

IN THEIR OWN WAY

By
Julie Gervais

FADE IN:

INT. PARKED CAR - DAWN

APRIL PATNODE, 20, sturdy and strong, sits in her rusty, dented compact, parked on a dirt driveway outside a vinyl-sided ranch with toys and junk scattered around the lawn. She deep breathes and then gets out of the car.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING

April's mother, DARLENE, 40s, hardened, heavy makeup, is frying breakfast and nursing a joint as April enters. They talk over the blare of the 'Looks News' channel.

DARLENE

Gotta say, this night shift is the best thing ever for getting your ass out of bed in the morning.

APRIL

That's debatable.

DARLENE

Everything's debatable to you.

APRIL

How's my ass get out of bed if it never got into it?

DARLENE

Still, cracks me up.

APRIL

Because you're high.

KELLI MANN (ON TV)

Coming up at the top of the hour, expert economist Don Fredericks responds to more wild allegations - oh boy get this - the liberals say that unions are actually good for our economy!

ROB (ON TV)

OOPS redundancy alert Kelli, biased and liberal!

KELLI

Ohhh Rob, now where are my journalistic standards this morning?!

APRIL
Standards?

DARLENE
Oh would you quit picking on her.

April scrolls her phone and rolls her eyes.

APRIL
I'm not picking on her, exactly.
More like all of them as a group.

DARLENE
Your father loved the station.

APRIL
Dad was in a union, when he first
started out.

KELLI
Stay tuned for the straight story,
only on Looks. Real news for real
people.

DARLENE
That's right Kelli, you got us
girl.

APRIL
I don't think she really gets us
Mom.

DARLENE
I don't think anyone really gets
YOU.

APRIL
How could she get us in a dress
like that?

DARLENE
She doesn't buy the dress HERSELF
April. The station buys it for her.

APRIL
Exactly. So how does she get people
who buy their own clothes, much
less at ValueWorld. Like she's ever
heard of ValueWorld.

DARLENE
Well who's all sour grapey again,
the girl who said she herself would
be a TV JER-nalist some day.

(MORE)

DARLENE (CONT'D)

We couldn't get over where you got that idea.

APRIL

(softly, getting rattled)
In school.

DARLENE

School's not reality April. Feeding truckers, for example, is real. I help to keep the country moving.

APRIL

Their bowels, anyway.

Darlene pins an American flag to her uniform on her way out.

DARLENE

Ok working girl, first paycheck is next week right? We're gonna fix that busted garage door!

APRIL

Can't wait.

INT. DINER - DAY

April stops for coffee at Truckee's, where her mother waitresses. Looks News plays on several screens in the restaurant. An elderly couple, MR. AND MRS. TROMBLEY, sit at the counter.

MRS. TROMBLEY

Oh April. You're still here?

APRIL

As opposed to...

MR. TROMBLEY

Thought you were going to college.

APRIL

I'm saving up.

MRS. TROMBLEY

Colleges are full of crazies now anyway. You're better off home and working. Heard you got in at the warehouse.

APRIL

Yeah.

MR. TROMBLEY
That's a good job. Should count
yourself lucky.

EXT. DINER - DAY

April takes her coffee outside, where the hard-of-hearing Trombleys converse loudly in the parking lot. She crouches down next to her car when she hears them coming.

MR. TROMBLEY
You know she's all messed up in the
head. One of those socialism types.
On and on about the poor, like they
should get everything for free.
Who's gonna pay for that?

MRS. TROMBLEY
It was that radical English
teacher. Got them all brainwashed
up.

They see April hiding and listening to them.

MR. TROMBLEY
(yelling across the lot)
It's our money, April!

MRS. TROMBLEY
Yeah, stop trying to give our money
away!

EXT. WAREHOUSE - DAY

April sees two former high school acquaintances, TRENT and TIFFANY, early 20s, a married couple, very clean-cut. Tiffany jiggles a baby on her hip as they talk.

TRENT
April, what are you doing here?

APRIL
Going to work.

TIFFANY
All's we heard about you was
college college college, Miss
Smartypants.

APRIL
I'm working on it. I need a better
car to get over there.

TIFFANY
College is overrated April.

APRIL
Oh really, Tiffany.

TRENT
What were you gonna do there?

APRIL
Are going to do there. Not were.
Journalism.

TRENT
Tell you what, can't do better than
study the Looks News team. Gee we
appreciate them, don't we honey.

TIFFANY
Oh, do we ever. We were so tired of
all that liberal krap everywhere.

APRIL
Looks is full of shit, you guys.

TIFFANY
Watch your language in front of my
baby, April!

TRENT
Uh oh, low-information alert! Your
Dad loved the station, by the way.

APRIL
That was before they went full
nutjob.

TIFFANY
Wake up April. You liberals are
delusional about how the world
works.

APRIL
Said the girl who couldn't get
through freshman history?

TRENT
Hey! Don't you be rude to my wife!

APRIL
(walking into work)
It's time for my shift.

TRENT

Good luck in your commie socialist world April!

TIFFANY

Yeah, hope that works out for ya!

EXT. YARD - DAY

April throws a ball for her dog CRONKITE.

APRIL

Attaboy, you still got it Cronkite!
Look at you go, buddy!

The dog returns the ball as Darlene arrives.

APRIL (CONT'D)

We should get him a new tag.

DARLENE

Why?

APRIL

It still has Dad's name on it.

DARLENE

Well I think everyone in this town remembers where your father lived.

APRIL

It's just weird.

DARLENE

Cronkite would never wander off.

APRIL

Unless he goes looking for Dad.

INT. DINER - EVENING

April stops in on her way to work again. Some regular customers are at the counter - PERRY, 60s, worn and grizzled, and BIG AL, 50s - very heavy, in overalls and muddy boots. The Trombleys are also there, along with Trent and Tiffany.

DARLENE

You're gonna be late for work baby.

APRIL

Hi to you too Mom. I'm going, I just want coffee.

Looks News blares from multiple screens. April goes to the coffee machine and finds both pots empty.

APRIL (CONT'D)
Can we change the channel?

DARLENE
No. Everyone likes Looks.

APRIL
No need to count me in there.

PERRY
(to Darlene)
Still fighting the news wars at your place?

DARLENE
It never stops. How do I make it stop Perry?!

KELLI (ON TV)
Coming up next, we'll take a look at the latest bit of double talk from America's liberal elites who think they're better than you.

BIG AL
Goddam right. Libtards.

PERRY
Hey April, hear you're out in the working world with the rest of us. How's your attitude doin'?

BIG AL
That right? All's we heard about you is straight to college, kid.

April pretends she doesn't hear this, as she fumbles around with the machine, trying to make coffee.

PERRY
Well here's a college course for you. Don't believe anything the libs say. Ya get an 'A'?

APRIL
Oh Jesus Perry.

DARLENE
You WILL NOT take the name of the lord in vain in my restaurant!

APRIL

Mom, the name of the lord is the least of our problems around here.

BIG AL

Ok, what are our problems April? Give ya a minute on the clock.

APRIL

Trusting the wrong people, for one.

BIG AL

Your daddy knew who to trust.

APRIL

He got sucked into that Looks bullshit. It wasn't his fault!

DARLENE

April would you get your argumentative behind to work. We need this job.

BIG AL

Tell you what, Matt would be disappointed as hell to see his daughter spittin' that liberal whack talk.

April stops fiddling with the coffee machine, catches her breath, tries to contain her anger.

APRIL

Bullshit! He'd be glad he taught me to think for myself. FUCK it's just coming out as water! Mom why doesn't this work?

TRENT

It's not thinking for yourself if you're listening to the libs April.

APRIL

It's not thinking for yourself if you're only listening to one station all the time Trent.

MR. TROMBLEY

You sayin' your daddy didn't know best?

APRIL

Oh my god you guys! You're baiting me just like the Looks assholes do.

(MORE)

APRIL (CONT'D)

My Dad would have seen through all of it, eventually and he'd be calling you all out for being sheep!

MRS. TROMBLEY

Oh to be nineteen and talk like you've been around the block.

BIG AL

True that. Free pass expires when you graduate high school.

April stops fiddling with the coffee maker and turns to face everyone.

APRIL

Look around you guys, we live in a shithole up here. Is it all our own fault? We can work hard all our lives but unless we win the lottery, we're always going to be in about the same place we started.

TIFFANY

I happen to like it here. It's a great place to raise a family.

APRIL

Except there's no real economy here, it's just a bunch of scattered little shit jobs to make enough so you don't starve.

MR. TROMBLEY

And that's all Looks News fault? April that's the craziest thing I've ever heard!

APRIL

You listen to what they say like it's gospel! Did you ever think about their agenda?

PERRY

Expose the libs, that's the agenda! Bury 'em!

TRENT

Wait, sheep can read the gospel?

APRIL

Don't you ever think about why we are like, trapped?

BIG AL

Just like a lib, blaming everything on somebody else.

APRIL

Just the opposite Al, I'm saying take responsibility to get your information from someplace reliable! So you know what's actually going on because we're making decisions based on bullshit!

TRENT

Wake up April and get your head out of the sand! The liberal mentality is the cause of all the problems in this country!

APRIL

Well of course you would think that if you only listen to Looks!

DARLENE

April when you find someone you trust, you trust them and get on with it.

APRIL

Why's there only shitty jobs up here, like warehouses and diners and half-broken farms?

PERRY

Yeah it's all Looks News fault that my tractor is broken!

APRIL

Look at those people in their thousand dollar suits, they're selling us something. How can you not see that?

BIG AL

What do they wear on the egghead stations, hand me downs?

APRIL

I'll bet you anything, anything that the people who work at Looks, these New York City slicksters, they are laughing all at people like us all the way to the bank.

PERRY

Well April why don't you go there and ask 'em?! Ask 'em what they're laughing about, I bet it's all about the libs 'cause they keep getting owned.

APRIL

You know what Perry? That is a great fucking idea. How about I go to New York and find out what is really going on so I can come back and tell you and then you guys can make up reasons why it's not true, because it doesn't match up with what you already think, and FUCK!

She drops the overflowing coffee pot with scalding coffee. It smashes to bits and she sobs as she sits down on the floor. Darlene walks wearily over to the mess with a mop.

DARLENE

Get to work April. You've got all my customers upset.

She runs out, ugly crying. Several of the group watches her from the window.

DARLENE (CONT'D)

New York City my ass. Barely has enough money to gas up the car.

EXT. DINER - NEXT EVENING

April arrives on her way to work again but sees all of the regular customers' cars in the parking lot, and begins to turn away.

INT. DINER - EVENING CONTINUOUS

Darlene quickly pours a cup of coffee and brings it to the door, calling out.

DARLENE

Bet my daughter would love a nice cup of coffee to take to work!

APRIL

(taken aback)
I would. Thanks.

DARLENE

Come in for just a sec April.

The usual customers are all there -- the Trombleys, Tiffany & Trent, Big Al and Perry. They all rise as April enters. Big Al approaches her, holding out an envelope.

BIG AL

Took up a collection, kid.

APRIL

A what?

MRS. TROMBLEY

It's kind of a graduation present April. We all knew you always wanted to visit New York City.

TRENT

Be looking forward to what you find out there. Bring us back some stories of the big city, ok?

PERRY

Go get 'em kid, your first journalism assignment! You go get the story!

April opens the envelope in shock to find a pile of cash.

DARLENE

It's enough for bus fare and we hope, enough to stay somewhere for a few days. It's expensive there.

PERRY

City's a helluva place. I saw it when I was in the service. Everybody should go at least once.

TIFFANY

Counting on you to bring back some of that New York City style April, take a lot of pictures ok?

MR. TROMBLEY

Hopin' you can get me an autograph from Kelli Mann. Of all those women on Looks, she's my favorite. Don't mind sayin'. Wife knows about it even.

APRIL

Oh my god (turning to Darlene). I can really go?

DARLENE

You're grown April. It's not for us to hold you back.

April looks at everyone, tearing up.

APRIL

Thank you. I don't know what to say. That's like, really awesome of you guys.

EXT. BUS STATION - DAY

The group has gathered to see April off. She boards, waves goodbye to her smiling people and they to her, and the bus departs. They chuckle amongst themselves as they disperse.

BIG AL

Kid's delusional.

MRS. TROMBLEY

No idea what she's talking about, poor dear.

TRENT

Yep. Wasting her time but we all have to learn somehow.

TIFFANY

I can see pictures of New York City on the internet.

PERRY

Gonna be worse when she comes back, ya know? New York's all fulla libs.

MR. TROMBLEY

Oh Dar you got your work cut out.

DARLENE

Hope she won't be gone too long. We need that second job.

The group disperses.

FADE OUT.