

A Love Letter To The Bronx

by

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JUAN	Anthony
ANDRES	Javi: 2-7, 10, 13-14, 59-61, 68-69, 74-77 Peo: 41-54,
CHAUNICE	Ana: 7-14, 56-61, 74-75
LEON	Mike: 14-16, 53-54, 65
CRYSTAL	Lucia: 16-22 Penny: 50-52
CRISTY	Adelina: 16-21, 27-31, 48-49
DANNY	Luis: 21-27, 69-73
ANGELA	Annie: 21-27, 69-73 Seis: 39-40
HENRY	Jorge: 30-38 Maicol: 41-54
JASON	Alex: 31-38 Max: 60-61, 63
AMIRA	Andrea: 46 Dotty: 55
TANISHA	Ivy: 60-61, 63-65, 66-68, 75
JP	Hector: 61-65, 66

JAVI (**Andres**) appears, behind the wheel. ANTHONY (**Juan**) appears, getting in the cab.

JAVI
Sir, I have no problem putting your bag in the trunk.

ANTHONY
It's fine.

JAVI
You sure?

ANTHONY
A hundred percent.

JAVI
Where to?

ANTHONY
Listen, I need you to do me a favor...

JAVI
...before you say anything else, I don't speed and I don't pass any red lights. I have one of the cleanest records in New York City and-

ANTHONY
-I wasn't-

JAVI
-and I won't risk my medallion on anybody, cool?

ANTHONY
Cool. But what I wanted to ask you-

JAVI
-and I don't do any discounts or credits.

ANTHONY
Understood. I need you to-

JAVI
I don't do unscheduled multiple stops.

ANTHONY
I wasn't going to ask you to do that.

JAVI

I don't follow people or follow other cars. I don't do none of that creepy ex-boyfriend/stalker stuff.

ANTHONY

Got it. Now can I ask you what I need?

JAVI

And no, you can't drive the car.

ANTHONY

Are you done?

JAVI

Yes.

ANTHONY

Good. I need you to-

JAVI

-and no smoking. Okay. Now I'm done.

ANTHONY

You sure now?

JAVI

(Thinks)

Yes.

ANTHONY

Where I need to go is a bit out of your way but if you can take me there, I'll pay you what you make in a day.

JAVI

That rhymed. Where do you want me to go? Long Island?

ANTHONY

No. It's a dangerous place.

JAVI

Texas?

ANTHONY

The Bronx.

Javi laughs.

ANTHONY

Okay. Fine. I'll get someone else.

JAVI

Wait. Sir, I go there all the time.

ANTHONY

You do? Why?

JAVI

A lot of us cabs go out there all the time.

ANTHONY

I thought cabs were too afraid.

JAVI

We carry guns.

ANTHONY

Excuse me?

JAVI

I'm kidding. The cab is bullet proof.

ANTHONY

What?

JAVI

Kidding again. This cab is protected by the mob.

ANTHONY

You serious?

JAVI

No. I'm kidding! You're fun.

ANTHONY

If you can take me to this address...

(Hands a paper)

...that a be great.

JAVI

Oh. That's the *hood* hood. Don't be scared. A lot has changed.

ANTHONY

I'm not scared.

JAVI

Good. Buckle up.

Javi drives.

ANTHONY

Hey. Can I ask you something?

JAVI

Yeah.

ANTHONY

How much has changed?

JAVI

Well, every time I drive by there, there's a *new* store or a *new* construction crew putting up something *new*.

ANTHONY

Sounds like you go there a lot.

JAVI

Actually, where you got me taking you...I live there.

Beat.

ANTHONY

I'm going to see my family.

JAVI

Gotcha.

ANTHONY

Suarez. Fifth Floor.

JAVI

I can't say I know them. Can I ask you a question?

ANTHONY

Sure.

JAVI

When was the last time you were there?

ANTHONY

Twenty-one years.

JAVI

Wow. Prepare yourself for some surprises.

ANTHONY

Like what? I mean, I hear all about the *changes* but I don't know who to believe. Is it better?

JAVI

Eh.

ANTHONY

Worse?

JAVI

Eh.

ANTHONY

Then what's different?

JAVI

You're going to have to make that decision yourself.

ANTHONY

I'm Anthony.

JAVI

Javi.

ANTHONY

Last question. I'm craving for a bakery. There used to be a Jamaican one there on the block. They served the best coffee with bread and butter.

JAVI

You talking about Shelly's?

ANTHONY

Yeah.

JAVI

I know the place. That entire street is a mall now.

(Beat)

And Shelly's is inside, twice as big.

ANTHONY

Whose running it?

JAVI

No idea. Why?

Anthony smiles.

JAVI

What are you smiling about?

ANTHONY

A memory.

Javi fades out.
Inside the bakery, ANA (**Chaunice**)
appears, behind the counter.

ANA

One beef patty and one coco bread!/
/

ANTHONY

That's me! Right here! How much you said?/
/

ANA

I didn't. What something to drink?/
/

ANTHONY

Let me think.

ANA

Today. Before I go extinct./
/

ANTHONY

Let me get... wait, this a thinker./
I mean...
/

ANA

Cream?

ANTHONY

Yeah!

ANA

Figures./
/

ANTHONY

I'm the type that likes to try new things./
/

ANA

I'm sure you do.

ANTHONY

I'm not a has been./
You see this instrument? And I can sing./

ANA

I knew you were a player.

ANTHONY

Of the violin?

ANA

Heartstrings./

ANTHONY

My name's Tony
I'm not phoney/
I'm not boney
And I would love to be your one and only/

ANA

I'm Ana
And I demand ya/
Hand a
Total of two fifty
Thank ya/

ANTHONY

Here you go
And I'll be on my way/

ANA

You forgot to leave your phone number
You know, in case/

ANTHONY

You saying I got a chance?

ANA

Ask again/

ANTHONY

Are you saying I got a chance?

ANA

One in ten/

ANTHONY

Okay. Ha ha. The joke's on me/

ANA

Boy, the joke's on me if you want me/

ANTHONY

You funny
And hard to get but I'm hardheaded/
Stupid too, I guess

ANA

Well, you said it/

ANTHONY

And I'm alarmed by how disarming you are/

ANA

They'll be no harm done unless you came armed/

ANTHONY

What if I said I thought we was meant to make beautiful
/descendants?
Would you let this love go unintended?/

ANA

I suggest it's best to elect to exit/
Now this conversation has ended/

ANTHONY

All right, bakery girl
I'll twirl my ass out ya world
Keep the change
Although I hope you stay the same

ANA

Hey! Wait!

ANTHONY

Huh? What's up?/

ANA

Pick me up at eight.

ANTHONY

Like a date?

ANA

Don't mess this up./

Ana disappears.
Javi returns.

JAVI

Sorry about that! These potholes are no joke.

ANTHONY

I definitely don't miss this.

JAVI

Are you okay? You were talking to yourself.

ANTHONY

Yeah. Strolling down memory lane...avenue, street, neighborhood.

JAVI

Sounded romantic. What's her name?

ANTHONY

Uh...it's not important.

JAVI

Tell me about the last time you saw her. I bet that's important.

Javi (**Andres**) disappears.
Ana (**Chaunice**) appears.

ANA

My mom told me my dad got a job in Colorado/

ANTHONY

When do you leave, Ana?

ANA

Tomorrow.

ANTHONY

Tomorrow?!/

ANA

I couldn't tell you because I can't stand a long goodbye/

ANTHONY

Then let's not take any more of your time
Have a nice life!/

ANA

I thought you would understand

ANTHONY

I do/
And clearly this past summer has meant nothing do to/
If that's where you need to be then so be it/

ANA

Que sera, sera, right?

ANTHONY

Does there have to be a reason?/

ANA

I believe that things have meaning/
And if you're too dumb to see it
Then maybe me leaving is the best thing we're needing/

ANTHONY

You think I want you to go?

ANA

It be nice if you say so/

ANTHONY

Okay. I don't want you to go

ANA

At least now know I know/

ANTHONY

Okay. Stay. You see?/
Am I supposed to expect you to forget your family?/
For a summer relationship
That's lasted six weeks?/
I mean, we haven't even said I love you yet/

ANA

I love you

ANTHONY

I love you

ANTHONY/ANA

Shit!

ANA

We could talk on the phone
Minutes are free after eight/

ANTHONY

Maybe I could visit in the summer
If I work all through Spring break/

ANA

Or when my auntie visits
Maybe I could fly with/
To Connecticut
If I ever get my license/

ANTHONY

Maybe we can meet halfway/
And actually be alone together for longer than a day/

ANA

Where we could lay, all night, under the stars/
And not couped up inside your momma's car/

ANTHONY

And I can sweat out your curls

ANA

And I can braid your hair better/

ANTHONY

All right, bakery girl

ANA

All right, player/

ANTHONY

We'll be together before we both know it/

ANA/ANTHONY

I'm doubtful about that but I can't show it/

ANA

I can't wait to see you again/

ANA/ANTHONY

Even though we both know that won't happen/

Javi (**Andres**) appears and Ana (**Chaunice**) disappears.

JAVI

Hey! Hey, Anthony! We're here. Which building?

ANTHONY

What? Sorry about that. Leave me right there. By the stoop.

JAVI

When are you leaving?

ANTHONY

Tomorrow.

JAVI

Short stay.

ANTHONY

Thanks for the ride.

JAVI

What do you say you take my phone number and I'll pick you up tomorrow and take you back to the airport?

ANTHONY

All right.

JAVI

You can call when you're ready.

ANTHONY

Be here tomorrow night. At 8.

JAVI

If you want to stay longer or if anything comes up...that's okay.

ANTHONY

8pm.

JAVI

Cool.

Anthony looks out.

JAVI

Does it look that different?

ANTHONY

I don't remember. Tomorrow.

JAVI

Tomorrow.

Javi (**Andres**) disappears.

Mike (**Leon**) appears.

ANTHONY

Hey. Could you let me into the building?

MIKE

You live here?

ANTHONY

Used to.

MIKE

I lost my front door key a year ago.

ANTHONY

And you never replaced them?

MIKE

Not for thirty-five dollars.

ANTHONY

How do you get in?

MIKE

Hit all of the doorbell buttons. Someone will buzz you in.

ANTHONY

Thanks.

MIKE

Hey! Hey! Watch it. You almost stepped on my Js.

ANTHONY

My bad.

MIKE

Oh, and have you seen Ivy?

ANTHONY

Who?

Anthony disappears.

MIKE

All I do all day is clean my kicks. Do you see how shiny they look? There's an art to it. You take a little bit of water, maybe spit and you use a soft cloth and rub *but* you can't dig in too hard. You gotta work the surface.

Keeping these babies clean is a 24/7 job. People don't know how to walk, so I gotta dodge out their way. I also gotta jump over puddles and dog shit is a real problem in the summer. The last time I had gum stuck at the bottom of my kicks, it was all up in the grooves and turned into a solid rock. I used a fork for two weeks to get it all out. When it's muddy outside, I walk around with my kicks wrapped in plastic bags with a tight knot around my ankles.

You have to understand, I can't be looking whack out here. Everyone judges you on your looks, your surface. And if I want to stay safe, I better look like I belong. I better look like I'm making a statement, on the surface, even if I might be scared inside. And shit, if I want any chance of getting a date, I better look fly. Mattafact, I better look like I can fly like Air Jordan. I better look fierce like a Puma. Strong like the Adidas mountain. As artful as a pair of Yeezys. Ya come check out my Nike checks.

But you can ask anyone about me, about who I inside. And they would say that I'm cool, reserved and purposeful, like a pair of high-top Dunks. And if you asked me directly, I would tell you, "Who's asking?" and if I wanted to answer, I'd say that you can never know me because you can't walk a mile, 100 feet or a step in my shoes! The only way you can get any idea of who I am is if you rob me of my sneakers and look inside and then maybe, maybe you'll see my sole.

Yes, I stood in line for five hours to get these. And yes, for every pair I cop on Stock X, I sell two. So my vice costs me nothing. Can you say the same?

I know you wanna ask, so I'm a say it. "Mike, how often do you buy a pair of kicks? Twice a year? Once a month? Once a week? Everyday?" I buy a new pair every time I can afford it.

When I was in high school, I had a pair of white Air Force Ones. And even then, I would spend all day cleaning them. One time, my teacher asked me, in front of everyone in class, "Mike, why are you always cleaning your sneakers? You're so materialistic. Grow up." I said, "Well, teach, unlike everybody else here, I don't get to start the beginning of every school year in a new pair of sneakers because my mom can't afford that. So I have to clean these because I don't know when I'll get another pair."

Next semester is my last, before I graduate with a MBA from Columbia next year. I plan on opening a shoe store. And when my momma is cheering for me, I'm a be walking down the aisle in my cap and gown with a brand-new pair of Air Force Ones.

Say what ya wanna say. Think of me how ya wanna think of me. But as for me, life is more than surface thinking. It's rubber-deep, textile-deep, synthetic-deep, foam-deep, leather-deep, it's skin-deep.

Was that a raindrop? They didn't say it was gonna rain! Yo, I gotta go! I can't let these get funky. Good thing I can run fast as shit in these. Later!

LUCIA (**Crystal**) appears.

LUCIA

Hey, Mike!

MIKE

Hey, Mrs. Soto! I gotta go!

Mike (**Leon**) disappears.

Lucia makes a call and Adelina (**Cristy**) appears, picking up.

ADELINA

Hey, sis. What's up?

LUCIA

You're home, right?

ADELINA

Where else would I be? You know I'm a good-for-nothing.

LUCIA

That's not what I meant.

ADELINA

Where are you?

LUCIA

I'm walking to my apartment now.

ADELINA

Take your fat ass up two more flights and get some of this slamming mojo I made.

LUCIA

Mom's recipe?

ADELINA

You know it.

LUCIA

With what?

ADELINA

I'm putting it all over my leftovers. Pollo, yuca, papas - take your pick.

LUCIA

Have you seen Jayden?

ADELINA

Not since mass on Sunday.

LUCIA

Has he called you?

ADELINA

What's going on?

LUCIA

He cut school today.

ADELINA

He's at that age. When Joseito was doing that - I went all over looking for him. You remember. What a waste of time. I'm sure he's out there pissing off some girl's parents. Good. Let them deal with him for a few hours. They say it takes a village, pero, what's a village when we got city bills.

LUCIA

Jayden is nothing like Joseito.

ADELINA

It's not even 2 o'clock. So he won't show until curfew time.
Which is what, Lucia, 5pm?

LUCIA

He knows to come home right after school.

ADELINA

Damn. Poor kid doesn't even have a curfew.

LUCIA

Yes, because we know how kids turn out when they don't.

ADELINA

Did ya get into an argument?

LUCIA

No.

ADELINA

He told me about it last week.

LUCIA

He did? Why?

ADELINA

Because I'm cool tía Adelina. Now why can't he go to the
concert? His grades are good.

LUCIA

He's too young.

ADELINA

For what, exactly?

LUCIA

It's dangerous.

ADELINA

More dangerous than the neighborhood? He'll probably be safer *at*
the concert. At least over there, they'll be security.

LUCIA

You don't know what you're talking about.

ADELINA

You have to learn to let go, Lucia.

LUCIA

This is the first time he's done this and so I have to nip it in the bud. Spare the rod, spoil the child. And what am I letting go exactly? His safety? So I can lose him to the world like Ivy? Or like how you did with Joseito?

ADELINA

I didn't lose him to the world. I lost him to drugs.

LUCIA

Don't you think that if you were stricter with him that maybe...?

ADELINA

You think I haven't asked myself that? He makes - made - his own decisions.

LUCIA

He had so much potential, but he threw it all away.

ADLEINA

Lucia, that's the last time I will let you speak about my deceased son that way. I let it slide three times already.

LUCIA

Who do you blame?

ADELINA

Would you feel better if I said myself? Do you believe that if Jayden is out there now, getting high, getting STDs, getting initiated as a gang member, it's all because you weren't watching him enough?

LUCIA

Yeah. That's what Andrea says.

ADELINA

Ivy ran away because of Andrea. Because of how she treated her. Now Jayden, doesn't live in a household like that. So my advice to you is get ready for a lot more heartbreak.

LUCIA

What do you mean?

ADELINA

Wait until he tells you he doesn't want to go to college or that he's going to major in English Literature. Wait until he brings home girls you don't approve of because they'll never be good enough, or worse, they'll remind you of me. Wait until he marries the girl you don't like. Wait until you see him argue with his wife and you have to tell him that he's acting like his father. Wait until he forgets to call you.

LUCIA

What if the next call I get...is bad?

ADELINA

That's what mother's do. We wait.

LUCIA

I never asked you what it was like when they called you. I didn't want to know but now...I feel like I have to prepare myself. Do you remember?

ADELINA

As they say, "Like it was yesterday." I was cleaning his room. I told myself not to snoop around because I was starting to trust him again. They say you know once that phone rings but I can't say I knew for sure but when I picked up, I heard the hospital machines in the background. Before the doctor even said a word, I cried.

RING!

LUCIA

Hold on. Someone is calling.

(On phone)

Hello? ... Jayden, where are you?! ...what the hell is a COD tournament?!...did your friends make you do this? Are you on drugs? ...Say that again... hold.

(Returns to Adelina)

Adelina.

ADELINA

Hmm Hmm Hmm! This mojo is gonna get me a man! No! Two men!

LUCIA

He's in Manhattan. He said they won a game tournament. A trophy and thousand dollars. I have to ground him, right?

ADELINA

Claro. And clear a shelf and make room for that trophy.

LUCIA

I'll put it next to the picture of the four of us. Be sure to see it and compliment him the next time you come by. I'll call you back. Sis, I'm always scared for him.

ADELINA

That makes you a good mother.

Adelina **(Cristy)** disappears.

LUCIA

(To Jayden)

Hello, Jayden? ...get home now! Noooooow. ...I love you.

(Hangs up)

Luis! Are you here?!

LUIS **(Danny)** appears, on the fire escape.

LUIS

I'm on the fire escape!

LUCIA

You better not be smoking!

Luis takes a last pull and puts out a blunt.

LUIS

No!

LUCIA

What you doing?!

LUIS

I'm talking to Annie!

LUCIA

What?!

LUIS

I'm talking to Annie!

LUCIA

Oh. I see. HOLA, ANNIE!

ANNIE (**Angela**) appears, also on the fire escape.

Oh, god.

Hi, Lucia!

Call me mom!

Okay, mom!

We're having a private talk. Bye!

Okay, okay. When you're done, we have to talk about your brother. *But* don't rush. Take your time.

Bye!

Lucia (**Crystal**) disappears.

Sorry. I had to throw away your blunt.

I was done.

You were saying...something about school. I think.

I don't remember. Who cares?

I do.

They share a smile.

Oh, yeah. You were saying something about Jennifer.

ANNIE

Right. She was staring at you in class today.

LUIS

Yeah? I must have had something on my face.

ANNIE

Yeah. Your smile.

LUIS

Cute.

ANNIE

You should ask her out. There's a party at the student life center. Take her.

LUIS

I don't really know her.

ANNIE

That's why you take her out.

LUIS

Are you going?

ANNIE

You know I don't like those things.

LUIS

Doesn't mean you won't go. We can go together.

Beat.

LUIS

You got the math homework?

ANNIE

I didn't do it.

LUIS

What about the U.S. History?

ANNIE

I didn't do that either.

LUIS

Science?

ANNIE

Nope.

LUIS

Hold up...you haven't done your homework yet? Who are you and what have you done with the real Annie?

ANNIE

She's gone.

LUIS

Yeah? Where she go?

ANNIE

Santo Domingo.

LUIS

What's over there?

ANNIE

Death.

LUIS

In all fairness, death is everywhere.

ANNIE

True. But it's different. Somehow, it's worse. I'm having a long day. You're going to have to ignore my mood.

LUIS

It's been that kind of week. Ever since Ivy ran off, everyone has been in the dumps. Tell you what, how about *I* actually do the homework this time and give it to you?

ANNIE

So *I* can get a bad grade?

LUIS

Ouch. But let's be real, your grades are so high you can probably get an F and still have an A plus. Your grades are so high you probably have a GPA of a million. Your grads are so high, it says God on the report card. And when you're a doctor -

ANNIE

-lawyer-

LUIS

-Madam president of the United States, I'll be in the crowd like, "I know she's smart because she used to give me all of the homework!" "Vote Annie. Hope Is Alive."

ANNIE

Was that my slogan?

LUIS

Yeah. I made it up. Like it?

ANNIE

Eh. You should ask Jennifer for the homework.

LUIS

Are we bringing her up again?

ANNIE

I know you get scared.

LUIS

I'm not scared. I'm not interested.

ANNIE

Ya two would make a cute couple.

LUIS

And what tells you that?

ANNIE

Some people click. Like it's meant to be. Like they have the right timing or all of the time in the world.

LUIS

To be real, there's someone else that I like.

ANNIE

She'll be valedictorian, for sure. Don't let her slip by.

LUIS

I need to tell you something, okay?

ANNIE

Me first. I won't be at school tomorrow. We're being deported.

LUIS

What?

ANNIE

A few days ago, my dad was truck driving in Virginia when the border patrol stopped him. And so yesterday, my mother found out that we've been overstaying our visas. She thought he was taking care of everything but apparently not. Parents.

LUIS

I'm sure something can be done.

ANNIE

We haven't overstayed too long so, it's not like we're in big trouble or anything. We only can't return for a bit.

LUIS

How long?

ANNIE

Three years.

LUIS

Shit. So that means...

ANNIE

...it means you better ask out Jennifer. She'll say yes.

LUIS

Annie...I wanted to go with you. And I was going to ask.

ANNIE

I know. I might have went.

Adelina (**Cristy**) appears, head out the window.

ADELINA

Oye, you two! Get inside!

LUIS

Tía, we're talking!

ANNIE

And the streetlamps won't go out until way later!

LUIS

And mind your business!

ADELINA

First, you don't talk to your elders like that!

LUIS

Elders? Aren't you ancient?!

ADELINA

Malchriados! Entren!

ANNIE

Adelina, is it true that you were the waitress for the Last Supper?

LUIS

I heard that when you were born, the Dead Sea was only sick.

ANNIE

I heard she knew Captain Crunch back when he was a Lieutenant.

LUIS

I heard that if she acts her age, she'll die!

ADELINA

That's it! I'm going up there!

Annie (**Angela**) and Luis (**Danny**) disappear.

ADELINA

This generation is something else, I tell you.

(To inside the apartment, to her father)

Que?! Papí, I'll do it later. Finish your food. What?! Yes, the check came in yesterday. Eat. Say that again?! I'm your daughter, Adelina. That's right. Where's Antonia? You mean your favorite daughter? She's living upstate in a big house with a man she doesn't love and if her head isn't up her ass, she might call you once a month! I said, she's fine! Finish your food.

Anthony steps out the building, taking a deep breath.

ADELINA

Tony?

ANTHONY

Ade? Adelina?

ADELINA

I knew that was you.

ANTHONY

Were you snooping?

ADELINA

Yeah. That's what I do.

ANTHONY

How are ya? And how's your pops? I'll come by after dinner and say hi. He should remember me, right? All those school projects...

ADELINA

We're good.

ANTHONY

Cool.

ADELINA

How's your family?

ANTHONY

I wouldn't know. No one showed. They didn't think I was actually coming, so...

ADELINA

And your mom?

ANTHONY

I found out she's been spending her Christmases alone for the last few years.

ADELINA

You didn't know? I usually bring her food.

ANTHONY

Thank you.

ADELINA

It's not my place to say-

ANTHONY

-so don't-

ADELINA

-and I *should* mind my own business-

ANTHONY

-please do-

ADELINA

-but I still must say-

ANTHONY

What?

ADELINA

Maybe you should take her back with you?

ANTHONY

You don't think I've asked her that? She doesn't want to go.

ADELINA

Ay, okay. This is her home. And yours.

ANTHONY

You think I'm a bad son?

ADELINA

Not if you give her what she wants.

ANTHONY

She doesn't know what's good for her.

ADELINA

She's not thinking about what's good for her.

ANTHONY

And that's the problem.

ADELINA

She only wants to be happy.

ANTHONY

That doesn't make sense.

ADELINA

When you get to be her age, it will make sense. I didn't understand it myself until, I was forced to.

ANTHONY

Yeah. That's what she said. Or something to that effect.

ADELINA

So believe her.

ANTHONY

We got into an argument. So I needed some air, you know?

ADELINA

It's why my nosey ass is always out here.

Smiles. Beat.

ADELINA

So are you going to force her to go with you or let her live out her days here?

ANTHONY

You wanna know so you can tell everybody in the neighborhood?

ADELINA

Only asking.

ANTHONY

How many more chapters do you have left in that book your writing?

ADELINA

Three. You want to write the Foreword?

ANTHONY

Later, Ade.

ADELINA

One more thing. I heard you were a doctor. What kind of doctor are you exactly?

ANTHONY

A neurosurgeon. Why?

ADELINA

Sounds rich.

ANTHONY

Bye.

ADELINA

Bye.

Anthony disappears. JORGE (**Henry**) appears.

ADELINA

(Sees someone)

Oye! Pastor Jorge! Where you going?! Is it true?! You and Sister Julia?!

JORGE

Adelina! Pretend you didn't see me!

ADELINA

But you're walking right there!

JORGE

Me cago en na!

ADELINA

Don't go! What are you doing?! You can't go into there! That's the wrong church!

Adelina **(Cristy)** disappears.

ALEX **(Jason)** appears, inside the Catholic confessional booth.

JORGE

Hello?

ALEX

I'm here. Come in. Welcome.

JORGE

I'm ready when you are.

ALEX

(Blessing)
Father, I ask that you-

JORGE

Excuse me. Sorry. Could we get right to it?

ALEX

There's a process.

JORGE

I don't want to follow it. I hope that's okay.

ALEX

Do I know you? You sound familiar.

JORGE

I memorized this last night, so I hope it's right: Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been *always* since my last confession.

ALEX

What does that mean?

JORGE

This is my first time.

ALEX

I understand. So you're not a member of my parish?

JORGE

I have committed mortal sins.

ALEX

I understand. Are you new to the parish?

JORGE

What happened to anonymity? Isn't this private?

ALEX

I apologize. Continue.

JORGE

What I have to say is difficult.

ALEX

I understand. So that's why you came to another church?

JORGE

No. Yes.

ALEX

Do you feel that your sin is that bad?

JORGE

Yes.

ALEX

There must be someone you trust. Perhaps ask the other parishioners.

JORGE

Congregation.

ALEX

Your Christian?

JORGE

Yes.

ALEX

Why come here?

JORGE

I'm the Pastor of Salvation Church that's down the street. And I know all the other pastors in the borough, so if I go to anyone else, they'll know of this sin.

ALEX

Can't you speak with...Him.

JORGE

I'm also looking for a friend.

ALEX

Okay. Pastor Jorge, my new friend, I'm Father Alex. Tell me.

JORGE

I...

ALEX

It's okay.

JORGE

I...

ALEX

You can do it.

JORGE

All I've been doing for the last two months is secretly meet up with my friend's hot wife to pretend to be married to figure out ways to cheat in a thousand dollar prize husband-and-wife pie eating contest as revenge against her successful ex-husband who's now married to my successful ex-wife and posting our wins on a secret Instagram account! Wow. That felt good to say aloud. Father? You there?

ALEX

What?

JORGE

It's complicated. I shouldn't get into it.

ALEX

I think you should.

JORGE

Tell me what my penance is and I'll get right on it.

ALEX

That's the thing, I need a moment to understand. "All you've done...for the last two months..."

JORGE

...uh huh...

ALEX

"...is secretly meet up with your friend's hot wife...to pretend to be married...to figure out ways to cheat..." ...uh...

JORGE

...in a thousand dollar prize husband-and-wife pie eating contest...

ALEX

"...as revenge against *her* successful ex-husband who's now married to *your* successful ex-wife..."

JORGE

...yup...

ALEX

...and... help me here.

JORGE

...and posting our wins on a secret Instagram account.

ALEX

Right. I don't know if I can help you.

JORGE

What? Why? Isn't this where all sins are forgiven?

ALEX

Yes. But there's no department for ridiculous sins.

JORGE

This has been eating me up. You have to help me.

ALEX

All right. Let me think. I need a moment to break your sin down into parts. Wait. You're committing every sin in the good book.

JORGE

That can't be true. All I've been doing...for the last two months...

ALEX

That's sloth.

JORGE

...is secretly meet up with my friend's hot wife to pretend to be married...

ALEX

That's lust.

JORGE

...to figure out ways to cheat in a thousand dollar prize husband-and-wife pie eating contest...

ALEX

Greed and Gluttony.

JORGE

...as revenge...

ALEX

Wrath.

JORGE

...against her successful ex-husband who's now married to my successful ex-wife...

ALEX

Envy.

JORGE

...and posting our wins on a secret Instagram account.

ALEX

Pride.

JORGE

I'm committing all seven deadly sins! Oh my god!

ALEX

And now you used the Lord's name in vain!

JORGE

No! What is happening to me?!

ALEX

Hey! Take a deep breath!

JORGE

I'm a lost sheep! I'm beyond a lost sheep! I'm deep in the woods! I'm in the jungles of the Amazon! I'm in the undiscovered and untouched lands of Northern Patagonia! No! I'm in space! I'm Pluto! Abandoned forever.

ALEX

Jorge, is that *all* you've done?

JORGE

When I was six I peed in a boy's shoes because I didn't like him.

ALEX

I'm talking about now. The last two months.

JORGE

Yeah.

ALEX

Did you and this woman start a physical or emotional affair?

JORGE

No!

ALEX

And the money?

JORGE

Goes right into the church.

ALEX

Okay. Here's your penance:

JORGE

Five thousand lashes?

ALEX

No. What do you think us Catholics do?

JORGE

I don't know. Everything is always so serious over here.

ALEX

Hey, I don't go over there and tell you to keep it down!

JORGE

We celebrate so God can hear us! Everyone here could speak up a bit more. Lord knows how he hears your prayers.

ALEX

I'm sorry. Who's coming to who because their church talks a bit too much?

JORGE

Yeah, yeah. I guess we could exercise a bit more privacy.

ALEX

And we're well aware of how boring our masses are. When I stand behind the altar, I sometimes pinch my legs to stay awake. We could exercise a bit more excitement.

JORGE

What's my penance?

ALEX

First, no more pie eating contests and you go back and focus on that church. Second, you stop seeing your friend's hot wife without him knowing. Third, stop describing her as "your friend's hot wife." Fourth, you keep yourself busy enough to forget about your ex. If she's happy, find your own happiness. And fifth, delete the Instagram account. Okay?

JORGE

That's it?

ALEX

That's it.

JORGE

No prayers?

ALEX

You don't even know our prayers.

JORGE

That's true. Hey, thanks for listening.

ALEX

Anytime.

JORGE

You know...maybe we should get our communities together.

ALEX

I like that.

JORGE

We can have a bake sale. Or a pie sale!

ALEX

No.

JORGE

You're right, you're right, you're right. A potluck.

ALEX

That's a good idea. How about we step out of this booth and meet face-to-face?

JORGE

All right.

ALEX

See you in a second.

Jorge **(Henry)** and Alex **(Jason)** disappear.

SEIS (**Angela**) appears.

SEIS

Are the cops gone for real for reals? You can never trust them. Maybe they turned off their sirens but their still around.

'Sup. I'm Seis. S-E-I-S. I called myself that cause my name's got six letters, I was born on July 6th 1996 and so, yeah. But it aint nothing that got to do with Satan, airight? I'm tired of people asking, so don't. My trade is graffiti. I mean, I'm not Cope2, Comet, or TD, Blade, Daze, Billy 167, T-Kid 110, Noc 167, Kel 139, Cliff 159, Riff 170, Mitch 77, Ree 2, Phase 2, Butch 2 and Kase 2, Lady Pink, or Ces, Sento, Seen, Pel or the Tats Cru! I'm me. And one day I'll make my mark. If there's any walls or free speech left. My bad. Being an artist is stressful.

I've been hired to put up a memorial on this wall. Well, sorta hired. They couldn't get permission for a permit but they gave me the cash to do it anyway. I have a picture of the person. Wanna see? You know what, I rather not.

Twenty-five years old. Damn. I'm Twenty-five. His name was Yancey Jones. You know, I'm not really sure what happened to him. I didn't ask. My homegirl knows the family and so I met them for the first time yesterday.

All right. So I'm a hit this wall with an all white background. I'm a blend it 'cuz I want it to feel like he's at the threshold of heaven or somewhere that's not here.

And then I'm gonna stencil his face. His New York fitted hat. His gold chain. And his purple glasses. That must be his favorite color.

Yo, I bet he had a great sense of humor. With busted teeth like that, he had to be funny. He's got some beautiful eyes.

(Sprays)

I gotta touch this up with some color to give me an idea how this is coming out. A little here. Some there. Some more there. Looks good so far.

Not everybody gets a memorial. I'm not sure what the requirements are. I guess it's gotta be tragic.

When I did my first tag, I was four years old. It was a shark eating my name...it was about this big...right on the bare living room wall. My mom was piiiiiiissed.

I was a freshman in high school when I did my second one. My friend Tracey died of an asthma attack during gym class and so the school had every single one of us talk to the counselors. I aint speak much and I was known to doodle in my notebooks and...I don't know, something came over me or out of me and I got up from my desk and walked to the white board and I began to draw. To be honest, I only remember what I felt. And it's not that I wasn't sad but I was feeling the sadness of everyone else. And before I knew it, I took a step back and there she was...

The school took pictures and it made the newsletter and yearbook. For my senior year, I lead the mural club and we redid the walls of the new Science Wing.

I was in charge of drawing the S so you know, I did it like this. I heard that this S is something everyone's been doing for years. I wonder who did it first. It's also how I tag my name. I link both S's together cuz it means infinity to me.

I know that one day this wall will get taken down and Yancey will be forgotten and then we'll all be forgotten and they'll erase all of the graffiti in the world! Like how they snuck in the middle of night and white everything out at 5 Pointz!

But when they do that...they only creating a blank canvas. Because they can't get rid of artists. And if they take all of our paints and inks then we'll create in blood! And they're going to need a lot of cleaning product to get rid of that.

I better get concentrating. I aint gonna finish this until late tonight. This has got to be the next best thing I do.

Get out of here, would ya?

Seis (**Angela**) disappears.

Bodega: MAICOL (**Henry**) appears, behind the counter, on phone.

MAICOL

Oye, loco, yo toi aqui en mi bodega chillaxing. Mirando Jeopardy. Dimelo?
 Abri este colmado y no he recibido ningùn amor de ti.
 No Facebook like, no Instagram like, no Tik Tok hearts. Nada.
 Pero, que pasa? Recibí un peso de Buena suerte de *todos mis amigos* y los tengo aqui em mi pared. Y aqui hay un espacio esperando el tuyo. Que?... "Un billete de cien dolares?"
 Cuando?... Dique. Jesus regresará antes de que te vea...ah-huh...ah-huh...ah-huh...

PEO (**Andres**) walks in.

PEO

Que lo que, loco?! White owls.

Maicol ignores him.

PEO

Yo! White owls!

Maicol ignores him.

PEO

Yo, what's wrong with you?!
 (Slams the counter)

MAICOL

Coño. No ves que yo estoy en el telefono?

PEO

Telephone? You're not talking.

MAICOL

I'm listening.

PEO

White owls.

MAICOL

No.

PEO

You don't have any?

You can't have any. MAICOL

Why not? PEO

Dinero? MAICOL

Give me credit. PEO

Credit, que vaina, credit. MAICOL

Why not? PEO

En serio? MAICOL

What? PEO

You don't speak Spanish? MAICOL

No. I'm Puerto Rican! PEO

Okay. You want credit? What's your credit score? MAICOL

Yo. Come on. PEO

Mira, loco, you got a credit card...? ...what's your payment history? ...are you a risk? MAICOL

What's your name? PEO

Maicol. MAICOL

PEO

Maicol, welcome to the neighborhood and I'm happy that you took over the bodega but this was Puerto Rican spot before you got here, so you gotta pay respect. So, that will be one pack of white owls on my credit.

MAICOL

Okay. We play game. Sabes que, like Jeopardy. Sí?

PEO

Okay. But one question.

MAICOL

No problem. The answer is...bodega cat.

PEO

Oh. Okay. What is...eating all of your rats?

MAICOL

No. You lose.

PEO

Wait, wait, wait. I get ten guesses.

MAICOL

Ten? One.

PEO

Five.

MAICOL

Two.

PEO

Three! Come on, son.

MAICOL

Okay. The answer is...bodega cat.

Peo thinks.

PEO

What is...a health code violation!

MAICOL

No.

PEO

Damn! But both things are true!

MAICOL

Claro que si, pero..."that's not the answer we are looking for."

PEO

Give me the answer again.

MAICOL

You know it.

PEO

I gotta hear it.

MAICOL

The answer is...bodega cat.

PEO

The answer is bodega cat.

(Thinks)

Bodega cat. Bodega cat.

MAICOL

Oye, loco, let's go!

PEO

What is... why are we doing this again?

MAICOL

Your credit!

PEO

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. What is...your pet! That's it. The question to bodega cat is, what is your pet?

MAICOL

...you're wrong.

PEO

What? How?

MAICOL

The answer is... What sleeps on the bread? What sleeps on the bread?

PEO

Nah, that's too obvious an answer! I knew that!

MAICOL

Ay, pobrecito. You should have said it.

PEO

If you don't give me credit, I'll steal something.

MAICOL

You steal from me, you run fast. Because I will be with my machete and if I get you, you want to know what I'm going to do...? FUUUUAP!

PEO

Up my...?

MAICOL

Oh, yes. And everybody will hear air coming out of you when you walk. Sabes que? Everybody will call you-

Anthony appears.

ANTHONY

-Peo. I haven't see you in years.

PEO

Tony, is that you?

ANTHONY

Yeah. How you been?

PEO

I've had better days.

ANTHONY

Oye, hermano. Un café. Leche. Dos azucar. Por favor.

MAICOL

What did you call him?

ANTHONY

Him?

MAICOL

Yeah.

ANTHONY

Peo. That's what the neighborhood calls him.

MAICOL

Peo like...

ANTHONY

...fart.

(To Peo)

Oh, my bad. Does everybody still call you Peo?

PEO

No.

DOTTY (**Amira**) appears, slapping cash on the counter.

DOTTY

(To Maicol)

Two Take 5s and two Lucky 7s. Know what, give me a lotto ticket too. Quick Pick.

(To Peo)

Hey, Peo. How you doing?

PEO

Hey, Dotty.

Maicol gives Dotty everything.

DOTTY

Later!

Dotty (**Amira**) disappears.

MAICOL

Why they call him Peo?

ANTHONY

It's not that funny of a story, to be honest, but one day-

PEO

HEY! It's my story, so I'll tell it.

ANTHONY

My fault.

PEO

One day...it was none of your damn business!

MAICOL

Oye, Peo. Dimelo.

PEO

I'll tell you if you give me white owls.

MAICOL

He can tell me.

PEO

He aint saying nothing!

(To Anthony)

You aint saying nothing!

(To Maicol)

Now you can give me white owls and hear the story, or not.

MAICOL

(To Anthony)

Is it a good story?

ANTHONY

It's an airight story.

PEO

It's a good story!

ANTHONY

It's a good story.

MAICOL

Okay. Deal. You tell me the story and I'll give you white owls.

(To Anthony)

Here's your coffee.

ANTHONY

Thanks. Good seeing you, Peo.

PEO

Tell Ana not to close yet. I'm coming by after I leave here.

ANTHONY

What?

PEO

Yeah. You're here to Ana, right?

ANTHONY

Where is she?

PEO

She owns the liquor store. You gonna see her? She'd shit herself if she saw you.

ANTHONY

You mean, like, that one time, how you-

PEO

-ah, ah, ah! My story to tell.

ANTHONY

Peace.

Anthony disappears.

PEO

Okay. Now that no one is around -

Adelina (**Cristy**) walks in.

ADELINA

Hey, Peo. Hey, Maicol.

PEO

Damn it!

MAICOL

Hola, mi linda, Adelina.

ADELINA

What do you have for me today?

MAICOL

What you like?

ADELINA

Surprise me.

MAICOL

Pan con mantequilla.

ADELINA

Delicioso.

PEO

Excuse me. I'm trying to tell my story here.

MAICOL

One second. We busy.

ADELINA

Yeah. We busy.

PEO

I was here first!

MAICOL

Mi linda, this meal was made, for you.

Adelina takes her meal.

ADELINA

Thank you. Goodbye, mi amor.

Adelina **(Cristy)** leaves.

PEO

Yo, Romeo. You gonna hear my story or what?

MAICOL

Oye, say it!

PEO

One day-

Seis **(Angela)** rushes in, slapping a dollar on the counter.

SEIS

Loosie!

Maicol quickly gives her the loosie.

SEIS

Dueces!

Seis **(Angela)** leaves.

PEO

One day...

PENNY (**Crystal**) appears.

PENNY

Hey, are you the owner - oh, sorry. Are you next?

PEO

Go ahead.

PENNY

If you're next...

PEO

It's fine.

MAICOL

Can I help you?

PENNY

Are you the owner?

MAICOL

Yes. I am.

PENNY

I'm officer Penny. I saw a young girl step out of here with a loose cigarette in her ear. Did you sell that to her?

MAICOL

I don't do that.

PENNY

She didn't have it when she walked in here.

MAICOL

I gave her one from my own box.

PENNY

Did she give you money?

MAICOL

No.

PENNY

Is that camera above your head recording?

MAICOL
Yeah.

PENNY
Can I see the footage?

MAICOL
No.

PEO
What's the problem?

PENNY
No ones' talking to you.

PEO
I'm talking to you.

PENNY
Would you like me to run you through the system? I'm sure you got some warrants out on ya.

MAICOL
You no have something better to do? Go outside and stop the gangs. Go find Ivy. Go do something important and leave me and Peo alone.

PENNY
Your name is Peo?

MAICOL
There's a story and everything.

PENNY
What's the story?

MAICOL
He won't tell me.

PEO
I've been trying to tell you! One day-

PENNY
Shut up. Listen, truth is, I don't care what you do but you can't sell to minors.

MAICOL

She's not a minor. She's an adult. I no come here open my store to do that.

PEO

I would believe him. He doesn't even give credit.

PENNY

All right. Then in that case, let me get one.

MAICOL

One...what?

PENNY

A loosie.

MAICOL

You making a trick on me?

PENNY

I'm quitting the force today.

MAICOL

Why?

PENNY

You have to be a bad cop or a cop that's gotta look away. And I don't think I can do either. Maybe, I have to redraw where I draw the line. I always thought the line was permanent. How about that loosie?

Beat. Maicol gives Penny the loosie.

MAICOL

Here.

PENNY

Thanks.

Penny **(Crystal)** disappears.

PEO

That was...crazy.

MAICOL

Why are you still here?

PEO

Don't you want to hear my story?

MAICOL

I don't care anymore and right now, it's probably not worth it.

PEO

One day...

MAICOL

How long is it going to take?

PEO

...I was about two years old. October 2nd, 1979...

MAICOL

-aye, madre-

PEO

-and my mother was on a 151st street, with hundreds of people...
...waiting on His Holiness.

MAICOL

Who?

PEO

Pope John Paul the II. It was the first time he ever visited New York City. And they were still building the Christopher Court building and he told his driver to stop so he could bless the construction. And that's when he saw my mother, holding me. He reached out to her and she gave me to him. She said that he looked at me with a smile...and that's when I...farted. And since then, everyone calls me Peo.

MAICOL

That story was not worth it.

PEO

Yo, I don't care what you think! Give me my white owls!

Mike (**Leon**) appears, with a sneaker box.

MIKE

Maicol, I got something for you! Size eleven!

MAICOL

Red?

MIKE

You know it.
(To Peo)
Hey, Peo.

PEO

Hey, Mike.

MAICOL

Mike, you know why they call him Peo?

MIKE

Something about a school trip when he was young..

PEO

Shhh! He don't know about that!

MAICOL

Another story? Oye, Peo, how many stories you got?

PEO

If you want to know, you have to give me the entire box of white owls!

MAICOL

Que eso! Get out! Take your white owl and get out!

Maicol **(Henry)** and Peo **(Andres)** disappear.

Lights up on ANDREA (**Amira**), alone, underneath the streetlamp that shines on her.

ANDREA

Brandi! Come here!

Have you seen Ivy? How about this morning? At school? Anytime today? How about your friends? I need you to ask them. If they don't know then who would? Brandi, you gotta give me something. She left a month ago for school. She took her book bag. But all of her books were on the bed. I called them already.

Doesn't she hang out with that boy? What's his name? You have to know his name. If you're covering for her, I'll slap ya over your head and drag you to your momma! Swear to me you don't know a thing! I'll know if you're lying. All mothers know.

Okay. Then where does she hang out? I know you know that. I already checked there. Does she go to the library maybe? How about a friend's house? Calm down, Brandi, nothing bad happened to her. I know she's okay. Somewhere. I know because she left a note. Something about how she hates me and she's never gonna see me again. Believe that? First she stops talking to me and now she's writing me notes.

You really don't know that boy's name? All right. You can go. Listen, Brandi, if you hear anything...tell me. And you tell her, I'm gonna whip her to the bone. Tell her she better pad her jeans because I'm really upset. You tell her that if she doesn't get home...sorry. I didn't mean to grab you like that.

You're right. I'm sure she'll come back because she doesn't have any money and...yeah, because she'll miss me.

Brandi, I love her. You're still too young to understand but it's a bad world out there, baby. There aren't a lot of parents or people like me left. I didn't mean to make you sad.

Forget everything I said. If you see her, tell her that her momma misses her and that I'm worried. I'm going to keep the light on in my bedroom and if she tells you that she's in trouble, tell her she's not. I want her to come back home. Go on and play.

Andrea (**Amira**) disappears.

The liquor store. Ana (**Chaunice**) appears.

ANA

Who knew? What life had in store for me
Was a store for me
It could have gone horribly
Normally, a woman in my position can't afford to be
Living her dreams
Glory be

Anthony appears.

ANTHONY

Who knew where life would take me
In its arms, take me
Its grip could break me
But as he looks around, this place that made me
Living his dreams
Saved me

They see each other. Beat.

ANTHONY

Excuse me? How much for that wine?/

ANA

The reserve is on sale for 10.99/

ANTHONY

How about that one right there?

ANA

This one?

ANTHONY

Yeah./

ANA

It's the same price. I'm busy here./

ANTHONY

Let me get - ah, this is a thinker/

ANA

Bring your face closer to the glass to read the stickers/

ANTHONY

I'm in the mood to try something new/

ANA

Are you?

ANTHONY

Yeah. Which one do you think I should choose?/

ANA

Well, we have this
It gives a good kick/
Or maybe this
But that's for those who commit/
And then there's this
It has a particular taste to it/
Now I think of it
There's nothing here you can get/

ANTHONY

Bakery girl

ANA

Don't call me that/

ANTHONY

Okay, Ana
Then let's stick to the facts/
When did you and your fam decide to come back?/

ANA

The same week you went to L.A., in fact/
I saw your mom waving off the same cab/
That had you with your bags sitting in the back/

ANTHONY

So I just missed you?

ANA

I just missed you/

ANTHONY

We missed each other

ANA/ANTHONY

No, I missed you/

ANTHONY

The new owners at Shelly's told me about the fire/

ANA

It was a great excuse for my folks to retire/

ANTHONY

And you?

ANA

What about?

ANTHONY

How are you?/

ANA

I'm not the person you once knew/

ANTHONY

Then in that case
Ana, what's changed?/

ANA

It's impossible to remain here and be the same/

ANTHONY

It's impossible to escape here and not feel shame/

ANA

A small price to pay for anyone who can't stay/

ANTHONY

Ana, if I knew...

ANA

Tony, you would still go/

ANTHONY

You don't know

ANA

And neither do you, though/

ANTHONY

Do you still believe in dreams?

ANA
I believe we give them up/

ANTHONY
In exchange for what?/

ANA
Safety and trust
I have to close up/

JAVI (OFF STAGE)
Babe! You coming or what?

Beat.

ANTHONY
It was good seeing you.

ANA
You too./

ANTHONY
Are you happy?

ANA
Yeah. Are you?/

They share a smile.

ANTHONY
Bye, Bakery Girl

ANA
Bye, Player/

ANTHONY
See you later, alligator

ANA
In a while...

Anthony disappears. Javi (**Andres**) walks in.

JAVI
Hey. Everything all right?

ANA

Yeah. What's the rush?

JAVI

I have to get back soon. I'm taking that guy I told you about back to the airport. Want to come with?

ANA

I think I'll stay with my mom tonight. Is that okay?

JAVI

What's wrong?

ANA

You know the holidays are hard for me, so...

JAVI

Hey, you don't got to explain yourself to me. Let's lock up.

IVY (**Tanisha**) and MAX (**Jason**) rush in, armed.

MAX

Give me everything in the register!

IVY

Yeah!

JAVI

Okay. Let's relax. I'll give you whatever you want.

MAX

Give me everything in the register! NOW!

IVY

YEAH!

ANA

Ivy? Is that you?

MAX

Hey! No talking!

JAVI

I'm getting the money.

MAX

Hurry up!

JAVI

I'm going as fast as I can. Here. Take it.

Max (**Jason**) takes money and disappears. Beat.

ANA

Ivy, what are you doing? The bruises on your face. You need to go to the hospital. Come to me.

Max (**Jason**) appears.

MAX

What you doing? Let's go!

Max (**Jason**) and Ivy (**Tanisha**) leave.
Then, Ana (**Chaunice**) and Javi (**Andres**).

Standing at the train station turnstile is HECTOR (**JP**).

HECTOR

(Shouts)

Two dollar train fare! Two dollar fare, cause life aint!
Anybody, babies, darlings, I can get you through for two-dollars!

What was I saying? Oh yeah, so I was on the 5 train, right, going to the crib and this lady was standing in front of me - I was at the door - and she, you know the type, hot roots, eyes in her iPhone *still* playing Candy Crush, holding onto a must-have Tik Tok venti strawberry açai refresher in one hand and in the other, she clutches tight to her Michael Kors tote bag that could only be found at Macy's, in her trench coat with no belt, black crocodile skirt and black mid-heel platform slides because this walking mid-life crisis bitch face is only 30-something, with more cake on her face than her ass, with Dolly's tits but who will never get a seat at the cookout, know what I'm saying?

Anyway, she's standing in front of me and the back of her ugly bag is sticking out. The train's moving, rocking me like a rough lover and she can barely stand in her heels, so what happens? She bumps me. Not once, twice, three, four times.

I don't say nothing. In all honestly, I had half a brownie an hour before, and I couldn't care less. But now comes bump number five.

So she turns around, looks at me through her Katy Perry eyelashes, gives me a stank look that I could only describe looks something like Big Boy Caprice from Dick Tracy and turns back around and brings her bag closer to her side. Now I get it. She's confusing the bumping on the train with me trying to reach into her bag.

(To someone)

Hey, baby, what's up? Two dollars. The price is the price. Don't fuck with me. Come back when you have the cash. Pendejo.

Now her eyes keep looking over at me and I can tell because I can see the war that's happening between her crow's feet and the botox but because she's doing this, everyone else is looking at me too. There's even this John Goodman type checking us out. So I'm thinking of leaving at the next stop but it won't come soon enough.

(To someone)

You got the money? Good. Come to this turnstile and I'll swipe ya in. There ya go. Have a nice trip and see you next fall but if you're looking to bounce back, I'll see ya in the Spring!

The train moves again and we both bump. That's when she turns all the way to me and screams from the top of Florence Foster Jenkins voice, "leave me alone!" I'm looking at this psycho and I say, "This is the New York City transit system and we're on a train. It moves. We move. Now I'm sure you're not used to any push back in your life but I promise you, if I wanted something from you, you'd know, these nosey people will know, and that talentless stylist friend of yours is going to need months to put Frumpty Dumpty back together again!"

That's when the Karen crocodile tears came. She said, "Please, help me, this tomboy thug is trying to hurt me!" And John Goodman gets up from seat, walks over like buff penguin and looks at me. I froze. He looks at her and says, "If you don't leave this person alone and shut up, I'm going to kick you out of the train." She shut right the hell up for the rest of the ride. Believe that?

I'm telling you, time's are tough but in New York City, there's hope. Things are looking up. All right, maybe everything still sucks. I mean, shit's pretty bad but I'm all about doing one good deed for the day. The smallest thing that changes someone's life, you know? Once I hit my number, I'm a stay an extra hour and swipe through anyone who needs it.

(Shouts)

One dollar fare! One dollar fare, cause life aint!

Max (**Jason**) and Ivy (**Tanisha**) appear.

MAX

Here. Two dollars.

HECTOR

I can only let in one person every fifteen minutes. You should know that.

MAX

So you aint got money on that metrocard?

HECTOR

Nah, man. This is an unlimited. Is she okay?

MAX

Ayo, listen, Ivy, we can't stay here. One of us has to go. Uh, I'll go and you stay. I'll be back for you in fifteen minutes. Okay? Say, okay?

IVY

Why can't we hop the turnstile together?

MAX

Because...you see that wall...? Behind there is always a cop, waiting.

(To Hector)

Aint that right? Miss? Mister?

IVY

If there was a cop, wouldn't they get her for selling fares?

MAX

Trust me. Okay?

(To Hector)

Airight, swipe me in.

HECTOR

I'm more of a ladies' first kind of chick...

MAX

Yo, who ax you?

Hector swipes Max in. Max (**Jason**) disappears.

HECTOR

Was that your boyfriend?

Ivy shakes her head yes.

HECTOR

He looked like he was in a rush. Probably had to catch that train.

Ivy shrugs.

HECTOR

How old are you?

IVY

Old enough.

HECTOR

He looks *too old* for you, baby.

IVY

And you aint a shareholder in my business.

HECTOR

You know, this aint a safe place to be standing.

IVY

He's coming back.

HECTOR

And if he doesn't?

IVY

He will.

Beat.

IVY

If he don't come back, then you swipe me in.

HECTOR

And where will you be going?

Beat.

HECTOR

I'm a be here a bit, so, you can stand here with me. And if he comes back, cool and if not, I take you home myself. If you want. Up to you. What do you say?

IVY

Maybe.

HECTOR

I'm Hector. What's your name?

IVY

Ivy.

Ivy (**Tanisha**) and Hector (**JP**) disappear.

Anthony appears, on the stoop. He picks up his cell phone.

ANTHONY

(On phone)

Hello? ...hey, Javi. ...that's all right. No, really. How long? All right. I'll be here.

Mike (**Leon**) appears, walking by.

MIKE

Hey, man.

ANTHONY

What's up?

MIKE

Are you still trying to get into the building? That's crazy.

ANTHONY

I'm not...

MIKE

Shit. Good luck.

Mike (**Leon**) disappears.

Hector (**JP**) and Ivy (**Tanisha**) appear.

HECTOR

Right here?

IVY

Yeah. Thank you.

HECTOR

You'll be okay?

IVY

Yeah.

Hector (**JP**) leaves.

IVY

Excuse me? Can you let me in?

ANTHONY

I don't have keys. Hit all the buttons.

Ivy sits. Anthony takes her in.

ANTHONY

You waiting for somebody?

IVY

Do I look like it?

ANTHONY

You look lost.

IVY

What does a person look like exactly when their lost...compared to like, when their found?

ANTHONY

I was only asking cuz you seem - do you need help?

IVY

How do you know? Is it the bruises?

ANTHONY

Nah. It's in the eyes.

IVY

I'm late. I broke my curfew.

ANTHONY

That happens. Probably won't be the last time.

IVY

I don't think I'll do it again.

ANTHONY

Don't be hard on yourself. How late are you? A few hours?

IVY

A month.

ANTHONY

What's your name?

IVY

You ever feel like there's nowhere you can go?

ANTHONY

You should always go home. It's safe. Your mom's there.

IVY

My mom is hard to be with.

ANTHONY

Listen, the truth is, parents don't know what their doing half the time and you'll see, when you get older - and I know that's an annoying thing to hear, "When you get older..", it feels demeaning or fake but it's true, when you get older, you'll see it aint easy to do what they do.

IVY

She did this to my face. And it seems easy to her every time.

Beat.

Maybe I haven't gone far enough?

ANTHONY

I've been to the other side of the country, and I couldn't forget everything. I've tried. I thought I was outgrowing my block but I was only trying to survive. My heart is always here.

IVY

I don't think I'll ever miss it here. Later.

ANTHONY

Ivy.

Anthony thinks of something to say. Ivy (**Tanisha**) disappears.
Javi (**Andres**) appears.

JAVI

Anthony! Ready?

Anthony looks back at the building.

ANTHONY

Yeah.

Anthony gets in. Javi drives.

JAVI

Sorry about that. I had an emergency.

ANTHONY

It's okay.

JAVI

I would tell you what happened but I'm still trying to wrap my head around it.

ANTHONY

It's that kinda night.

JAVI

My wife and I were robbed at gunpoint.

ANTHONY

Right now?

JAVI

You know, you live in a neighborhood for years and you try to be a law biding citizen, but the attitude of the people here is dog eat dog eat cat eat rat eat it all - and I'm sick and tired of being scared of my own home! Sorry. How was your stay?

ANTHONY

Airight. Good. How are you?

JAVI

Tell me, since the last time you've been here, how much has changed? Because if this place isn't different from what it was once, it's time I go upstate. Like, Yonkers.

ANTHONY

A lot's changed. But not the stuff that matters.

JAVI

And what's that?

ANTHONY

In big bold block letters on a red bricked wall, it says, "It's all love."

Anthony and Javi (**Andres**) fade out.

Luis (**Danny**) is on the fire escape, at Annie's window.

LUIS

Annie? Annie, I saw you turn off your light. I know you're in there. Annie, I want to see you before you go.

If you think you're sparing my feelings, you're not! I'm even more hurt! The void in my heart isn't only a hole now, it's a pit! And it's getting deeper. And soon, nothing's going to fill it. Except you.

When you leave, I'll be sitting on this fire escape, thinking of you. And you know smoking aint fun if you do it alone. And after a week, I'll wonder what you'll be doing. And after a month, I'll wonder how you are. After a few months, I'll wonder if you met anyone else. And after a year, I'll be hoping that you're happy. And as the years go by, I'll think of you less and less until, one day, I'll only remember you when I meet someone with your name, or, when I have to solve a complicated math problem, and we all know that I'll never use algebra again, so.. eventually, I will forget you. And I'll never know how are you again. So don't take this goodbye away from me. Annie?

Beat.

Thank you, for turning the light back on. Now, if you could come out, or maybe pull back the curtain, so I can see you. Annie?

I wanted to do this face-to-face but you're not giving me a choice.

Annie, I'm in love with you. And maybe a young man like myself has no concept of the world, or that I have no idea what's waiting for me out there, at least that's what my father says, but I can't imagine anything better than you.

I don't have a ring but...

Annie, will you marry me?

Annie, will you marry me?

Annie...will you...marry me?

Bye, Annie. I'll be thinking of you.

Annie (**Angela**) shows up.

ANNIE

What are you doing?

LUIS

Being romantic.

ANNIE

You're being stupid.

LUIS

That too.

ANNIE

Luis, this isn't that kind of story.

LUIS

Why can't it be?

ANNIE

Because life doesn't work that way.

LUIS

Why not?

ANNIE

I don't have all the answers!

LUIS

Life is what we want.

ANNIE

What I want, is for you to live the life you're supposed to.

LUIS

And how do you know that's not with you?

ANNIE

I know...that life shouldn't be hard, if it can be helped.

LUIS

I'm willing.

ANNIE

I'm not. Goodbye.

LUIS

Bad bye.

ANNIE

Bad bye.

LUIS

Before you go, could you answer the question.

ANNIE

The answer's no. I won't marry you.

LUIS

Can I ask you another question?

ANNIE

No.

LUIS

Do you love me?

(Beat)

I want to know.

ANNIE

(Beat)

No.

LUIS

Good. I don't love you either.

ANNIE
You told me you did.

LUIS
It went away.

ANNIE
Right now?

LUIS
Just like that.

ANNIE
So you'll be able to move on fast.

LUIS
So fast.

ANNIE
And if we walk into each other...

LUIS
...we'll walk on by!

ANNIE
Passive aggressively.

LUIS
Side-eyeing each other.

ANNIE
Giving each other the finger.

LUIS
I'll squeeze your husband's hand real tight.

ANNIE
And I'll interrupt everything your wife has to say.

LUIS
And I'll call your kids ugly.

ANNIE
And I'll call yours stupid.

LUIS
And I'll tell them about the time we kissed.

ANNIE

We never kissed.

Beat.
They kiss.

LUIS

Did you have your eyes closed?

ANNIE

Yeah. You?

LUIS

Yeah. I hope you liked it.

ANNIE

I wouldn't know. It's my first time.

LUIS

Annie, would you go to the prom with me?

ANNIE

Yes.

LUIS

Well, since you're going with me to that, then, I guess... you have to marry me.

ANNIE

Uh, no, *you* have to marry *me*.

Smiles.

ANNIE

It's going to be difficult.

LUIS

I know.

Luis (**Danny**) and Annie (**Angela**) disappear.

Anthony and Javi (**Andres**) appear in the cab.

JAVI

What are you going to miss?

ANTHONY

I don't know. Chopped cheese. Loud music. Open fire hydrants.

RING. Ana (**Chaunice**) appears.

JAVI

Sorry about that. That's my wife. I better pick up.

(Picks up)

Hey, babe. You're on speaker and I'm with a rider. So don't say anything dirty.

ANA

Stupid. So you're not downstairs?

JAVI

No. What's up?

ANA

Someone was buzzing the bell. I thought it was you. Like, if you left your key or something.

JAVI

Nope. And you know how everybody hits all of the buttons so, ignore it.

ANA

Okay. How are you?

JAVI

I'm okay. You?

ANA

Okay. Come straight home after.

JAVI

I will. Love you. Bye.

ANA

Love you too. Bye.

Javi (**Andres**) and Anthony disappear.

Ana hears the door knocking.

ANA

Hello? Who's there?

Ana looks through the peephole. Ivy (**Tanisha**) appears.

ANA

Everyone is looking for you.

IVY

I'm sorry.

ANA

Come here.

Ana (**Chaunice**) and Ivy (**Tanisha**) disappear.

In the cab, Anthony and Javi (**Andres**) appear. Javi pulls over.

JAVI

And here we are.

ANTHONY

I appreciate the smooth ride.

JAVI

When do you think you're coming back?

ANTHONY

Maybe next Christmas. But that feels like a long time from now.

JAVI

How about Thanksgiving? Mother's Day? New Year's?

ANTHONY

That feels too soon.

JAVI

True. If you're going to come back that soon, you might as well stay.

Beat.

ANTHONY

Later.

JAVI

Safe flight.

Beat.

ANTHONY

Wait! Cabbie! Yo!

JAVI

You know my name.

ANTHONY

Javi...listen, I need you to do me a favor...

JAVI

...before you say anything else, I don't speed and I don't pass any red lights. I don't do any discounts or credits. I don't do unscheduled multiple stops. I don't follow people or follow other cars. And you can't drive the car.

ANTHONY

You forgot the other thing.

JAVI

Oh, right. No smoking.

JAVI

Here's what I need...

ANTHONY

And I know you got your vaccine shots, but this time I'm a need you to keep your mask on. You didn't do it this time. I could report you.

ANTHONY

Right. Apologies.

JAVI

As you were saying.

ANTHONY

I need you to go a bit out of your way.

JAVI

Oh, yeah? Where to?

ANTHONY

Somewhere magical.

JAVI

Well, buckle your seatbelt, put your feet together and click your Timberland boots twice, because we're going to a place where there is no other.

ANTHONY

I'll give you another twenty if you boogie.

Anthony and Javi (**Andres**) disappear.

End of Play.