Black Men Don't Cheat

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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.
Author

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

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

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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 gooooo.

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
Let’s get it!!!

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

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

DRE
Taylor Swift!!!!

Time expires on the clock.

JAYLEN
Let’s GOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!

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
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)
Oooouuuuuuu!!

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 exhaled 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
Yerrrrr! Mr. Uptight is up!

DRE
Ayeeeee!

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 weig-

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