the sofa, lounging.

HAROLD

What happens next?

SHANA

There is no next. She's going to fire me.

HAROLD

She can't fire you.

SHANA

Yes, she can.

HAROLD

For what?

SHANA

Conflict of interest.

Harold takes it in.

HAROLD

Why didn't you tell me?

SHANA

Greed. I didn't want it to stop.
(beat) I'm gonna quit.

HAROLD

Don't quit. You haven't done anything so wrong that you deserve to lose your job. You're a great teacher. Stand up. We'll get you an attorney. We'll do whatever it takes -

SHANA

But is it worth it? This could be a blessing in disguise.

HAROLD

That's for you to decide, but don't let them punk you into giving up what you've worked for. If you want to, stay and fight it out. I'll help you. I'll go to the hearing, we'll build a case. I'll testify, whatever -

SHANA

You would?

HAROLD

Absolutely. Why wouldn't I?

Shana considers.

SHANA

I need to vent. Can I vent to you?

HAROLD

Yeah. Go 'head.

SHANA

It just seems like my life is going to shit, like I'm cursed or something. I hate my job. I live in New York. I'm making shit money. My mom isn't going to get better. She isn't ever going to be the way I remember. She's not going to be able to give me advice or -

HAROLD

What would she tell you to do?

SHANA

Honestly, I think she would be appalled that I was dating you.

HAROLD

Really?

SHANA

She was very old fashioned. Was. She *is* very old fashioned. She never told me my father's name because she was ashamed she got pregnant without being married. As if not telling me would make my birth immaculate. (beat) But once she got passed us, when I'd tell her about the accusations, she'd stand up for me.

HAROLD

So, you've got to stand up.

Shana looks out of the window. Though it is night, the street in Brooklyn still bustles. Harold sits next to her and comforts her. She nestles under his arm, tracing the lines of his palm with her finger.

SHANA

I think she'd like you.

HAROLD

(doubtful)
Okay.

SHANA

Maybe not at first, but eventually.
She always warned me that I'd end
up with an older man.

HAROLD

Does she have any lucid moments?

SHANA

Not anymore. They say she can
still hear though. They say
hearing is the last thing to go.
So I talk to her. I tell her
jokes. Her eyes used to speak to
me, but -. (beat) She started
having trouble being on her own
during the day. She told me that,
when it came to that moment, when
things got that hard, she wanted me
to let her go. She said she didn't
want to tie me down. So I found a
place for her to go. They have
skylights and patios in every room.
(beat) Tomorrow I think I'm going
to let my mother go.

Shana cries, straight-faced, sober. Harold comforts her.

SHANA (CONT'D)

I want you to meet her.

HAROLD

(wiping her tears)
I would love to.

Shana kisses him. He kisses her back. She takes his hands
and silently gives them permission to caress her body. Is he
ready. He tentatively touches her: her face, her hair, her
neck, her back. She reaches under his shirt. Her hands feel
good to him. He is on the ledge. Harold drifts his hands to
her breasts, her waist, her butt, her thighs. He squeezes.
He kneads. She pulls.

SHANA

You feel so good.

Harold lets go. Though we don't see it**, we know they make
love on the couch, underneath the family portrait.

FADE TO:

35 INT. P.S. 188 -- MAIN OFFICE 35

Morning. Shana walks into the main office to sign in for the day.

SHANA
Hi, Ms. Jacobs.

Ms. Jacobs looks at her over the rim of her glasses. She gives a tight-lipped smile, and moves on to some paperwork. Odd. Shana signs in.

36 INT. P.S. 188 -- SHANA'S CLASSROOM 36

Shana enters her classroom and places her personal belongings in the file cabinet. She closes and locks the cabinet. She removes a file from her tote bag and reads her lesson plan for the day. She looks out of the window to see Principal Meyer arriving for the day. Principal Meyer happily greets other school staff. Her face is softer, friendlier than we've ever seen it with Shana. Shana sees the first bloom of a tree insisting winter cease. Shana exits the classroom.

CUT TO:

37 INT. P.S. 188 -- HALLWAY 37

Shana walks down the hall and peers into Marie's class. The lights are on. Her tote bag sits on the chair behind the teacher's desk.

CUT TO:

38 INT. P.S. 188 -- TEACHER'S LOUNGE 38

Shana enters the teacher's lounge. Marie stands talking to another TEACHER in the copy room. Shana overhears.

TEACHER (V.O.)
What was she thinking? It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that that's just asking for trouble.

MARIE (V.O.)
I told her not to do it. I said, "Mommy. If you're that desperate, get a dildo and handle it!"

TEACHER (V.O.)
Oooooohhh!

MARIE (V.O.)

But does anybody listen to me? No.

They laugh. Shana enters the copy room. Their laughter trails off into silence. Shana looks at Marie. Marie is caught.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Ms. Redclay, you know Ms. Thompson.

TEACHER

Yes, how are you?

MARIE

I'd be fine if I could use the copy machine.

TEACHER

Oh, by all means. I was finished. I'll see you ladies later.

The teacher leaves. Shana walks over and begins to use the copy machine. Marie stands watching her.

SHANA

You told me everyone knew. You failed to mention that they knew because you told them.

MARIE

I wasn't telling her anything she didn't already know.

SHANA

You were laughing at me behind my back.

MARIE

It was small talk.

SHANA

Fuck you.

MARIE

Shana, fuck you. Now, I'm in the middle of this shit, got the PTA ordering me to testify, got Principal Meyer breathing down my back 'cause of that boy. I told you to leave his ass alone. You didn't. That's on you.

Shana looks at Marie. Shana takes her copies and walks toward the door.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Shana wait -

Shana exits.

CUT TO:

39 INT. P.S. 188 -- HALLWAY

39

Shana walks back through the hallways and staircases to her classroom. More students, staff, teachers and administrators have arrived, and they all look at Shana, differently - some with empathy, some with disgust, some with amusement, some in amazement. Everyone knows. Everyone. Ade walks into the hallway. Other children crudely tease him about his father being old, about his father's relationship with Shana. Ade begins to armor himself. Shana sees the fight brewing between the boys. She approaches.

SHANA

Hey! Hey!

The bullies scatter. Ade stands, eyes wet with anger, fists clenched.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Ade, you okay?

Ade gives her a look of seriousness much too grownup for an 8-year-old

ADE

Leave me alone!

Ade disappears into the staircase. Shana watches him go without objection.

CUT TO:

40 EXT. SHANA'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT

40

Ade sits in the back seat of Harold's Saturn playing his PSP. He, as inconspicuously as he can, glances up to see his father and Shana standing on the stoop.

SHANA

He hates me.

HAROLD

He does not hate you. He hates being made fun of.

SHANA

Because of me.

HAROLD

Because of us.

SHANA

I really didn't mean for it to be like this. I don't want to see him fall back into fighting and -

HAROLD

Don't worry about it, we'll get through it.

SHANA

You should've seen them at school. This is out of control. No kid, no person, should have to be in such a hostile environment. Babe, I think he should transfer.

HAROLD

The school year is half over -

SHANA

Still -

HAROLD

No, he has to learn he can't get into a fight every time someone says something he doesn't like.

SHANA

Think about it?

HAROLD

I'll think about it.

SHANA

Thank you.

They kiss.

HAROLD

You ready for tomorrow?

SHANA

Yeah. I have to start packing up her things. I think I'm in denial. You still coming?

HAROLD

Yeah. I'll be there.

SHANA

See you then.

They kiss goodbye. Shana opens the door to her apartment. Harold descends the stairs toward the car, eyes locked with his son.

41 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??)

41

Harold enters the hospital. He approaches the receptionist.

RECEPTIONIST

Can I help you?

HAROLD

I'm just waiting. I'm a little early.

RECEPTIONIST

Who are you here to see?

HAROLD

Thompson?

RECEPTIONIST

You mean, Ms. Thompson. Shana Thompson's mother?

HAROLD

Yes.

RECEPTIONIST

So your the mature man she's been talking about.

HAROLD

She talks about me, huh?

RECEPTIONIST

All good things.

HAROLD

Good to know.

RECEPTIONIST

We've been wanting to meet you.

HAROLD

Really?

RECEPTIONIST

Oh yeah! Don't worry, we don't bite. Shana likes you, so we like you.

HAROLD

That's great.

The receptionist starts watching television.

RECEPTIONIST

(to herself)

No she didn't say he was the only one!

HAROLD

Shana here?

RECEPTIONIST

Oh, I'm sorry. No, not yet. But, uh...you're pretty early.

Cheryl goes back into her television coma. Harold stands awkwardly, looks around for something to occupy his time. The television is turned to a judge show handling a paternity case - not Harold's cup of tea.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

You watch Judge Brown?

HAROLD

Not really.

RECEPTIONIST

I bet you that's not his baby. Baby don't look nothing like him.

He grabs a tabloid magazine from the coffee table, not his thing either, but is better than the judge show. He sits in the stiff lobby chair. Cheryl notices.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

You don't have to sit down here if you don't want to. You can go up. You don't have to wait. Ms. Thompson's got her own tv in the room. You can watch whatever you want.

Harold gives a look of 'thanks'. He approaches the desk and signs in. The receptionist allows him pass the checkpoint.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)
 Third floor. Room 306. Elevator's
 at the end of the hall.

Harold walks down the hall.

CUT TO:

42 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??) - ELEVATOR 42

Harold checks himself out in the reflection of the metal adornment of the elevator interior. Hair in place. Shirt collar laying properly. He can't remember the last time he was so concerned with meeting someone's mother. "She'll be as old as I am," he thinks. He chuckles at the thought. He exits the elevator, and buys a floral bouquet from a side stand in the hallway to take to Shana's mother. Every little bit helps.

CUT TO:

43 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??) 43

Harold enters into Michelle's room, flowers extended, expecting to see her. She is not there. The room is empty, radio playing. Harold removes his coat and looks around the room at the little ways Shana has attempted to decorate, to individualize and personalize Michelle's stay. The radio on the oldie-but-goodie station makes him feel at home. The old fashioned doll collection, and do-dads on the table. He closes the door to see the wall collage, Shana's constant work in progress. He examines each photo of Shana growing up. Shana as a toddler, playing sports, graduating, homecoming dance. Shana being goofy. He lets his eyes wonder. He sees the PICTURE with the young, vibrant Michelle standing next to the headless man holding the baby Shana. He sees Michelle's face. He recognizes Michelle's face. He recognizes the headless man's body. He sees the baby. It's the same baby in the other baby photos of Shana. He looks to Michelle's face again and the memories return - FLASHBACKS of their courting. FLASHBACKS of their arguing. FLASHBACKS of him taking that photo. His mind returns to the room, to the photo. He gasps for air. The NURSE opens the door, hitting Harold.

NURSE

Oh, my dear. I'm sorry.

The Nurse escorts Michelle into the room via wheelchair. Michelle manages to lift her head to see Harold.

And she recognizes him. Her eyes, usually dormant, confirm the horrific truth.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Can we help you?

CUT TO:

44 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??) 44

Shana walks into the front door of the hospital.

SHANA
Hey, Cheryl.

RECEPTIONIST
Hey, lady. You're early.

SHANA
I know. I wanted to get a head start on packing her up.

RECEPTIONIST
She's leaving us today, huh?

SHANA
Yeah.

RECEPTIONIST
We're gon' miss ya'll.

SHANA
We'll miss you too. Thanks for taking care of her.

Shana hands her a gift.

RECEPTIONIST
For me?

SHANA
Yes, for you!

Cheryl accepts the gift.

RECEPTIONIST
Well, you got a surprise waiting for you too.

SHANA
He's here already?

RECEPTIONIST

And he's cute.

Shana blushes.

RECEPTIONIST (CONT'D)

Go on up. Don't keep that man waiting.

They laugh. We watch Shana walk down the hallway to the elevator.

CUT TO:

45 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??) - MICHELLE'S ROOM 45

Harold is paralyzed. Michelle makes a sound. She makes another sound. Michelle urinates on herself.

NURSE

Ms. Thompson, are you okay? What's going on? Oh, dear.

HAROLD

Michelle.

NURSE

I'm sorry sir, I'm going to have to ask you to step out for a second.

Harold's eyes lock with Michelle's and he can't tear them away. His face bursts into a spontaneous sweat. The nurse pushes Michelle's wheelchair further into the room. Michelle continues to heave noises from her throat. Harold looks up at the clock. He has two minutes.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Sir, please?!

Harold leaves the room. He looks to the right and he sees Shana, having rounded the corner talking to one of the nurses. She doesn't notice him. Harold flees in the opposite direction, down another hallway. He sees a staircase and he enters into it. Down the stairs he flies, to the first floor, where there is a door that lets out to the lobby and a door that lets out to the street. It says "EMERGENCY EXIT: OPENING THIS DOOR WILL SOUND THE ALARM".

CUT TO:

46 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??) - MICHELLE'S ROOM 46

Shana enters the room with a smile, expecting to see Harold and her mom. Instead, she sees the nurse, cleaning her mother, who has urinated on herself, and her mother, hurling a repetitive noise from her throat.

NURSE

Miss, please, wait outside.

SHANA

That's my mom. What happened?

NURSE

Miss, please.

SHANA

Was there a man in here?

NURSE

I asked him to step out, as I am asking you to step out now.

SHANA

What happened?

CUT TO:

47 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??) - STAIRCASE 47

Harold decides to risk it. He opens the door to the street, and the alarm starts to blare. Hospital guards run to the security breach.

48 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??) - MICHELLE'S ROOM 48

The alarm starts to blare as Shana exits her mother's room. She looks down the hallway both ways - no sign of Harold. She heads back toward the elevators.

49 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??) 49

Shana walks over to Cheryl, the receptionist. The blaring alarm continues in the background.

SHANA

What's going on?

RECEPTIONIST

Some fool went out the emergency exit.

SHANA

Did Harold, the gentleman with me,
did he come back down here?

RECEPTIONIST

I haven't seen him. He wasn't up
there?

SHANA

No. He left his coat.

RECEPTIONIST

He'll be back. I can barely go
outside to smoke my cigarettes
without a coat on today.

CUT TO:

50 EXT. HARLEM STREETS

50

Harold runs down the streets of Harlem, crossing the street, almost getting hit by a car. He finds his car, and fumbles ferociously with the keys, as he can't steady his hands in the mix of cold and adreneline. He is sweating profusely, though it is cold. You can see his breath making clouds in the air. He gets into his car, closes the door, and silence. He looks at his reflection in the rear view mirror. He adjusts the mirror so that he can't see himself. He closes his eyes and sees himself making love to Shana. He opens his eyes. He puts the keys into the ignition and drives off, hitting another car coming down the street. His airbag deploys. His cell phone rings in his pocket. He looks at his phone, and Shana's name on the caller ID appears. The other driver comes toward his window, yelling New York City style.

CUT TO:

51 INT. HARLEM - ST. PETER'S HOSPITAL (??) - MICHELLE'S ROOM 51

Shana is on her cell phone, calling Harold. She leaves a message:

SHANA

Babe. Where are you?

After a moment, she realizes that he can't hear her and hangs up. Shana's mother continues to vocalize sounds, softer now.

SHANA (CONT'D)

What is it mommy? You don't want to go? You said this is what you wanted.

Shana bends to meet her mother's eyes. Michelle tries, and tries. Shana kisses her.

SHANA (CONT'D)

I have to take you today, mommy.

MONTAGE: PACKING UP

Harold gets out of his car. The other driver confronts him.

Shana starts to load the boxes with her mother's possessions. She looks up at the TIME. Shana gets annoyed with her mother's noise making. She yells at her mother. She immediately feels bad.

The police show up to the scene of the accident.

People come to take the boxes out of Michelle's room.

Harold gets back into his car

Shana wheels her mother to the van that has come to take her away. She looks around for Harold. He is nowhere.

Harold drives away from the scene of the accident.

Hostilities building at school against Shana

Harold going to church

Shana noticing Ade's absence in school

Shana getting the notice about the PTA hearing

Shana calling Harold, Harold not picking up. She leaves a message.

SHANA (CONT'D)

Harold. I hope everything's okay. The hearing's on Thursday. I'll see you there? I need you to be there.

Harold keeping Ade home from school.

Harold, paranoid, working from home

Shana teaching her class

Shana making eye contact with Marie, but not speaking
 Harold changing his cell phone number at the cell phone store
 Shana calling him again, and the number not working

FADE TO:

52

INT. P.S. 188 -- AUDITORIUM

52

Several hand fulls of parents mill around folding chairs fashioned as a courtroom galley. In front are several tables and chairs lined up like a court bench, and a single 'plaintiff's table' where Shana sits, looking through her folder of documentation. Principal Meyer enters, greets a few of the parents and takes a seat on the front row. Shana and Principal Meyer see each other. Shana looks at the TIME. Five of the parents remove themselves from the crowd and sit behind the bench.

PTA PARENT #1

I make a motion to call this meeting to order.

PTA PARENT #2

I second that.

PTA PARENT #1

All in favor say 'Ay'.

ALL PTA PARENTS

Ay.

PTA PARENT #1

All opposed.

No one speaks.

PTA PARENT #1 (CONT'D)

I call this meeting to order.

Everyone settles into seats. Shana looks around to see if Harold is going to show up.

PTA PARENT #1 (CONT'D)

The matter at hand: second grade teacher, Ms. Hazel S.

(MORE)

PTA PARENT #1 (CONT'D)
 Thompson, is accused by the family of Brittany Westmoreland of violating the second article of our Teacher Code of Ethics which states, "all personal relationships between teachers and students must be reported to school administration and the parent teacher association for conflict of interest review," and of nepotism in not punishing Ade Mitchell's indecent exposure to their daughter on Friday, February ____, 2008. Ms. Thompson is here today to speak on her own behalf. Ms. Thompson, welcome.

SHANA

Hello.

PTA PARENT #1
 And Jacqueline Westmoreland, mother of Brittany Westmoreland, is here to speak on the family's behalf. Welcome Ms. Westmoreland.

MS. WESTMORELAND

Hello.

PTA PARENT #1
 Let the proceedings commence.

PTA PARENT #2
 Ms. Westmoreland can you express your concerns to the board.

MS. WESTMORELAND
 Yes. A boy in my daughter's second grade named Ade Mitchell, was caught by Ms. Thompson showing his penis to my daughter in the stairwell and asking her to "touch it." She took them to the principal's office and I was called on my job. I think Ms. Thompson was negligent in her duties as teacher to supervise her students which is why something like this could happen. The boy, Ade, is bad, according to my daughter. He's always in trouble or being sent to the Principle's office. But it seems the three-strike rule doesn't apply to him.

(MORE)

MS. WESTMORELAND (CONT'D)
 He has yet to be punished for what he did to Brittany, and I think it's because Ms. Thompson is dating his father.

PTA PARENT #2
 Do you have proof that Ms. Thompson is dating Ade Mitchell's father?

MS. WESTMORELAND
 I have pictures.

The crowd jabbars as Ms. Westmoreland takes the photos to the PTA board.

PTA PARENT #2
 Thank you.

PTA PARENT #3
 Let the record show that these pictures are of Ms. Thompson and Ade getting into a vehicle driven by Mr. Mitchell outside of the school on several occasions.

The audience gasps. Shana looks around the room for Harold. She sees Marie standing in the back.

PTA PARENT #4
 Ms. Mitchell, did you leave your students, Brittany and Ade, unattended?

SHANA
 No. They wandered off.

MS. WESTMORELAND
 Brittany did not wander -

PTA PARENT #1
 Ms. Westmoreland, please. You had your opportunity to speak.

PTA PARENT #2
 So you didn't leave them unattended, but you weren't able to keep up with them all.

SHANA
 I have 34 students -

PTA PARENT #3
 As do most of my teachers, and they seem to do just fine.

PTA PARENT #5
Principal Meyer. May we ask you a few questions regarding the matter.

PRINCIPAL MEYER
Certainly.

PTA PARENT #5
Why wasn't Ade reprimanded?

PRINCIPAL MEYER
After investigation into the matter I had come to discover that, though he did show Brittany his private parts, he had recently suffered trauma at home and I recognized his behavior as "acting out." I felt that suspending him would only exasperate the issue for the worse.

PTA PARENT #5
How would you characterize Ms. Thompson's performance as a teacher?

PRINCIPAL MEYER
She's a good teacher who is often overwhelmed by her load.

PTA PARENT #3
Ms. Mitchell, you said you had a character witness, someone to speak on your behalf?

The chatters from the audience escalate. Shana looks at the time, and everything starts to go in SLOW MOTION. She looks for Harold, he is not there. There is not a friendly face in the room. She is abandoned. She is humiliated.

PTA PARENT #3 (CONT'D)
Ms. Mitchell?

SHANA
No, there's no one.

PTA PARENT #4
Ms. Mitchell, do you have any further documentat -

SHANA
I quit.

PTA PARENT #4
Excuse me?

SHANA
I quit.

PRINCIPAL MEYER
Shana -

SHANA
No. I quit.

The crowd escalates its chatter. Shana gathers her things.

PTA PARENT #4
Ms. Thompson, we -

Shana walks out of the courtroom. Two-bit journalists snap a few photos of her as she leaves.

CUT TO:

53 INT. SHANNA'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT

53

Shana sits among several boxes packing her mothers belongings away. The house is slowly becoming vacant. The DOOR BELL rings. Shana looks out the window and doesn't see anyone. The BELL rings again. She goes to the door and opens.

SHANA
Ade?

ADE
Hi.

SHANA
What are you doing here?

ADE
Did you and my dad break up or something?

SHANA
Come inside.

EXT. HAROLD'S HOUSE

Shana hold's Harold's coat and rings his door bell. Ade stands beside and slightly behind her to brace himself for his father's wrath. The cab they rode in idles in the street. Harold opens the door.

SHANA
Missing somebody?

Ade peeks around Shana's body.

SHANA (CONT'D)
Go ahead.

HAROLD
Ade?

ADE
I just wanted to say, "Hi."

HAROLD
Go inside.

Ade goes inside. Shana and Harold awkwardly stand looking at each other. Shana hands him his coat.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Thank you, for bringing him back.

Harold stares at her. Ade peeks at the two of them on the stoop.

SHANA
That's it? That's all you have to say?

HAROLD
What do you want me to say?

SHANA
Say something.

Harold is speechless. He takes a breath.

SHANA (CONT'D)
(after a moment)
Fine. You might, at least, want to explain what happened to your son.

Shana walks toward the cab. The meter has been running and we see the time pass signified by the cents added to the price. Shana doesn't look at Harold standing on the stoop. The cab drives away.

FADE TO:

Shana on a plane landing into LAX

Shana looking out of the plane window at the miniature looking buildings and cars becoming bigger and bigger.

PILOT (V.O.)

Welcome to Los Angeles
International Airport, time now is
11:43am, temperature a sunny 73
degrees. Your baggage will be at
baggage claim carosell number
three. Please remain seated until
after taxi -

Shana waits for her luggage to come around the carosell. It's a nice sized bag signifying a potentially long stay. She wheels her bag in the direction of ground transportation.

Shana rents a car.

Shana gets into her rented car and drives out of the garage.

Shana drives, windows down, hair blowing in the California sunshine.

CUT TO:

EXT. LOS ANGELES, THE JUNGLE

Shana drives on the freeway past famous Los Angeles palm treed geographic markers. She drives into her old neighborhood onto Santa Rosalia, and though it has been more than twenty years, everything is in place, just older and browning at the edges. The people are different, the times have changed. There's a different gas station company on the corner down the street, the movie theatre is now a church, etc. Shana drives onto her old street. She sees her old building. Everything looks so much smaller than she remembered- the walkway shorter, the courtyard a pueny concrete enclave - how did she ride her bike there? The FLASHBACK from the beginning returns as she can see her child self in the window looking to see her father. She sees her mother, the younger Michelle, coax her young self from the window. She sees her mother look from the window with worry and doubt. SOMEONE actually looks out of the window at her staring wondering what the hell she's staring at. Shana translates that body language, and leaves.

58

EXT. HAWTHORNE - AUNT SHARON'S HOME

58

Shana drives into the driveway of the gated condominium community of her aunt SHARON THOMPSON (60).

She gives the security guard the validating information and the baracade is lifted. Shana drives into the manicured, villa complex. Shana parks in the parking spot designated for guests of the building. Sharon emerges from behind her condo door, to greet her. Shana gets out of the car.

SHANA

Hey.

SHARON

Don't you 'hey' me. Come here.

Sharon hugs Shana, and Shana melts into her arms.

SHARON (CONT'D)

Come inside.

Sharon helps Shana with her bags and ushers Shana inside.

CUT TO:

59

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE

59

Shana and Sharon are in the living room. Plates of empty food are war torn on the coffee table. Pictures from the wall collage sit in looked-through piles on the coffee and end tables near the women. Shana is stretched out on the couch.

SHARON

Maybe you should talk to somebody.

SHANA

Somebody?

SHARON

A therapist.

SHANA

You think I need a therapist?

SHARON

There's nothing wrong with talking to a therapist.

SHANA

I'll be fine. I just needed to get away.

SHARON

I talk to a therapist. We all got issues. There's nothing wrong with it.

(MORE)

SHARON (CONT'D)

All this stuff with this man, and
with your mom, if you keep it
inside it's going to make you sick.

SHANA

Maybe I'm already sick.

Shana returns to her photos. She flips through one by one of her favorites. Shana hands Sharon a recent picture of her and her mother in the hospital.

SHARON

You all never did look anything
alike.

Shana looks at the old pictures of family in frames all around the room. She stops on a posed picture of a much more reserved Michelle and a young Shana. Sharon lights a cigarette.

SHANA

I always thought I must look like
my dad.

SHARON

You don't look like him either.

SHANA

You met him?

SHARON

I've seen a picture. It was a
picture of him holding you and you
mom -

Shana pulls the picture of the family with the headless man from her stack.

SHANA

This picture?

Sharon looks.

SHARON

Yeah.

Sharon looks at the photo.

SHANA

Do you know his name?

SHARON

She never told you either?

SHANA

No.

SHARON

I think I have this picture. She gave it to me when she thought it was going to last between the two of them, I guess.

Sharon places her pile of pictures on the table and retreats to her bedroom. Shana looks at the headless man photo.

CUT TO:

65 INT. SHARON'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM

65

MONTAGE: SEARCHING

Sharon brings out albums and boxes of unorganized photos. They look through them together and share moments as they reminisce.

Shana looks through the pictures alone, unsuccessful.

Harold searches for pictures and finds a copy of the same Sears photo, his head in tact. He breaks down.

Shana throwing up and looking at herself in the mirror.

Ade acting out at the new school, back in the principal's office.

Harold driving by Michelle's hospital, not going in.

Shana walks along the beach on a crisp day. Not many people are there, just a few die-hards kite surf in the distance. She makes footprints in the sand that get washed away.

FADE TO:

INT. SHARON'S HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM

Shana packs her bags. Sharon puffs her cigarette.

SHARON

You going to have it?

SHANA

I'm too old to pretend it was a mistake.

SHARON
You don't sound happy about it.

SHANA
I'm not. But I will be.

66 INT. CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL

66

Shana enters her mother's room. She is in the bed, propped up by pillows. Shana watches her from a distance. She is the shell of what Shana remembers. Shana places her mother's hand on her stomach. Michelle doesn't respond.

INT. SHANA'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT

Shana packs up the house which looks significantly empty. She wraps each china dish in newspaper before placing it in the storage box. The doorbell rings. Shana goes to the door. It is Harold. They look at each other. Shana opens the door and turns to go back inside. Harold lets himself in.

HAROLD
I've been by to see you a couple of times.

SHANA
I took some time off.

Shana continues to pack.

HAROLD
Shana I owe you an apology. I'm sorry. For leaving you hanging, that day. I wasn't ready. It's complicated.

SHANA
It's not complicated. You either show up or you don't.

HAROLD
I was scared.

Harold is at a loss. He stands there wanting to say more, but helpless to do so.

SHANA
I'm pregnant, Harold.

Harold freezes.

HAROLD

From me?

Shana darts her eyes at him as if to say, "how dare you,".

SHANA

Don't worry. I'm not asking you
for anything. I thought you'd like
to know.

Shana tapes a box.

HAROLD

You can't have it.

SHANA

Please don't be here when I get
back.

Shana lifts the box and takes it into the back room
(basement).

Harold stands in complete shock. He exits the front door and
doesn't look back. Shana returns from the basement. He is
gone. She goes to the window and looks out of it, waiting as
she did as a child.

FADE TO:

INT. SHANA'S BROOKLYN APARTMENT

The room is all decorated different, looking like the home of
a young soon-to-be mom. Shana is showing now. The MEN
delivering furniture from IKEA to her home are leaving and
she sits in what is now her nursery reading instructions to
assemble baby furniture. We see MAIL being juttet through
her mail box slot. She stops her assembly and goes to
retrieve the mail. She scans through the junk mail and bills
and stops on a letter from her aunt Sharon. She opens the
letter and reads it first. It says "his name is Harold, last
name unknown" There's the complete photo stapled to the back
page of the letter, and its Harold. Shana looses her breath
and stumbles back. She looks at the picture. She looks at
the picture. She FLASHBACK to her child memory of waiting
for her father. She FLASHBACK to making love. She gasps.
She sees the photo and turns it over. In her aunt's
handwriting it says, Harold, Michelle and Hazel 1971. She
FLASHBACK to Harold disappearing at the hospital. She
remembers her mother wailing. She realizes that he knew.
She sees her belly growing.

SHANA

No.

She looks at the time. 3pm.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAROLD'S HOUSE

Shana knocks on the door. Harold opens the door. Shana looks at him. She sees flashes of his younger self in the photo and she knows it's the same person. She hands him the complete picture. He looks at it, and as he looks up:

SHANA

Is it true? (beat) Please tell me
you didn't know.

HAROLD

(beat)
Come inside.

Shana attacks him. Harold defends himself and tries to restrain Shana. People on the street notice their physical altercation on Harold's stoop.

SHANA

You knew! You knew from the
beginning!

HAROLD

I didn't know, Shana. I swear to,
God. I swear -

SHANA

Oh, God!

SLOW MOTION: Shana screams and continues her attack. Ade hears the fight and comes to the door.

ADE

Stop it!

Ade interjects himself into the middle of the brawl and is pushed down the stoop stairs. He stumbles for his footing, misses the steps and lands on his head on the concrete at the bottom of the stairs. Blood from his cracked skull pools on the gray concrete. Harold runs to Ade. Shana stands in the whirlwind of pointing bystanders and Harold's screams.

HAROLD

Call 911!

SLOW MOTION: Shana's head spins. The sun is bright. The sky is blue. The clock tolls.