

FOREIGN MATTERS

Pilot

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

LENSWORTH DINESH (Jamaican, 40s) is being wheeled on a gurney at breakneck pace down a busy hospital corridor filled with PATIENTS AND STAFF. Breathing through a respirator he's disoriented and panicked. Potential heart attack.

DOCTOR
Move! Out of the way!

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They arrive at a hospital room. NURSES hook up monitors with hurried precision while a DOCTOR oversees.

DOCTOR.
Hook him up. Get the crash cart.

NURSE
Yes, doctor.

Lensworth lies still on the gurney as STAFF hovers over him. Over this --

LENSWORTH (V.O)
My name is Lensworth Dinesh. I came to this country from Jamaica last year to look for a better life for my family. Now, I'm a full-fledged American citizen living the American dream. And, as a result, I now have a mortgage, credit card debt, anxiety, hypertension and a car on it's last legs. Is that what put me here you ask? No!

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT 1

FLASHBACK:

INT. DINESH HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Morning breakfast with the Dinesh men gathered around the table. Lensworth engrossed in a newspaper while KAVAN (12 - family brat) plays with his portable radio.

Kavan decides on a hip-hop station and a DJ fills the room.

DJ (O.C.)

...It's a sunny but breezy L.A. morning. As we approach New Year's Eve and say goodbye to 1991, '92 promises to be filled with more good times and great music, like this one. The number one song of the week "Good Vibrations" by Marky Mark and The Funky Bunch. We're going to be hearing a lot from them in the future --

Wife MIRA (40 - June Cleaver type) walks to the table with Kavan's breakfast and places it on the table in front of him as she turns off the radio.

Lensworth puts down his paper.

LENSWORTH

Why do you listen to crap music?

KAVAN

It's rap! It's pronounced rap.

LENSWORTH

However you say it, I still don't like it. American noise.

MIRA

Eat your breakfast or you'll be late for school again.

KAVAN

I wouldn't be if I had a new bike.

LENSWORTH

Do you know how far I walked to school when I was your age?

KAVAN

I know! Hundreds of miles in
Jamaican heat. Uphill both ways.

MIRA

Be careful how you talk to your
father.

KAVAN

If I had one, I could run errands
for the family.

Kavan puts his hand on Lensworth's arm.

KAVAN (cont'd)

You're not getting any younger, you
know.

Mira taps Kavan on the back of the head and points to his
breakfast.

MIRA

Eat!

Mira turns and calls upstairs.

MIRA (cont'd)

Jada. Jada! Wake up. It's almost
9:00.

INT. DINESH HOME - JADA'S BEDROOM - DAY

JADA DINESH (16 - square peg drama queen) tosses and turns
frantically in her bed.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

A tense scene from a classic courtroom drama - circa 1930s.

A packed gallery of SPECTATORS and PRESS wait anxiously as
an antique clock ticks loudly on the wall and approaches
9:00. In the front row sits the Dinesh family.

Suddenly, courtroom doors open. The room erupts - flash
bulbs explode.

Jada steps forward with head down to answer for her crimes. Dressed in an orange prison jump suit she's escorted by a tough, no-nonsense MATRON (50s).

SPECTATOR 1

Poor child.

SPECTATOR 2

She's so young!

SPECTATOR 3

Where were the parents, that's what I'd like to know?

A ray of sunlight shines through a barred window creating a spotlight on the floor. She steps into it and stands before the JUDGE'S bench. He bangs his gavel for order.

JUDGE

Order. Order! Jada Cadella Dinesh, do you have anything to say in your defense before I pass sentence?

Before she can answer Lensworth jumps up.

LENSWORTH

Your honor, may I approach the bench? I'm Lensworth Dinesh, Jada's father. This is my wife Mira and her younger brother Kavan. I'm begging your honor -- give her another chance. We've tried everything. The best schools -- counseling. Nothing has worked.

MIRA

We don't know what else to do.

JUDGE

This court is not without compassion.

(beat)

For crimes against fashion, social inadequacy, cheating on your diets and failure to fit into American culture, I sentence you --

(dramatic pause)

to life.

A collective GASP from the gallery. Mira screams hysterically. An ELDERLY WOMAN passes out in the front row.

JADA

No!

JUDGE

Bailiff, take her away.

Jada gets dragged out in tears by the BAILIFF and matron. Mira tries to reach out as Lensworth holds her back.

KAVAN

Can I have her room?

END DREAM SEQUENCE

INT. DINESH HOME - JADA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Jada tosses and turns frantically.

JADA

No! Don't let 'em take me. I look fat in orange.

MIRA (O.C.)

Jada! Downstairs. Now!

Her eyes bolt open. Realizing it was a dream she calms down.

JADA

It was only a nightmare.

She looks around the room and sees an orange uniform hanging behind her door. She lets out a gasp. The nightmare is just beginning.

INT. DINESH HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

MIRA

Where is that girl? Jada! You'll be late for your first day of work. Are you coming down?

JADA (O.C.)

No!

MIRA

Do I have to go up there? I'm counting to three. One -- two --

Jada slowly comes down the stairs dressed in her new fast food, restaurant uniform. A neon orange jumpsuit with a giant hamburger as a hat.

MIRA (cont'd)
Oh... Look at her.

Mira reaches into a kitchen drawer, pulls out an old Instamatic camera and proudly snaps a photo.

Kavan laughs hysterically, making Jada fume.

MIRA (cont'd)
You be quiet or you'll spend the weekend in your room. Don't you dare look at me that way.

Kavan struggles to stop laughing.

JADA
How can white people dress this way? I feel like a total mumu.

LENSWORTH
Well, this is the big day. Your very first, part time job. How does it feel to be an adult?

JADA
I've graduated from teenage hell to adult hell.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Jada runs in a panic to the stop holding onto her hat. She barely beats the bus and joins the CROWD. They stare and snicker at her uniform.

The bus pulls up. They push and shove their way on as Jada gets crushed in the mob.

BUS DRIVER
Keep moving. Keep moving. Plenty of room in the rear.

Jada shoots him a dirty look.

BUS DRIVER (cont'd)
You know what I meant.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Reminiscent of a 50s diner. In the parking lot is a bold sign reading "BOFFO BURGER". In lower case beneath it reads "Union Free Since '83".

The bus stops in front. Jada jumps off, running towards the building. Short of breath and red faced.

Suddenly, a terrified YOUNG MAN (20s) in an identical orange uniform comes running towards her.

YOUNG MAN
Go. Get away! Get out while you
can.

From out of nowhere, TWO MEN appear in white uniforms and wrestle him to the ground.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)
No. No! Don't send me back in
there. No, please. I'll do
anything --

The men drag him back into the restaurant, screaming and kicking.

Jada reaches the restaurant red faced and winded from running. She pauses at the door, takes a deep breath and enters.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, a dozen pair of teenage eyes in matching uniforms turn to stare at her. Her fellow TRAINEES.

MILDRED (O.C.)
You're late! Get in here with the
rest.

Across the room she sees the instructor MILDRED (50s - tough, militant).

MILDRED
Good morning. Welcome to the
exciting world of Boffo Burger,
where every bite is Boffo-licious.
My name is MILDRED, I'm your
motivational leader. Let me start
by saying, for anyone who watched
60 Minutes last night, all
employees have been recovered and
returned safely to their parents.

Everyone lets out a collective sigh of relief.

MILDRED (cont'd)
Now, step this way to our kitchen.

INT. RESTAURANT KITCHEN - DAY

On one side is a row of COOKS in front of a hamburger grill with flippers in the their hands.

Their INSTRUCTOR (John Cleese type) carries a swagger stick and guides them with military precision.

INSTRUCTOR

Cooks, insert your flipper. Then rotate, release, repeat. On my count. Now! Rotate -- release -- repeat. Rotate -- release -- repeat. That's it! Number two, tighten your wrist. Don't be afraid of it man.

The cooks follow instructions in perfect synchronicity like drones, flipping their burgers as they stare off into space, unblinking.

MILDRED

This is our kitchen. This is where the magic happens. Each Boffo burger is made only with the finest, quality meat substitutes and genuine, artificial flavors.

Jada raises her hand shyly.

JADA

Excuse me, ma'am. Do we tell customers that we don't use real meat?

A collective gasp of shock from the instructor and the row of cooks who all stop and look at an embarrassed Jada.

MILDRED

Only if someone brings it up.
(slight beat)
Now, if there's no more questions, let's move along.

They take a few steps and come to an assembly line. Coming down a conveyor belt are bowls of hot water. Behind the belt is A MAN holding an uncooked chicken by it's legs.

MILDRED (cont'd)

This is how we make our world famous chicken soup. Each bowl is dipped twice to ensure zesty, boffo-flavor.

The chicken gets dipped twice in a large bowl, then lifted and dipped in each bowl following.

MILDRED (cont'd)

Now, let me show you how we make
beef stew.

Jada gulps and turns shades of green.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER

The trainees are ushered back in the main restaurant. A SECOND INSTRUCTOR steps forward handing Jada and the others a book hundreds of pages thick.

MILDRED

This is our company manual.
Memorize it. It outlines conduct,
company rules and how to handle any
situation.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A children's birthday party resembling a prison riot. KIDS throwing food and tying up STAFF as hostages.

Jada is swarmed by a kindergarten age MOB while Mildred is tied up and gagged in a corner.

JADA

(to Mildred)

This wasn't in the manual!

From out of nowhere comes the young man from earlier who was being hauled away. He's now tied and being dragged off by a GANG OF CHILDREN.

YOUNG MAN

I tried to warn you.

Jada starts to sink under the mob until all we see is her hand extending in the air -- then completely disappear. Over this.

JADA (V.O.)

And, slowly I went down.
Outnumbered -- I fought 'til my
last breath. Then, the room turned
black --

LENSWORTH (V.O.)
Don't you think you're exaggerating
a bit, Jada?

INT. DINESH HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Jada is lying down on the couch being comforted by Lensworth and Mira. Her fast food outfit is tattered and the hamburger hat is torn down and hanging around her neck.

JADA
They fired me! It was a nightmare.

She sits up and puts her hand to her forehead in dramatic fashion.

JADA (cont'd)
I think I'm suffering from Post
Traumatic Stress Disorder.

LENSWORTH
You only worked three hours.

Jada breaks down and starts to cry.

JADA
I wanted you to be proud of me. I
suck! I'm a failure.

Lensworth hugs her close and lets her cry on his shoulder as Mira rubs her back.

LENSWORTH
No, you're not.

MIRA
We'll always be proud of you. Being
fired from a job won't change that.

LENSWORTH
It's difficult to adjust to the
American workplace. Restaurant work
was just too difficult, that's all.

JADA
You think so?

LENSWORTH
I do.

(MORE)

LENSWORTH (cont'd)

(beat)

Maybe we can find you something simpler. Something requiring less know-how.

Jada regains composure, dries her eyes and gives a smile.

INT. TV STUDIO - OFFICE - DAY

Jada stands in the station manager's office of the Women's Entertainment Television channel. Low budget, low quality and low paying.

A female hand reaches over and turns on a 20" portable TV with rabbit ears hooked up to a Beta player. She presses play and we see a trailer of schlock geared for a female audience.

AGNES

Welcome to the exciting world of cable television. This is a sample of our exciting, new line-up.

TELEVISION SCREEN

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

FEMALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Tonight, hard hitting drama. Torn from the headlines!

A vicious gunfight on a dark city street. HOODS run for cover and shoot over their shoulders. Burglar alarms wail in the distance.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

A well dressed, BUSINESS WOMAN gets her kids ready for school and packs her briefcase with volumes of paperwork.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

During the day, she's a mild mannered, Wall Street executive and soccer mom who speaks five languages. At night --

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

The gunfight continues. '90s techno music now fills the background. The same woman is now shooting back. Dressed in a skin tight costume and mask with a gun in each hand and rounds of ammo around her chest.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 -- she's a one woman, war on crime.
 She's Killer Mama.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

She's now in the kitchen with flour on her face baking while negotiating a business deal on the phone.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 When she's not baking cookies --

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

Now back in costume, she wins the gunfight and stands over her conquests.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 -- she's taking out the trash.
 Followed by a brand new, dramatic
 series "Alone Against The World".

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A GIRL walks alone along the shore line looking distraught and sighing. Taking comfort by staring off into the distance.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The story of a woman diagnosed with
 a terminal illness while struggling
 alone against oppression in a male
 dominated society. But first, stay
 tuned for "Cooking With Carla".

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

A HOUSEWIFE comes on screen wearing an apron. She serves dinner to her husband who turns his nose up at it.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Delicious recipes and helpful
 kitchen tips for women forced to
 cook for ungrateful husbands.

Station identification logo pops up with the bold letters
 "WET".

FEMALE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 You are watching Women's
 Entertainment Television. Where all
 men are guilty until proven
 innocent.

BACK TO SCENE

A hand reaches over and turns the TV off.

AGNES
 Welcome to our internship program.
 My name is AGNES TURNBULL, I'm the
 station manager. Are there any
 questions?

Jada looks around and we see for the first time she's
 standing alone.

JADA
 (excited)
 I just want to thank you Miss
 Turnbull for giving me this job.
 I can't believe I'm qualified.

AGNES
 Is your father still an
 investigator for the IRS?

JADA
 Yes.

AGNES
 Then, your qualified. Welcome
 aboard.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

Agnes and Jada tour the station. They pass desks with
 SECRETARIES and WOMEN going about their business.

AGNES (CONT'D)

As an intern you'll be working on exciting projects like The Margaret Atwood Comedy Hour and The Church of Oprahology.

JADA

I didn't know Oprah started her own religion?

They come to a studio door and stop walking.

AGNES

It's no Scientology, but give it time.

Agnes opens the door to reveal a church setting with Oprah waving her arms behind the pulpit leading a congregation shouting, "YOU GO GIRL", "YOU GO GIRL" in unison.

She closes the door and they move on.

JADA

This is going to be fun.

AGNES

This is television, there's no fun involved. Don't be late for your first day.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

INT. DINESH HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Feeding time at the Dinesh home with the family gathered around the table.

JADA

(excited)

...And, I'll be working with celebrities. And, getting coffee for famous people too important to get their own.

LENSWORTH

We're proud of you princess, we really are.

JADA

And, you know what else I learned today? Celebrities in this country don't make TV commercials for money, they do it because they care.

MIRA

(sincerely)

God bless them for taking time out of their busy lives.

JADA

I can hardly wait to tell Clive.

LENSWORTH

Who's Clive?

MIRA

Clive's is Jada's new boyfriend.

JADA

We've been together for almost a week.

LENSWORTH

How come we've never met him?

MIRA

Yes, what's he like?

JADA

He's a rebel and a free soul.

KAVAN

Who lives in his mother's basement.

Jada shoots Kavan a look of pure sisterly hate.

JADA

He's the lead guitar player in an acid rock grunge band called Death by Choice.

LENSWORTH

What college is he planning on going to?

JADA

Oh, Clive doesn't believe in college.

LENSWORTH

What do mean he doesn't believe in college?

JADA

Clive says it's nothing more than an establishment symbol. He's so cool.

KAVAN

He's so unemployed.

LENSWORTH

But, he's still in school?

(beat)

He is still in school, isn't he?

JADA

He's taken time off to look for himself.

LENSWORTH

And, how long has he been looking for himself?

JADA

Not long.

KAVAN

Yeah, he's only twenty.

Mira drops her knife and fork from shock.

Lensworth coughs on his food and points at Jada.

LENSWORTH
If you think I'm going to --

Lensworth suddenly starts gasping for air and clawing at his chest as the room starts to spin. Mira and the kids rush to his side as he sinks down to the ground.

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Lensworth lies in a hospital bed. The same doctor we saw earlier is now taking his blood pressure.

LENSWORTH
 ...And, on top of everything, I
 learn my sixteen year old daughter
 has been dating a twenty year old.

DOCTOR
 And, how did you react when you
 found out? Did you share your
 feelings with her?

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST OFFICE - DAY

Mira lies on a couch in the office of a female PSYCHOLOGIST.

MIRA
 The whole neighborhood heard him
 share his feelings.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Kavan and his friends FOOGIE (12 - follower) and EUGENE (12 - leader) strut along the school grounds in baggy jeans and 90s rap regalia. Foogie's pushing a high end mountain bike.

FOOGIE
 Your dad had a heart attack while
 chewing out your sister? That's so
 cool!

KAVAN
 Yeah, I've never seen one up close
 before.

EUGENE

Big deal, my old man has them all the time. He's always grabbing his chest when he screams at me.

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS - DAY

Jada lies on her back talking to two female friends, AMBER and BRITTANY (each 16). Grunge rock wannabes with valley girl intelligence.

JADA

My dad doesn't want me seeing Clive anymore, which is so unfair. Especially now that he's out of rehab.

AMBER

Some parents are so immature.

JADA

Do you want to hear Clive's new song?

Both girls get excited and jump up.

Jada reaches for a portable radio with a cassette deck and plays the song. A fast, wicked, punk rock grunge attack with heavy distorted guitars and unintelligible screaming.

AMBER

Wow!

BRITTANY

Yeah! His lyric are like, so profound.

JADA

It's almost like he reads our minds.

INT. DINESH HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lensworth returns home from the hospital as Mira helps him to the couch.

MIRA

Now remember, the doctor told you to take it easy. Fortunately, it was only a panic attack.

LENSWORTH

Yeah, I'll just lay here and enjoy life.

MIRA

Don't be so negative. Remember, these are the best years of your life.

LENSWORTH

These are the best?

(slight beat)

I ache all over, I fall asleep on my chair by seven, and I get up twice a night to go to the bathroom. On top of that, my daughter is dating a twenty year old grunge person? And, I don't even know what a grunge person is.

(beat)

Back home in Jamaica they knew how to deal with the daughter's boyfriends.

(smiles)

Goodbye chubble.

MIRA

This is home. And, don't even think such things. They don't do things like that in this country.

LENSWORTH

Ooman! Are you serious? Don't you watch the 6 o'clock news? This country is crazy.

MIRA

(beat)

Anyway, the more we fight her the more she'll rebel. So, try and relax. I'm sure it's just a phase and nothing serious.

LENSWORTH

When it's my daughter, it's serious.

Suddenly, the sound of a motorcycle cuts through the room.

EXT. DINESH HOME - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

In the driveway is a black jacketed figure on a motorcycle, reeving the engine.

On the back of his jacket boldly reads "Death By Choice" above a patch of a bleeding guitar. We never see his face, only a mirrored helmet.

INT. DINESH HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

LENSWORTH
What's that racket?

Jada comes running down the stairs.

JADA
That's Clive!

LENSWORTH
He owns a motorcycle?

JADA
It's okay, they gave him his license back. Don't wait up.

LENSWORTH
Gave him his...? Jada!

Lensworth glares at Mira as Jada runs out the door.

MIRA
(sheepishly)
I'm sure it's just a phase.
Really!

INT. IRS BUILDING - DAY

Lensworth, looking tired, walks down a hallway exchanging pleasantries with PEOPLE going about their jobs.

He arrives at his office. On the door is boldly displayed; "LENSWORTH DINESH - INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE INVESTIGATOR".

INT. IRS BUILDING - LENSWORTH'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

He walks in and takes his place behind his desk.

Enter NORM GREENE (60s) Loud, obnoxious, conservative flag waiver. Knows everything and quick to share it.

AB

Hey, Lenny. How's the old ticker?

LENSWORTH

It wasn't a heart attack, only a panic attack.

NORM

That's how it starts. Then, finally one day...

LENSWORTH

My heart is fine.

NORM

With a teenage daughter at home, nothing is ever fine. Is she still dating that rock and roll drug dealer?

LENSWORTH

I'm sure he's not a drug dealer.

NORM

If he plays guitar, he's one of them. Oh, God! I just thought of something. It might be worse. He's probably a Democrat.

(beat)

Can I give you some good old fashioned, American advice?

LENSWORTH

Can I stop you?

NORM

Don't give in. Stand your ground! Let them know who's boss. That's how I raised my kids.

Norm pulls a photo of his wallet revealing two of the unhappiest high school children ever captured on film.

NORM (cont'd)

Look at them! Aren't they great?

LENSWORTH

Didn't your kids run away and join religious cults?

He puts his wallet and photo back in his pocket.

NORM

They did! And, if they apply themselves, they'll soon have cults of their own. That's what proper, American upbringing teaches. Hard work -- perseverance.

LENSWORTH

I'll keep that in mind.

Norm moves behind the desk and puts his hand on Lensworth's shoulder.

NORM

Just know, I'm here for you. And, remember the philosophy America was built on. Love thy neighbor!

(slight beat)

But, lock your doors, just in case.

Norm removes his hand from Lensworth's shoulder and rubs it clean on his clothes.

LENSWORTH

That's comforting. Thanks Norm.

Norm leaves the office and shuts the door behind him.

LENSWORTH (cont'd)

White men. Total mumus.

Lensworth shakes his head and goes about the paperwork on his desk.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Jada waits for her bus along with other COMMUTERS. The bus pulls to the stop and they crowd on.

JADA

(to herself)

My first day in the exciting world of television. Molding the minds of a new generation. A first step on a journey of independence.

INT. TV STUDIO - DAY

An atmosphere of noise and commotion as FEMALE INTERNS run around and go about their duties.

Jada balances a large tray of coffees for the SECRETARIES delivering them from desk to desk.

JADA
Extra hot, decaf, skinny hazelnut
macchiato, sugar-free syrup, extra
shot, double ice and whip?

SECRETARY 1
Here!

JADA
Extra hot, non-decaf, skinny
hazelnut macchiato, sugar-free
syrup, extra shot, triple ice with
no whip?

SECRETARY 2
Over here.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Jada struggles to walk with a mountain of files in her arms.

B) She sits behind a desk trying to answer multiple phones incessantly ringing.

INT. TV STUDIO - LUNCHROOM - DAY

Jada sits at a table, exhausted with her hair strewn about. She looks at her watch, groans and lays her head down.

Agnes walks by. She's wearing a purse over her shoulder and pops her head through the door.

AGNES
Morning kid. Are you ready to get
started?

Jada raises her tired head from the desk.

JADA
Started?

Suddenly, a YOUNG WOMAN (20s) with a page in her hand comes running up to them. Panic stricken and short of breath.

YOUNG WOMAN
Ms. Turnbull. Ms Turnbull.

MILDRED
What's wrong?

The woman pauses. Stumbling to find the words. Jada stands up looking concerned.

YOUNG WOMAN
The ratings are in.

Agnes starts to faint but the woman catches her.

Jada runs to their side to help.

YOUNG WOMAN (cont'd)
Get some water. Quick!

Jada quickly moves out of the room and comes back with a paper cup of water for Mildred and hands it to the woman.

YOUNG WOMAN (cont'd)
Drink slow... That's it.

Jada picks up a magazine and starts to fan her.

Agnes gains composure and is helped up.

AGNES
Okay! Give it to me.

The woman hands her the page. Agnes reads it and gets light headed again.

YOUNG WOMAN
More water.

AGNES
It's okay. I got this.

Agnes pulls a flask from her purse and starts drinking.

JADA
Is it that bad?

YOUNG WOMAN
We lost all our time slots.

AGNES
All of our jobs are at stake.

JADA
(shocked)
Are we in second place?

Agnes and the young woman look at each other in silence.

JADA (cont'd)
(quietly)
Third place?
(whisper)
Fourth?

Agnes drinks down another swallow from her flask.

AGNES
We're behind the Fireplace Channel.

The young woman grabs the flask from Agnes and drinks it down.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3

INT. DINESH HOME - NIGHT

Lensworth comes through the door. He walks over to Mira and kisses her on the cheek.

MIRA
How was your day?

LENSWORTH
Uneventful. How about yours?

MIRA
Mama called today.

Lensworth moves to the stove to see what's for dinner.

LENSWORTH
And, how is the black widow?

MIRA
Don't talk that way about my
mother. She loves you.

He moves to the couch, turns on the TV and flips through the channels.

LENSWORTH
She hates me.

MIRA
It's your imagination.

LENSWORTH
I work for the IRS. Trust me, I
know hate.
(slight beat)
She wore a black veil to our
wedding. A suspicious man might
think she was trying to tell him
something.

MIRA
Anyway, she wants to take us all
out to dinner this week.

LENSWORTH
Which means I'm paying.

MIRA
She always leaves the tip.

LENSWORTH
 (under his breath)
 That old obeah wouldn't tip if she
 was a canoe.

Kavan enters.

KAVAN
 Hi Mom. Hi Pop. How are you
 feeling?

LENSWORTH
 I'm fine. How are you?

KAVAN
 Good. Hard day at work?

LENSWORTH
 Not too bad.

KAVAN
 Have I ever mentioned how much I
 worry about you?

LENSWORTH
 No, I don't think you have.

KAVAN
 Well, I do.

LENSWORTH
 And, how much is this concern going
 to cost me?

KAVAN
 Nothing, it's on the house.

Lensworth picks up the evening newspaper and starts to read
 it.

LENSWORTH
 We'll, that's nice. How was school?

KAVAN
 It was great! Foogie brought his
 new bike to school.

Lensworth lowers the paper as realization hits his face.

KAVAN (cont'd)
 Foogie's dad bought it for him.
 You outta see how fast it is.

LENSWORTH

Foogie's dad is an American divorce lawyer. He has to move fast.

KAVAN

If I had one, you wouldn't have to worry about me being late for school again.

LENSWORTH

(sarcastically)

I do stay up at night worrying about that. I'll let you know if I can afford your concern and get back to you.

KAVAN

I'm free tomorrow around 4:30.

Feeling elated Kavan starts to leave the room.

LENSWORTH

This country could use more politicians like him.

Lensworth starts again on the newspaper.

An exhausted Jada enters and ignores Kavan as he leaves.

KAVAN

Hello, charm school graduate. Is Clive in jail yet?

Jada shoots him another look of pure, sisterly hate.

LENSWORTH

The love in this house brings a tear to my eyes.

MIRA

How was your first day of work?

Jada stomps to the fridge, picks a soda and slams the door.

JADA

He's an annoying little troll.

LENSWORTH

Who?

JADA

Who? That creature you call a son.
Why couldn't you have stopped at
one child?

LENSWORTH

It's was foolish of us to think we
could improve on perfection.

Jada glares back at Lensworth and storms out of the room.

MIRA

You upset her.

LENSWORTH

She's a teenager, she's always
upset.

MIRA

You have to be more understanding.
These are difficult years.

LENSWORTH

I agree. And, with any luck, I'll
survive them.

House phone rings. Lensworth gets up to answer it.

Suddenly, thundering footsteps fill the air. Kavan and Jada
come running into the room. Lensworth gets knocked over in
the stampede and the newspaper flies around him.

Kavan and Kate both reach the phone and wrestle for it.

JADA

It's for me!

KAVAN

I was here first.

JADA

Give it to me you worm!

Jada wrestles it away.

JADA (cont'd)

Hello!

(lights up)

Oh, hello Clive.

Kavan puts his hand to his forehead and leans back in Jada's
dramatic fashion. She sees him and tries to ignore it.

JADA (cont'd)
 It's good to hear from you.
 I've missed you too.

Kavan gets down on one knee and puts his hand over his heart in Shakespearian fashion, rein-acting Romeo and Juliet.

KAVAN
 Oh, Clive. Wherefore art thou and thy brain?

JADA
 Can you hold a minute sweetheart?
 I'll just be a second.

Jada mutes phone and raises her voice.

JADA (cont'd)
 Beat it, you little troll.

KAVAN
 Make me.

JADA
Mom!

MIRA
 Okay you two, that's enough!
 Kavan Lensworth Dinesh! Room! Now!

Kavan bolts like lightning up the stairs.

She turns to Lensworth and grabs him.

MIRA (cont'd)
 There's no reason for you to listen either.

LENSWORTH
 But, I'm her father.

MIRA
 All the more reason why you shouldn't.

EXT/INT. FAMILY CAR - DAY

Lensworth, Mira and Kavan take an afternoon drive.

LENSWORTH
 I can't believe I was talked into this.

MIRA

It's good for you to get out of the house. This will take your mind off other things,

KAVAN

And, you promised you'd look.

EXT. BIKE SHOP - DAY.

They pull up to a very high end bicycle shop. The sign on the window reads "LA BICYCLETTE". In lower case below; "If you need to ask price, you're in the wrong place."

MIRA

Oh, look -- it's French.

LENSWORTH

Oh, look -- it's expensive.

They climb out of the car and step inside to find--

INT. BIKE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Lavish and snobbish. Catering to rich parents buying for spoiled brats.

As the family steps inside the EMPLOYEES eye them up and down and dismiss them. Finally, a SALESMAN (PHILIPPE) rolls his eyes to the ceiling and grudgingly approaches them.

PHILIPPE

(French accent)

Hello, my name is PHILIPPE. I'm the store manager. May I help you?

KAVAN

We're here to see the Mark IV Turbo Mountain Bike.

PHILIPPE

Do you have an appointment?

LENSWORTH

To see a bike?

PHILIPPE

I'll take that as a no.

He snaps his fingers as he eyes them up and down.

PHILIPPE (cont'd)
Fabian, take these -- people to the
secured area.

The equally snobbish FABIAN joins them.

FABIAN
(French accent)
Walk this way, please.

They move towards --

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

The doors open and they step on.

LENSWORTH
(uncomfortable)
You wouldn't by chance be offering
any sales?

FABIAN
Sir does have a sense of humor,
doesn't he?

The elevator stops. They step off and approach --

INT. BIKE SHOP - SECURED AREA - LATER

A high level secured room with dozens of expensive bikes.
Each sits in it's own roped off area with spotlights.

FABIAN
May I present, the Mark IV.

The Mark IV stands in the middle of the room protected by
SECURITY GUARDS.

KAVAN
Wow!

LENSWORTH
How much?

The security guards snicker under their breath.

FABIAN
There are no price tags on quality,
sir.

LENSWORTH

Call it my sense of humor. How much?

FABIAN

The MARK IV has been reduced to make way for a new model.

MIRA

That's good.

FABIAN

Normally, \$14,500.00, now only \$11,000.00.

The color runs out of Lensworth's face as he stares ahead, unresponsive.

KAVAN

(concern)

Pop! Are you alright?

(beat)

Dad?

MIRA

Lensworth?

Lensworth suddenly passes out face first and hits the floor.

FABIAN

Oh, no! Not another one.

Fabian's French accent drops and a Brooklyn one slips out.

FABIAN (cont'd)

Someone call the nurse.

INT. DINESH HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY.

Mira and Kavan help Lensworth to the couch and sit beside him.

MIRA

You've had another shock. Just lay back and relax. You'll be fine.

LENSWORTH

\$11,000 for a bike? My car was only \$10,000. This country is crazy.

Kavan holds up a brochure from La Bicyclelette.

KAVAN
They offer installment plans.

Lensworth and Mira both glare at Kavan.

KAVAN (cont'd)
Maybe I should go to my room?

Kavan exits to go to his room.

MIRA
Sit back and relax before we deal
with the next problem.

LENSWORTH
Should I ask?

MIRA
It's Jada. Her and Clive broke up.

Lensworth face turns to joy as he lights up with a smile.

MIRA (cont'd)
Try not to look so happy when she
comes down. She's very upset.

Jada descends the stairs in slow, dramatic splendor.
Dressed in black from head to toe and carrying her cassette
player.

LENSWORTH
I'm surprised she didn't borrow
your mother's veil.

Mira elbows Lensworth in the ribs. She moves towards Jada to
comfort her.

MIRA
Tell me what happened sweetheart.

JADA
Clive and I had a fight and broke
up.

They move to the couch and sit as Lensworth gets up.

MIRA
I'm sorry.

JADA
He hurt me.

MIRA
How did he hurt you?

JADA
It was what he said.

MIRA
It'll be alright. What could he say
that was so bad?

Jada stands and puts her hands on her hips.

JADA
He had the nerve to call me a drama
queen! Can you believe that?

Lensworth starts to say something but Mira glares at him.

MIRA
Don't worry about him. You'll meet
someone else.

Mira and Lensworth share a look of relief.

JADA
There'll never be anyone else. We
were soul mates. Meant to be
together for life.

Jada reaches down and picks the tape player from the couch. She plays Clive's song. Lensworth's face shrivels in pain while Mira smiles awkwardly.

JADA (cont'd)
(over music)
How can someone not love a man like
that?

She breaks down and starts to cry.

JADA (cont'd)
I hope his guitar short-circuits.

Mira puts her arm around her, hugs her close and shuts the tape player down. Lensworth shows a sign of relief.

Jada pulls away, puts her tape player down and dries her eyes. Suddenly, she reaches under her hat and pulls down a black veil.

LENSWORTH
I should have known.

She gets up to leave as Kavan enters the room.

JADA

I hate men!

She storms out and runs upstairs to her room.

KAVAN

What's for lunch?

END OF ACT 3

TAG

INT. DINESH HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jada sits in front of the TV watching a fireplace on the screen. She's eating a large submarine sandwich and has piles of discarded candy wrappers around her.

Lensworth walks in with a drink and takes the chair beside her.

LENSWORTH

Why are you watching the Fireplace Channel?

JADA

I see love going up in flames. Dying embers... Ashes... Now I know why this is so popular with white people.

LENSWORTH

I thought you were on a diet?

JADA

I went on a diet for Clive. And, now I'm eating because of him. I hate men! Except, you.

LENSWORTH

What about your brother?

JADA

I haven't decided yet.

LENSWORTH

(beat)

You know I worry about you. You're growing up. And, it scares me. I know I have to let go. But, I'll always be here for you.

JADA

I know. You're always thinking of me. And, I love you for that.

Lensworth reaches out his hand to Jada's.

LENSWORTH

(jokingly)

Want to go out for a New Year's burger?

Lensworth manages to get a smile out of Jada.

JADA

I'd rather have a new bike.

He touches his glass to her sandwich and they toast each other.

THE END