ATLANTA

Created by
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"VAN"

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FADE IN:

INT. DPSS - DAY

The place is crowded and noisy with long lines. It's basically the DMV with a different name. **VAN (26)** waits in line with her daughter **LOTTIE (2)** who plays with her doll. Someone finally calls Van and she walks up to the window.

The worker's name is **SHANTAY (40s)**

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VAN
Hi, I wanted to um -- Lottie why don't you go sit down over there?
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Van watches Lottie as she takes a seat nearby. Moments pass as Van insures Lottie is secure. Shantay coughs. Van turns toward Shantay.

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VAN
Hi.
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SHANTAY
How can I help you miss?
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VAN
(quietly)
Yea. I wanted to apply for--
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Van looks at Lottie again. Lottie strokes her doll's hair.

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SHANTAY
I'm sorry ma'am. I can barely hear you.
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VAN
(quieter)
I wanted to apply for SNAP.
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Shantay looks confused.

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VAN (cont'd)
(whispers)
I'll--I'll just write it down.
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Van writes the words SNAP on a piece of paper and passes it to Shantay.

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SHANTAY
(loud)
Oh Food Stamps! Why didn't you just say so?
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Van nods and looks around to see if anyone heard. Shantay hands her a clipboard with an application attached to it.

SHANTAY (cont'd)
Fill this out and make sure you have all the required documents.

Van nods.

SHANTAY (cont'd)
And baby, don't feel ashamed. We need all the help we can get.

Shantay glances at Lottie.

SHANTAY (cont'd)
Especially black women.

Van gives her a faint smile. She takes the application and sits next to Lottie.

SHANTAY (cont'd)
Next person in line!

Van reluctantly fills it out; she sighs heavily and stares at the floor.

TITLE: ATLANTA

["FOR REAL" BY AMEL LARRIEUX STARTS AS "ATLANTA" COMES UP]

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS - NIGHT

Van opens the door to her apartment. She holds Lottie on one arm and a McDonald's Happy Meal in the other.

VAN
Ugh, Lottie. You're getting so big.

Van puts Lottie in the crib and plays her voicemail messages. She grabs some limp fries and eats them as she listens.

JAYDE
(voice message)
Hey girl! I was calling to see how my "best friend" is doing, since she never calls. Or text me. You can't even DM me on Insta?

Van smiles.
JAYDE (cont'd) (voice message)
Shit. Even an email would suffice!

Van bursts out laughing.

JAYDE (cont'd) (voice message)
Anyways, hit me up. I really wanna see you. We should go out. Have some fun. Lord knows you need it.

Next is EARN (28), the father of her child. Van sips on some watered down soda.

EARN (voice message)
Hey Van. Its Earn. Just calling to see how you and Lottie are doing. I was gonna come by but I've been really busy with the whole Paper Boi thing, so um-- uh, well let me know if you need anything important like money. Or diapers. Or milk.

Van bites her bottom lip and grins.

EARN (cont'd) (voice message)
Well, um, I lov-- yea. OK.

Van rolls her eyes, disappointed. She throws away the Happy Meal. Finally, a more SERIOUS MAN leaves a message.

SERIOUS MAN (voice message)
Hello. I'm calling from Winchester High School.

Van rushes over to the answering machine and puts her ear over the audio.

SERIOUS MAN (voice message)
We reviewed your application and want to set up an interview with you. Can you come by on Monday around 1 a.m?

VAN
Yes!

The message keeps playing.
SERIOUS MAN
(voice message)
If this time doesn't work, just call
and let us know. Can't wait to see
you, have a good day.

The voice messages end.

INT. WINCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Van waits patiently. She wears a business suit with gold
earrings and black dress shoes. Her hair is styled in a neat
Afro. A tall woman sits next to her. She smiles and leans in
close to Van.

TALL WOMAN
(whispering)
I am so happy I'm not the only black
woman here, if you know what I mean?

Van looks around.

VAN
Yea, I hadn't noticed.

TALL WOMAN
Its like being two crows in a sea of
snow ha ha.

Van looks away for a moment.

TALL WOMAN (cont'd)
Sorry that was a bad simile. Or is it
metaphor? Shit. Well, google is my
friend.

The tall woman scrolls through her phone. She glances at
Van.

TALL WOMAN (cont'd)
By the way, I love your hair.

Van smiles and touches her dark brown Afro.

VAN
Thank you.

TALL WOMAN
Yea, I've been tyrnna go natural too.

Tall woman runs her fingers threw her long, shiny weave.
VAN
Oh really?

TALL WOMAN
Yea, but you know how these white folks feel about black hair.

(She uses her hands to get her point across)

TALL WOMAN (cont'd)
Either its too unprofessional, or too unkempt, or too exotic.

The Tall woman leans in again.

TALL WOMAN (cont'd)
(whispering)
But what they really trying say is, its too black.

The tall woman rolls her eyes.

TALL WOMAN (cont'd)
(louder)
And I'm just like bitch--

VAN
Oh--

TALL WOMAN
(quieter)
Its not my fault I was born with nappy ass hair. I mean do I discriminate against white people for being born with thin ass lips!? No!

A white secretary steps out of her office.

WHITE SECRETARY
Ashley Johnson.

TALL WOMAN
Oooh, that's me. Wish me luck.

The tall woman gets up and steps into the white secretary's office. Van is the only black woman in the room. There's an awkward silence. A white woman sits next to Van and gazes at Van hard. Hard enough to make any human uncomfortable. Without permission, the woman touches Van's hair. Van jerks away like "the fuck?"
INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS - DAY

Van washes dishes while Lottie sleeps on the couch. There's a knock at the door. Van opens it. It's Earn.

EARN
  Sup.
  
VAN
  Hey.

Earn steps in and walks over to Lottie.

EARN  
  (baby talk)
  Heyyy sweetie. Look at you with those big fat cheeks. Who'd you inherit those from?

Van comes over.

VAN
  Don't wake her up. It took me forever to get her to sleep!

Earn raises his forehead and steps back.

EARN
  My bad.

Van resumes washing dishes. Earn leans on the counter and stares at Van while she washes.

EARN  (cont'd)
  You look tired.

  VAN  
  (bluntly)
  I am tired.

  EARN
  You want me to help you?

Earn leans off the counters and grabs a dish.

VAN
  I got it.

  EARN
  Nah, I insist.

  VAN
  Earn! I got it.
Okay.

Earn retreats and opens the fridge. He laughs.

What?

Earn stands up and holds an empty gallon of milk.

We're out of milk.

You said you'd buy some.

Earn nods slowly.

I did say that didn't I?

Earn searches threw the cabinets and grabs a box of assorted nuts. He leans against the couch across from Van and munches on the kernels.

How's your job hunting going?

Van stops and turns.

Not good.

Didn't you go on some interview?

Yea, that was over a week ago. I don't think I got the job.

Earn pops his last cashew in his mouth and walks toward Van.

If it's money you need, I got you.

It's okay Earn.

Earn pulls out an envelope filled with money.

You sure?
Van turns around quickly and snatches the envelope. They're really close. Too close.

   VAN
   Why are you so close?

   EARN
   Your breath is music to my nostrils.

   VAN
   Hear you go with your weird ass.

   EARN
   What? It smells ... Sensational.

Van giggles.

   VAN
   Okay. Stop.

They kiss. Van puts her arms round Earn's neck. They start making out. Earn puts her on top of the counter. Van let's out a moan, then pushes him back. She holds up the envelope.

   VAN (cont'd)
   Thanks.

   EARN
   Yea.

Earl looks at the fridge and back at Van.

   EARN (cont'd)
   You know there's nothing wrong with letting people help you right?

   VAN
   I know.

   EARN
   But ... ?

   VAN
   I just wanna be self-sufficient. For myself. For Lottie. I need job Earn.

   EARN
   Yea.

   VAN
   Where are you staying?

Earn hesitates.
EARN
At Al's. I'm still saving up for my a place. Those cost an arm and leg nowadays, so.

VAN
Well, you can chill here if you want.

EARN
Thanks--

Earn phones buzzes. He checks his pockets.

EARN (cont'd)
I appreciate that--

Earn checks his phone

VAN
Who is it?

EARN
Uh, Al, he needs me for something.

Earn heads for the exit and then comes back to take the can of assorted nuts.

EARN (cont'd)
I'm gonna take these, they're pretty good.

Earn grabs the can and heads for the exit.

EARN (cont'd)
See ya.

VAN
Bye.

INT. LOCAL LIBRARY - DAY

Van uses a computer to fill out several job applications: some teaching positions, a few secretary positions. She clicks on the send button. Lottie plays on the floor nearby.
INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS - DAY

VAN
(on the phone)
Hi I was calling to follow up on an application I submitted (a week ago).
Sure, I'll hold.

Minutes pass.

VAN (cont'd)
(one the phone)
Hi. Yea, my name is Vanessa. Oh, okay. You already filled the position?

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Van walks down a vacant aisle. She puts a boatload of food into the cart: mostly veggies, fruits and grains. She goes to a self-checkout aisle. Stealthily, she pays for her groceries using her SNAP card.

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS - DAY

Van is on the phone again.

VAN
Yes! This is my fourth time calling this week. Can I talk to your manager?

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS/BATHROOM - DAY

Van scrubs the bath tub.

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS/LIVING ROOM - DAY

Van vacuums the living room.

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS/BATHROOM - DAY

Van shampoos Lottie's hair.

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Van feeds Lottie.
Its good huh?

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
Van and Lottie sit on the carpet criss-crossed apple sauce. While Lottie plays with her toy, Van brushes her hair.

VAN
Someone's hair is getting so long.

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
Van watches "Two Broke Girls" when her phone rings. She picks it up.

VAN
(on the phone)
Hello? Hi. Yes, I'm Vanessa. Yes! Yea, that's great. I'll be there. Thank you.

Van hangs up the phone and pumps her fists.

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS/LOTTIE'S ROOM - NIGHT
Van puts Lottie in her crib and kisses her on the forehead.

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS/BATHROOM - THE NEXT DAY
Van puts on a business suit and flat irons her hair.

EXT. HOTEL CHAIRS - DAY
We pan up on a swanky pool party. There's a white DJ with expensive looking equipment playing R&B and Hip Hop music as well as a fully stocked bar manned by an Alfred wannabe. There's a large pool and several grills cooking meats to perfection.

JAYDE
Girl, I'm so happy you came out.

Van looks down at important papers.
VAN
Yea, thanks for inviting me.

JAYDE
Anything to get you out of that suffocating ass apartment of yours.

Van manages a smile.

VAN
Let's just hope its better than last time you invited me out.

Jayde laughs.

JAYDE
Okay, last time was not my fault--

VAN
Not your fault? I lost my job because of you!

Jayde looks really surprised.

JAYDE
Bitch, did I force you to smoke weed? Besides, you shouldn't smoked with me if you had a drug test the next day.

VAN
I forgot!

Jayde looks at her like "Well? It's still not my fault."

VAN (cont'd)
You know what, your right. Forget it.

Van leans back in her chair and writes something down.

JAYDE
What are you doing?

Van doesn't look up

VAN
Filling out this job applications.

Jayde shakes her head.

JAYDE
Okay. Van. I didn't invite you here to fill out job applications.
VAN
Its important.

Jayde sits up.

JAYDE
You know what else is important? Fun. And relaxation. And enjoying this party.

VAN
Fine!

Van puts her application in her bag.

VAN (cont'd)
You wanna swim?

Jayde smirks.

JAYDE
And get my hair wet? I'm good luv, enjoy.

Van shakes her head.

VAN
Do you have a hair net?

JAYDE
In my bag.

Van grabs a pink hair cap from Jayde's bag and puts it on.

VAN
(not really thankful)
Thank you.

Van walks to the pool and puts her legs in. The water's warm.

VAN (cont'd)
You should at least put your feet in Jayde.

Van turns to find Jayde talking to a tall and good looking man. Probably a basketball player. Van rolls her eyes.

EXT. HOTEL POOL - DAY

Van holds her breath under the pool as she swims gracefully. Under the water she feels free. Free of bills.
Free of being broke. Free of being jobless. Free of problems. That all ends when someone farts in her direction.

Van quickly comes up. The Farting man turns. The two stare at each other for awhile. The man blinks (nervously).

VAN
Really--

FARTING MAN
Aye my fault.

VAN
You're just gonna--

FARTING MAN
My fault fam. My fault.

The Farting man makes "I'm sorry," gestures with his hands.

FARTING MAN
See what had happened was I had ate a big ass burrito and that shit had mad beans in it. And now. Now its taking its toll . . .

Silence.

FARTING MAN
Aye what's that over there?

Farting man points behind Van and she looks. The Farting man swims away. Van gasps as he watches him swim away.

Van sits on the edge of the pool and readjusts her bikini. Some random black dude comes over. He rubs his hands and licks his lips, Birdman style.

RANDOM BLACK DUDE
Aye wassup ma?

Van looks around like "Who is this nigga talking to?"

RANDOM BLACK DUDE (cont'd)
Yea, I'm talking to you shortie.
DAMN! You are one fine red bone.

VAN
I have a name.

RANDOM BLACK DUDE
Oh no doubt. But you finsta have a new name: Mrs. Mackey.
Van gets up.

RANDOM BLACK DUDE (cont'd)
That's my last name by the way.

VAN
I'm not interested. Thank you.

Random Black Guy puts his hand in the air, shocked. Then he says what every rejected guy feels obligated to say.

RANDOM BLACK DUDE
It's all good. You wasn't that cute anyways!

(Van keeps walking.)

RANDOM BLACK DUDE (cont'd)
I wasn't even tryna holla. I just needed directions to the nearest bathroom!

(Van keeps walking.)

RANDOM BLACK DUDE (cont'd)
I prefer white women anyways!

Van stops and flicks him off.

EXT. HOTEL CHAIRS - DAY

Jayde laughs as her and the tall, probably a basketball player guy converse. Jayde rubs his shoulders.

JAYDE
Ha ha, you are so funny.

The Basketball player guy smiles as Van walks up and packs her stuff.

JAYDE (cont'd)
Van? Where you going?

VAN
I need a drink. Can we get a drink?

JAYDE
Okay. But, did something happen--

VAN
No. I just wanna get drunk.
Jayde puts her hands up.

JAYDE
Okay.

Jayde starts to pack up.

BASKETBALL GUY
So can I call you sometime?

JAYDE
How much did you say you make again?

Basketball guy laughs.

BASKETBALL GUY
Seven figures.

JAYDE
You can call me anytime.

Jayde gives the guy her number. Van shakes her head.

JAYDE (cont'd)
Come on Van.

The two friends head for the bar.

EXT. HOTEL BAR - DAY

An over-dressed bartender hands Van two shots of vodka. Van gulps one down as Jayde watches her, shocked.

JAYDE
Van. Sweety. You okay?

VAN
I'm fine.

Van gulps down another. Jayde smirks and sips her Bloody Mary.

JAYDE
You need a man.

Van exhales.

VAN
Why is everything always have to be about a man with you?
JAYDE
It's obvious your not getting any action. You're too uptight.

VAN
I'm not uptight! Okay, I cam--

Jayde laughs.

VAN (cont'd)
I came out with you to turn up. And that's what I'm gonna do.

Jayde lifts her fists up, Black Panther style.

JAYDE
Yass girl, that's what I like to hear!

Jayde takes a large sip of her Bloody Mary.

JAYDE (cont'd)
Let me go use the restroom, I'll be right back.

Jayde leaves. Van twirls her drink with her finger. A tall, dark man dressed in African attire sits next to her.

RANDOM BLACK DUDE 2
Hi, let me get a Hennessy with ice.

Van glances at him. RBD 2 examines her.

RANDOM BLACK DUDE 2 (cont'd)
May I just say that you look like a beautiful Eritrean princess.

Van ignores him. The bartender hands him his drink; he sips it and He continues . . .

RANDOM BLACK DUDE 2 (cont'd)
You know, I believe that the black woman is the supreme being. The first human on this Earth was a black woman. We all come from a black woman. Did you know that? I bet you didn't.

Van looks around for Jayde.

RANDOM BLACK DUDE 2 (cont'd)
Do you believe in love at first sight? I do.

(MORE)
RANDOM BLACK DUDE 2 (cont'd)
I mean when I saw your midnight
black, gravity defying hair, your
smooth vanilla skin, your full lips--

Random Black Dude 2 sucks his lip, startling Van.

VAN
Nigga, you barely know me. Talking
about black women this and black
women that, your probably thinking of
how you wanna get in my panties with
your I'm so woke, Afro-centric ass!

Jayde comes back, with her makeup (done better). Van gets
off her seat, taking her drink.

VAN (cont'd)
Let's go.

JAYDE
Damn, alright.

RANDOM BLACK DUDE 2
I just want you to know I would never
treat black woman like that. I love
my black queens!

Van and Jayde ignore him and head for the dance floor.
Random Black Dude 2 gives up and sips his drink. A dark
skinned black woman seats next to him and he smiles.

RANDOM BLACK DUDE 2 (cont'd)
(Excuse me beautiful) as anyone ever
told you that you look like a Nubian
queen with blessed the warmth of the
Sun and the strength of a thousand
moons?

The woman smiles.

EXT. HOTEL DANCE FLOOR - DAY

A mixture of African and Caribbean music plays in the
background. Jayde leads Van to the center.

A man carrying a tray of shots slithers through the crowd.
Van takes two and (gulps) it down.

She then grabs slabs of seasoned jerk chicken and tears into
it.
Jayde comes behind her (shimming, dancing with her shoulders, hands and hips). Van twerks on Jayde as a group of people gathering around them yelling "Aye" and cheering them on.

After dancing for awhile, Van enters a drinking contest with a white guy who looks like a frat boy.

She loses.

EXT. OUTSIDE EASTLAKE APARTMENTS - NIGHT

Van gets out of an Uber and waves goodbye. She walks, clumsily towards the door. She stops and holds onto the door knob. Something comes up in her throat. She pushes it back down and opens the door.

INT. EASTLAKE APARTMENTS - NIGHT

Van enters her apartment and stumbles. She looks up at Earn whose sitting on the couch with Lottie asleep in his lap.

  EARN
  You okay?

Van nods.

  VAN
  Yea. I just need to sit down.

Van collapse on the couch next to Earn. She rubs Lottie's forehead affectionately.

  VAN (cont'd)
  When she sleep?

  EARN
  Like twenty minutes ago.

Earn gets up and puts Lottie in her crib.

  EARN (cont'd)
  So I'm guessing you had a good time?

  VAN
  Uh, yea. It was fun.

  EARN
  Word?

Van nods her head.
VAN
I got hit on. By a wanna be playa and a hotep nigga.

Earn squints his eyebrows.

EARN
Oh no. Not a hotep nigga. They're like . . . the worse.

VAN
Right?

EARN
Oh yea, I bought you something.

Earn steps into the kitchen and opens the fridge. He brings a gallon of milk. She smiles.

Earl sips all the milk out of his bowl.

VAN
Ugh, I feel bloated.

He puts his bowl on the coffee table.

EARN
Just relax.

Earn faces Van with a white line above his lips.

EARN (cont'd)
Like my mustache?

Van giggles.

VAN
Its ight.

Earn looks hurt.

EARN
Ight?

Van rubs some of the milk off with her finger. Earl leans in for a kiss.

VAN
I like your kisses though.

EARN
Yea?
Van nods and smiles. They kiss, passionately. Phone rings.

    VAN
    I'll get it.

Van answers it.

    VAN (cont'd)
    (on the phone)
    Hello? Yea this is Vanessa.

Van grins and Earn signs "What?"

    VAN (cont'd)
    Of course, yea. No. Thank you. Okay bye.

Van hangs up.

    EARN
    So?

Van dances in place, ecstatic.

    VAN
    I got the job!

    EARN
    Whaaaaat? That's . . . Awesome.

A seductive look glimmers in Van's eyes.

    VAN
    We should celebrate.

Van gets atop on Earn and they resume their make out session kiss. She stops.

    EARN
    Um?

Van puts her hand over her mouth. She throws up on Earn's chest.

    EARN (cont'd)
    Awe, what the fuck!? Really Van?

Van's just as shocked as him. She gets up.

    VAN
    I'm sorry. I'll get some paper towels.
Earn sits there in silence. Van comes back with some wet paper towels.

**EARN**
You know this is like my favorite shirt right?

Van tries to wipe it off Earn's shirt.

**EARN (cont'd)**
I--I got it. Thanks.

Van smirks. Earn wipes this shirt and Van goes into the kitchen to get more paper towels.

**VAN**
You should probably take a shower ha ha.

Van goes into the kitchen to rinse the towels.

**EARN**
Yo that's fucked up Van. Can't believe you find this shit funny. You owe me a new shirt!

CUT TO BLACK.

END.