



Digital Commons@

Loyola Marymount University
LMU Loyola Law School

LMU/LLS Theses and Dissertations

Spring 2021

Black Men Don't Cheat

Edwin Lorenzo Martin

Loyola Marymount University, retrosupreme@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Film Production Commons](#), and the [Screenwriting Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Martin, Edwin Lorenzo, "Black Men Don't Cheat" (2021). *LMU/LLS Theses and Dissertations*. 982.
<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/etd/982>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. It has been accepted for inclusion in LMU/LLS Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Loyola Marymount University and Loyola Law School. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lmu.edu.

FINAL THESIS
TELEVISION PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Student Name: Edwin Lorenzo Martin _____

Thesis Logline: Sick of doing what's expected him, Marcus leaves his job as a doctor to pursue acting as he and his roommates figure out life in a fast changing South Central LA.

Writer

Title

A teleplay written and produced and presented to the faculty of
the Writing and Producing for Television MFA Program in the
School of Film & Television at Loyola Marymount University of
Los Angeles, California

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Fine Arts

Writing and Producing for Television

By

Edwin Lorenzo Martin

Student Name



Edwin Lorenzo Martin (May 4, 2021 18:44 PDT)

Student Signature

APPROVAL TO ADVANCE TO CANDIDACY

The following student has met all the criteria to advance to candidacy for an M.F.A. in Fine Arts with an emphasis in Writing and Producing for Television:

Edwin Lorenzo Martin

Student Name



SCWR 680 Fall 2020 Instructor Signature



SCWR 681 Spring 2021 Instructor Signature



Patricia Meyer (May 6, 2021 11:15 PDT)

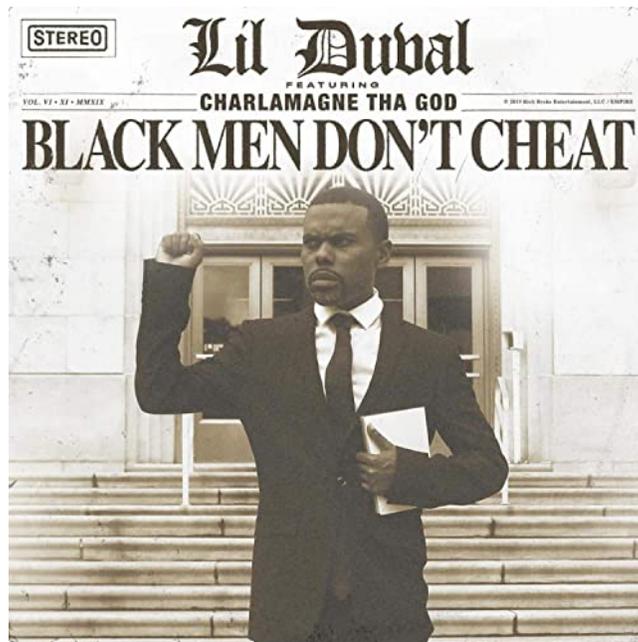
Graduate Director Signature

Date: May 4, 2021

BLACK MEN DONT CHEAT

Written by

Lorenzo Martin



FADE IN:

EXT. INGLEWOOD - NIGHT

A PERFECTLY CLEAR NIGHT SKY. We PAN ACROSS an overhead shot of some apartment complexes parallel to those iconic Cali palm trees.

INT. - APARTMENT - NIGHT

We're revving up a "friendly" game of Heads Up, in a clean living space with hints of bro vibes. MARCUS (29, clean, cut and proper) is teamed up with his girlfriend KAYLA (late 20s, bad & boujee) who both seem comfortably overconfident and relaxed on the couch.

JAYLEN (28, tall, dark but not so handsome) doesn't seem bothered by the challenge alongside his parter ANDRE (27, an extra from The Wire) who sits juxtaposed to him on the carpet.

MARCUS

Alright so that's 7. It's you guys' turn but don't feel bad if you don't beat our score, Kayla and I have never lost at this.

KAYLA

Exactly, we're always in sync especially when you act it out.

The couple share lovey dovey eyes before touching noses leaving the other two guys disgusted.

JAYLEN

Alright, keep that shit over there, let's just get this game going.

Marcus fiddles with his phone before handing it over to Jaylen.

MARCUS

Alright, the next category is celebrities. But feel free to change it to something else.

DRE

Huh? For what?

MARCUS

Every time I play this game with you you never know anyone.

DRE

What you mean? I be killing it in this game.

MARCUS

Yeah, when the category is food or something. But when it's people you fold. You don't know any white people.

Kayla holds back a laugh before Jaylen gives the phone to Andre.

JAYLEN

Cause you don't know how to give clues.

MARCUS

How? If it's an actor, I'd name every movie they're in and he still won't get it.

JAYLEN

See? That's why you fuckin' up. Watch this.

"ANNE HATHAWAY" pops up on the screen.

JAYLEN (CONT'D)

Ight. This the white chick that be in all the movies.

Dre snaps his finger without hesitation.

DRE

Anne Hathaway!

JAYLEN

BOOM.

Marcus and Kayla hits the wtf face before the next name shows up on the screen **"Matthew McConaughey."**

JAYLEN (CONT'D)

This the cowboy nigga.

DRE

Matthew McConaughey!

Next name, **"QUEEN LATIFAH."**

JAYLEN

Ight, She gay... I think.

DRE
Queen Latifah!

JAYLEN
Let's goooooo.

Marcus feeling real goofy as he looks back and forth between his two roommates, stupefied.

Next name up with 15 seconds left, "**KANYE WEST.**"

JAYLEN (CONT'D)
Ight, this nigga be wildin'.

DRE
Kanye!!

JAYLEN
Lets' get it!!!

Last name with five seconds left for the win, "**TAYLOR SWIFT.**"

JAYLEN (CONT'D)
Uhhh... ummmm... she suffers from
noasitol!!

DRE
Taylor Swift!!!!

Time expires on the clock.

JAYLEN
Let's GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!

Jaylen and Dre do an intricate elaborate handshake leaving Marcus and Kayla in the dust.

What the fuck just happened??

TITLE SEQUENCE

EXT. INGLEWOOD - DAY

The same palm trees from before are visible but against a clear blue sky this time. A MEDIUM WIDE of streets buzzing with activity

EXT. CENTINELA HOSPITAL - DAY

Regular shmegular day. It's a hospital. People walking in and out.

INT. CENTINELA HOSPITAL - DAY

PAN IN towards the receptionist desk. Things are fast paced. White coats and scrubs move in and out of rooms so fast you can't see any faces. We don't know if any actual medicine is being practiced but if there isn't they're playing it off well.

Marcus appears in view, bright and chipper ready to tackle the day shadowing Surgeon DR. MAC (50? 60? 80 with good skin? Doc Brown in Cosplay?) who clearly had an interesting night.

INT. HALLWAY - WALKING

MARCUS

Alright, so other than the analysis results at 8:30. Looks like you're prepped for surgery at 10.

DR. MAC

Splendid! And the surgery is for...

Marcus looks at him annoyed.

DR. MAC (CONT'D)

The uhhhh...

MARCUS

Kidney transplant-

DR. MAC

KIDNEY TRANSPLANT. Right, right, right...

Dr. Mac checks his clipboard as he walks off when Marcus hears a cry for help in the distance.

OLD MAN (O.S.)

Help! I need a doctor!

Marcus scurries to the source of the sound to find an OLD MAN in a hospital bed.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Ahhh... Finally thank you!

After proudly fixing his trench coat, Marcus walks over to his bed.

MARCUS

What can I help you with today?

OLD MAN

Didn't you hear? I need a doctor!
I'm in pain.

Marcus looks around before pointing at himself. The old man squints his eyes and sizes him up and down.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

You?

MARCUS

Yes sir. Now where is this pain com-

OLD MAN

You know actually, I feel a lot better now.

The old man springs up out of bed and saunters out the room leaving a bewildered Marcus behind.

INT. - CENTINELA HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA

More white coats and scrubs walking around in controlled chaos. Marcus sits at a table checking his phone while snackin' on some carrot sticks before ADAM (early 30s, white & definitely claps when the plane lands) plops down next to Marcus.

ADAM

Dude. Get this.

Marcus inhales clearly preppin' himself for some bullshit.

ADAM (CONT'D)

So I'm talking to this chick I met at this party last week. We're texting and everything's going good till...

Adam leans over to show him a text message and points to one specifically that read **"Hey, you're cool but I just wanna be transparent, I'm not really into white guys."**

MARCUS

So?

ADAM

SO? You don't think that's fucked up?

MARCUS

Not really. She just has a dating preference. Maybe she can't help that she's not attracted to white guys.

ADAM

She's white!

MARCUS

Welp.

ADAM

What if--

Marcus lifts his finger up.

MARCUS

Ahh-- don't say it.

ADAM

C'mon Marky, my stock is low right now...

MARCUS (WHISPER)

Marky...

ADAM

... I don't know what happened. In college I was swimming in coo. Now I can hardly get a tinder date.

MARCUS

Okay... don't ever say the word coo ever again. I mean never. You hear me? Don't even think it.

ADAM

Noted. I don't know man, when I'm out I just feel like some dumb, boring white guy.

MARCUS

Oh, c'mon man. You're not dumb. You're a friggen doctor for crying out loud. You're a high profile bachelor. Just do you.

ADAM

You're right Marcus. I should find an asian chick or a black girl to make her jealous.

MARCUS

What? I didn't say that at all.

ADAM

You're a genius bro thank you!

Adam runs off before Marcus can even process what happened.

EXT. INGLEWOOD - EVENING

Similar shot from opening with slightly more light. The sun just set so there's still that orange hue in the sky.

INT. APARTMENT - BATHROOM - EVENING

Jaylen looks like he can't decide if he's going with the nerdy or the urban look as he fixes himself up in the mirror clearly getting ready to go out. He grabs a black bottle of Creed and sprays a modest amount on his neck. This doesn't go unnoticed by Dre who catches him walking by and calls him out.

DRE

That boy bustin' out the Creed?? Oh he tryna spend a bag tonight!

Jaylen is clearly a little embarrassed but tries to play it off.

JAYLEN

Me? Nah, just taking this girl I met on Tinder to a bar on Sunset.

DRE

Sunset?? Aye man, I feel broke just talking to you, she gotta be at least an 8 if you going out like this.

Jaylen sprays another mist of the cologne as Dre continues the theatrics.

DRE (CONT'D)

A 9??? Oh shit, I know yo cheap ass only use that much if you making money or you spending it so I know you with the static.

JAYLEN

Relax, man. I'm just trying to make a solid first impression.

Dre laughs it off while leaning on the doorway.

DRE

By taking her to a spot you can't afford on the regular? What's the point of acting fake rich, just be real and keep it playa.

JAYLEN

Man, I got this alright. I'm bout to come up anyway so this little spot bout to be nothin' with this bread I'm bout to be on.

DRE

Aye, man whatever you say.

Dre walks away with the "ight bruh" look on his face.

DRE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Don't forget to keep it playa!

Jaylen scoffs at his advice before spraying one last stream of Creed on his wrists.

DRE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Ooooouuuuu!!

CUT TO:

EXT. MALIBU - NIGHT

Gold lights paint a dark landscape on the coast. Waves crashing can be heard faintly in the background.

EXT. NOBU MALIBU - NIGHT

It's a who's who of who feels important making their way inside the restaurant. Valet drivers compete for tips in front the lot.

INT. NOBU MALIBU - NIGHT

Marcus & Kayla have two colorful cocktails in front of them complimenting the sophisticated atmosphere. Kayla seems way into her phone not noticing Marcus looking for a conversation starter.

KAYLA

Can you believe Monica started an Only Fans? Monica. The one who tried to tell ME I need to get MY life together. Well look how the tables have turned.

MARCUS

Yeah, that's crazy.

KAYLA

I mean not that there's anything wrong with it, it's just that this whole time she was giving me shit for being an influencer when she--

MARCUS

Hey, Kayla.

KAYLA

Oh, I'm sorry babe. What is it?

MARCUS

Where do you see realistically in the next couple years?

Kayla's eyes light up.

KAYLA

Well... obviously I wanna be married. So you need to get it together because I am not trying to be one of these basic bitches out here with no ring.

MARCUS

Right.

KAYLA

And I want kids obviously. No less than four. And a house in the valley, six bedrooms with a gazebo in the backyard, a pool and two dogs.

Kayla runs out of fingers to count on before Marcus takes a big sip of his drink.

MARCUS

You got it all planned out, huh.

KAYLA

Of course I do. What don't you?

MARCUS

I don't know. Sometimes I wonder if being in medicine is really for me.

KAYLA

You know I was thinking the same thing because anesthesiologists are in demand in our area so you could open your own practice and make even more money...

Marcus exhales in disappointment watching Kayla completely miss the point and drone on before beckoning the waiter for another drink.

END ACT ONE

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MORNING

Jaylen sits on the kitchen table eating a bowl of cereal as Marcus walks in to make a coffee while Dre's locked in to a game of Madden. Jaylen can't help but throw a jab his way.

JAYLEN

Yerrrrrr! Mr. Uptight is up!

DRE

Ayeeeeeeee!

MARCUS

Oh, y'all got jokes this morning.
How was your night that Tinder
chick?

JAYLEN

Ummmm... You know it was good. Took
her to a nice ass spot. Pulled out
the stops.

CUT TO:

FLASHBACK

INT. FRESH ON SUNSET RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A WAITRESS (20s, ANNOYED) is attempting to swipe Jaylen's card for the umpteenth time. His date RAYNA (20s) hasn't fully caught on.

JAYLEN

That's so weird, I just used it.
Are you sure you can't manually
input it?

WAITRESS

No, sir like I said. We need
something we can swipe.

Nervous, Jaylen fumbles another card out of his wallet before handing it over. The waitress rolls her eyes as she walks away to go try it.

JAYLEN

Hey, actually I'll finish up here
why don't you just meet me at the
car?

RAYNA

Oh. Okay.

After Rayna gets up and leaves, Jaylen looks around before slipping out of the restaurant.

END FLASHBACK

JAYLEN

But enough about me, How was your night with the ol' lady. Y'all figured out if your future house gonna have a gazebo or y'all just going with the pool?

MARCUS

Yeah, you havin' fun with it. Nah, we just talked about the future and stuff.

DRE

I mean y'all been together what, two years? Y'all basically married.

MARCUS

I mean it looks like that, I'm still figuring out life.

JAYLEN

Man, you had life figured out as long as I've known you. You plan out when you have sex with your girl man what the fuck is that.

MARCUS

Knock a guy for trying to be organized.

JAYLEN

Watch. When you and Kayla get married, you're gonna have to make a power point about why she should let you beat.

DRE

He gonna buy a hot pocket without asking and go home to separate beds.

Dre and Jaylen are having the time of their lives clowning the good doctor. Marcus pulls out his phone.

MARCUS

Man, whatever. Speaking of money I need rent. I need to pay it by tomorrow so we don't get hit with that late fee, *again*.

All eyes shoot towards Jaylen.

JAYLEN
Oh, c'mon. Once?

DRE
Twice, nigga.

Dre reaches in his pocket and pulls out a wad of cash rolled up in a rubber band. He tosses it over to Marcus who counts it before handing a bill back.

MARCUS
Got an extra hundred in here.

DRE
Oh my bad, good looks.

Jaylen is straight up astonished. Marcus gestures towards him.

MARCUS
Well? Lemme guess, your bank doesn't let you transfer more than \$500 at a time right?

DRE
Nah, his account got hacked remember.

JAYLEN
Actually, I'm waiting for a check to clear from my last gig. Should be today.

MARCUS
Well, listen if I don't have the money by tomorrow morning, we're going to have to discuss the roommate situation moving forward. Dre and I can't keep pulling your weight-

JAYLEN
Look, I got you okay. I'm not even worried.

Marcus doesn't get to plead his case before construction sounds start flaring up outside. Dre pauses his game before heading outside.

DRE (O.S.)
Aye, y'all come check this out

Jaylen tosses his bowl in the sink before following him, Marcus lagging behind.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - SIDEWALK - DAY

Dre & Jaylen turn their heads in sync at the construction taking place just across the street from their residence. A sign in front of the activity read **FUTURE HOME OF WHOLE FOODS.**

JAYLEN

Welp. We had a good run.

DRE

Back in B-More, they put a Trader Joe's on the block. A few months later, mad niggas started moving out the block.

Marcus walks up on them shuffling some mail unaware of the severity of the situation.

MARCUS

He did you guys see the rent's going up 2%?

Marcus looks up to see what they're seeing.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Oh snap! They're building a Whole Foods? Perfect. I've been dying for some healthier food options out here.

Jaylen and Dre look disappointed before Marcus spots a parking enforcer out the corner of his eye.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

Isn't that your car, Jay?

Jaylen looks up before running towards his whip.

JAYLEN

Aye!

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

The METER MAID slaps the ticket on the windshield of his older modeled car that could use a rainy day or two.

JAYLEN

Aye, man what the fuck?

METER MAID
Car's on the red.

JAYLEN
What the hell? That's barely an
inch.

METER MAID
Sorry. Rules are rules.

Jaylen grabs the citation before reading it.

JAYLEN
Dusty!? For color you put dusty??

METER MAID
Yeah I couldn't tell what color it
was.

JAYLEN
Man, it's gray.

The meter maid tilts his head slightly.

METER MAID
Really? Hm.

He walks away whistling leaving a pissed off Jaylen behind.
Jaylen walks back to his roommates.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - SIDEWALK - DAY

Jaylen looks at his ticket in disbelief.

JAYLEN
Look at this shit. \$78. I swear
this city loves exploiting niggas.

MARCUS
Yeah, the city of Los Angeles gave
you a ticket for parking in the red
zone because you're black.

DRE
No cap, that dusty ass whip needed
a ticket.

Marcus and Dre laugh at Jaylen as he storms back into the
apartment.

DRE (CONT'D)
Aye, don't forget we gotta hit the
mall later.

MARCUS

Yeah, I got you after work.

INT. APARTMENT - JAYLEN'S ROOM - LATER

Jaylen aggressively searches through his phone while his friend Vera (Latin, late 20s) casually uses his computer.

VERA

So how short are you?

JAYLEN

\$600

VERA

How many times are you going to go through this though? I told you my job can use a BTS photographer, just start there and try to do other stuff.

JAYLEN

I told you already. I came out here to make it as an artist. If I take a steady job, I'd be selling out.

VERA

If you take a steady job you'd be paying your bills.

JAYLEN

When I make it, it'll all be part of my origin story. I can see it now. I'm on one of the late night shows and tell them about the struggle as a tear falls down my face.

Jaylen looks aimlessly in the sky as his future visualization sets in leaving Vera bewildered.

JAYLEN (CONT'D)

I just gotta have a warrior spirit.

VERA

Alright, Drake well that warrior spirit won't get you paid but I know something that might.

She hands over her phone to show him an app called CreateCom. He's surprised to see his picture already there.

VERA (CONT'D)

I made you a profile already. You basically just choose your profession and people hire you based on need. I linked your profile so people can see your work. You negotiate a price, do the job, get paid. Simple.

JAYLEN

I don't know. I can't do odd jobs. I gotta do things that align with my vision.

Vera's annoyed now. She grabs him by the collar.

VERA

Make it align with your vision. Look you have an offer already.

The picture of an older woman appears on the app with the ad **"Need dignified photos of Colonel Aureliano Buendía. Reference photos attached. \$300"**

VERA (CONT'D)

See? Dignified photos. \$300 right there. Easy.

JAYLEN

Colonel? So just a couple shots of some military dude? Sounds easy enough.

VERA

Exactly. Also; Please get a car wash. Expeditiously.

JAYLEN

Man, it's not even that bad.

VERA

You're right. And if a girl is still down to talk to you after seeing your wheels, she can write her number with her fingers on your windshield.

Vera offers a fake smile to her buddy.

CUT TO:

INT. CENTINELA HOSPITAL - ROOM - DAY

Marcus scribbles illegible notes down on a pad as he assesses MS. PARKER (Black, Fiddy something and FABULOUS, OKURRT) while she sits on the chair in front of him.

MARCUS

Okay, and do you smoke?

MS. PARKER

When you say smoke, you mean...?

MARCUS

Well, anything. Marijuana,
Tobacco...

MS. PARKER

No, I do not smoke... tobacco...

Marcus can't help but laugh to himself.

MARCUS

Ok and drinking?

MS. PARKER

Yeah, I' have a drink every now and
then.

MARCUS

Meaning like occasionally,
frequently, every day...?

Ms. Parker ponders the question before answering.

MS. PARKER

...Yes.

Marcus checks every box.

MARCUS

Alright well we're done with the
assessment, I think you're ready
for your procedure next week.

MS. PARKER

Perfect. And when do I get the
drugs?

MARCUS

Drugs?

MS. PARKER

You know... the sleepy stuff.
Propofol. Fentanyl.

(MORE)

MS. PARKER (CONT'D)

I got a guy who can flip those
bitches for crazy money. You think
I'm here for my health?

SHEENA

Mom!

Marcus was too enthralled by Ms. Parker's antics to notice SHEENA (20s, box braids, gawjus with an aura) walk into the room.

SHEENA (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, my mom thinks
everything is material for her new
career in stand up.

MS. PARKER

They say comedy comes from pain
actually.

Sheena shakes her head before extending her hand towards Marcus.

SHEENA

Hi, Sheena. You're doctor...?

MARCUS

You can just call me Marcus.

SHEENA

Okay Marcus. Nice to see a brotha
in a white coat. I was supposed to
be with her when she got here but I
got caught up in an audition.

MARCUS

Oh, you act?

SHEENA

Amongst other things, yeah.

MARCUS

I actually minored in drama before
I took the plunge into med school.

SHEENA

Oh okay, so you sucked at acting
and decided to fall back on being a
doctor?

MARCUS

More like my parents smacked some
sense into me.

SHEENA

Do you miss it at all?

MARCUS

Not really. Every time I think about doing something I hear a voice in my head saying "no, no, no... Why?" (accent)

SHEENA

Your parents are African?

MARCUS

Nigerian, so it was either doctor or... a different type of doctor.

Sheena laughs as her mom glows at her daughter hitting it off with Marcus.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

So you'll make sure your mom is good for next week?

SHEENA

Don't worry Doc, I got this.

Ms. Parker is escorted out the room by her daughter but behind her back she makes a "call her" gesture to Marcus putting a smile on his face.

EXT. ECHO PARK HOME - DAY

Outside shot of Victorian looking yet fancy house as Jaylen pulls up in his dust magnet.

INT. ECHO PARK HOME - DAY

Jaylen is led through the house, lighting equipment in tow by, MARIANA (60s, BIG CAT LADY VIBES) who gives her the run down.

MARIANA

The colonel's eyes aren't as good as they used to be so we can't have too many flash shots.

JAYLEN

Okay thats fine, I think I can accommodate that.

MARIANA

Also, he loves being complimented,
it really boosts his self-esteem.

JAYLEN

Alrighty.

MARIANA

So I really just need a good shot I
can use as a portrait to hang in
the living room. Oh, let me go get
him.

Mariana exits the room as Jaylen starts setting up his camera equipment. Jaylen looks around for a second as he notices the lack of family photos. Not too long passes before Mariana returns with Colonel Aureliano... A cat.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

Here he is. He's just had his
insulin shot and he's ready to go.

She places the grumpy looking cat on the floor in front of a disturbed Jaylen.

MARIANA (CONT'D)

Alright, I'll leave you to it. The
colonel hates when I watch, he gets
shy. Shout if you need anything.

As she exits, Jaylen gets locked into an involuntary staring match with his feline client.

INT. BEVERLY CENTER - LATER

It's a regular hustle and bustle day with a good amount of traffic in the mall.

INT. ZARA - EVENING

Dre tosses some clothes in a pile on a table while locked into a debate with Marcus.

DRE

I'm just saying... you take away
all that conscious shit and he
ain't really saying nothin'.

MARCUS

He's consistently in every top
rapper debate.

(MORE)

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You can't talk about great rappers
and not mention Cole. He started
his own rap label.

DRE

Yeah and he ain't even the best
spitta on it.

MARCUS

Okay, NOW you're bugg-

SHEENA

Marcus?

Marcus looks over his shoulder to see Sheena heading over to
him. Dre looks impressed.

SHEENA (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh, twice in the same day,
what a surprise.

MARCUS

Yeah, what are the chances, I'm
surprised you recognized me without
my coat on. You wouldn't happen to
be stalking me would you?

SHEENA

You shouldn't have let me catch
your scent earlier. It's a wrap
now.

DRE

Ahem...

MARCUS

Oh, my bad. This is my roommate
Dre. Dre this is Sheena, I met her
at the hospital earlier.

DRE

Wassup, shawty.

Sheena gives Dre a quick side hug.

MARCUS

So what're you doing here?

SHEENA

I need an outfit for another
audition I'm doing tomorrow.

MARCUS

How many roles are you trying book?

SHEENA

As many that pay me. Wait, actually this one is open call. Why don't you come?

MARCUS

Me?

SHEENA

Yeah, you said you took some drama classes. Aren't you curious to see if you still got it?

MARCUS

I have rounds tomorrow night.

SHEENA

Perfect. The casting is in the morning. Just come for shits and giggles.

MARCUS

What's it for anyway?

SHEENA

Some movie. My agent said it's for a big director but it's top secret apparently.

MARCUS

I don't know.

DRE

Just do it, nigga. You might be Denzel and you don't even know it.

SHEENA

Here let me give you my contact info.

Sheena puts her contact card in his phone which shows her number and all her social handles.

SHEENA (CONT'D)

Let me know if you decide to come and I'll shoot you the info.

She side hugs Marcus before taking off.

SHEENA (CONT'D)

See ya around, doc.

She disappears amongst the sea of people in the mall as Dre smacks Marcus on the arm.

DRE
My guy, how're you not all up in that?

MARCUS
C'mon, you know I'm with Kayla.

DRE
Negro, y'all are not compatible. Me and Jaylen keep telling you. She aggy as fuck.

MARCUS
Oh, so what am I supposed to do just drop her and go with the next pretty face?

DRE
I'm not saying that, I'm just saying vibe with shorty and see what happens.

MARCUS
Man, that's cheating.

DRE
No, that's vibin'. Black men don't cheat.

MARCUS
Man, shut up.

Marcus shoves all the clothes he was helping carry back into Dre's hands and walks away.

DRE
A lil' vibin' ain't hurt nobody!

EXT. HIGHLAND PARK HOME - BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

The colorful balloons. The bounce house. The kids running around. It's clearly a child's birthday. Jaylen's in another staring contest, this time with a kid, GABBY (8, PRECOCIOUS).

JAYLEN
Five bucks.

GABBY
What am I, a dope? Twenty.

JAYLEN
Twenty? You're crazy. Ten dollars. Take it or leave it.

GABBY

Guess I'll just have to tell my mom you were uncooperative and didn't have patience with me. I'm sure she can find another photogr-

JAYLEN

Fifteen dollars and I'll make you a balloon animal.

GABBY

Fifteen, Balloon animal AND you have to follow my tiktok.

JAYLEN

What? I don't even use tiktok.

GABBY

Looks like someone's making a new account then.

JAYLEN

Man, I'm not following an 8 year old child on tiktok, that's mad sus.

GABBY

MOMM-

JAYLEN

OKAY. OKAY. But you and the rest of your cronies have to show teeth.

GABBY

Done.

Jaylen takes out his phone and takes a second to download the app and make an account.

JAYLEN

Okay, what's your username?

GABBY

Gabby Not 2 Shabby. Number 2.

Jaylen rolls his eyes at the lack of creativity before showing her his phone.

JAYLEN

You have 250 thousand follo--
Whatever. There. Happy?

GABBY

Jubilant. And don't try to unfollow later because I'll know. & I'll make your life hell.

JAYLEN

Whatever. Can we just take this pic now?

GABBY

Why, of course!

A beaming Gabby takes over as she whistles for her kiddie friends to come over.

GABBY (CONT'D)

Let's get a couple shots in. Straight line, All teeth. Even if you don't have all of them.

Jaylen, relieved, takes some photos of the kids.

JAYLEN

Alright, perfect. That's all I need.

GABBY

Ummm... aren't you forgetting something?

JAYLEN

Oh, yeah...

Jaylen grabs a long balloon and tosses it towards Gabby.

GABBY

What the heck is this?

JAYLEN

A snake. Deuces.

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

Marcus finishes up washing some dishes as Jaylen comes through the door. He has an envelope in hand as he gives it to Marcus.

JAYLEN

It's all there

Marcus takes the envelope and puts it on the counter.

MARCUS

Jay. What's been up with you, man?

JAYLEN

Just hit a couple rough patches--

MARCUS

Every body hits a couple rough patches but they take responsibility for their shit. You're one of the most talented dudes I know. But you're not gonna wake up one day and see your work in art galleries.

JAYLEN

I know, man.

MARCUS

Do you? You have posters of Basquiat's work all over your room. He didn't just wake up Basquiat. He started out spray painting graffiti before his stuff made it to museums. But for whatever reason you think working hard makes you less of an artist.

Jaylen's clearly disappointed in himself. Marcus puts a hand on his shoulder.

MARCUS (CONT'D)

You're too smart to squander success over your ego. Don't be late on rent again.

Marcus walks away leaving Jaylen to his thoughts.

INT. APARTMENT - MARCUS' ROOM - NIGHT

Marcus plops on his bed, exhausted by the long day. He opens his phone where we see him texting Kayla. He starts out a dialogue along the lines of "**Hey, I think we should talk**". He thinks about it for a second before deleting it.

He then opens up Instagram and peruses Sheena's page, smiling as he looks through her pictures.

END ACT TWO