LOW TONE

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. RAY’S HOUSE - MORNING

TWO STORY HOUSE. Quiet NEIGHBORHOOD.

INT. RAY’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MORNING

BECKA, 26, a TALL, BEAUTIFUL BRUNETTE is arguing with...

...RAY, 26, SHORT, AFRICAN AMERICAN.

BECKA
I've told you no. I've told you no a thousand times. I'm not going out with you.

RAY
Why not? I'm good looking, I'm successful. Is it the height?

BECKA
It's not the height.

RAY
Cuz if it is the height I can fix that.

BECKA
It's not the height!

RAY
They sell these platform shoes that strap on. It'll be our little secret provided it doesn’t freak you out but turns you on.

BECKA
It's not the height, it's not your job, and it’s not your looks.

RAY
Then what is it?

BECKA
It's your voice.

RAY
(High pitch)
What's wrong with my voice?
BECKA
There—that right there is what's wrong with it! I need a man with a deep-black-sexy voice that can melt ice. Not a high pitch Mickey Mouse voice that can command dogs to hump trees. (a beat) Unless you can sound like Barry White, don't ever think for a fraction of a second of us going out.

She leaves and slams the door. Ray is devastated.

INT. APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

DOMINGO, HISPANIC, 28, and T, 26, WHITE, Ray’s best friends, are busy playing VIDEO GAMES and laughing at his dilemma.

DOMINGO
Now that you mention it, you do sound like Mickey Mouse.

RAY
(High pitch)
No I don't.

They laugh.

RAY (CONT’D)
You guys are supposed to be my shoulders. Not my persecutors.

DOMINGO
Alright, alright, we're sorry.

T
Yeah, we’re sorry.

DOMINGO
You really like this girl?

RAY
Yeah, I do.

DOMINGO
Then we’ll help you get her. Right T?

T
Damn straight. Let’s go.
RAY
Where?

DOMINGO
To the secret place.

RAY
Wait, wait, wait-
(pause for effect, then:)
Did you say the secret place?

DOMINGO
(nodding)
...the secret place.

RAY
(fast, excited)
That place you guys are always bragging about, but have never bothered to take me along.

T
The one and only.

RAY
That place that’s rumored to be full of everyman’s wishes, desires and sexual fantasies.

DOMINGO
It’s not rumor son, it’s a fact.

T
Hell yeah, it’s a fact.

T and Domingo high five each other.

RAY
That place that has the answers to every question in the known universe, including who we are, why we’re here, and what are purpose in life is?

DOMINGO
Turns out our purpose is to sit here all day long...

T
And play videogames while smoking weed.
RAY
I knew this time would come. How do we get to the secret place?

T
That’s a secret.

DOMINGO
That only members of the secret place know.

T
We’ll be facing a perilous path of hidden dangers and trials. I hope for your sake you’re ready.

DOMINGO
Pray that you’re ready.

EXT. LOS ANGELES - STREETS - EVENING
The TRANSIT BUS pulls away from the curb, leaving the three amigos in the wake of it’s fumes. Ray looks around.

RAY
I thought you said it was going to be a perilous path of dangers and trials.

T
You ever taken the Los Angeles city transit bus before? It’s dangerous.

EXT. ALLEY - EVENING
They walk the alley. Ray looks around and can’t get over how eerily quiet it is.

They turn the corner and find themselves at a dead end, with a DUMPSTER against the wall.

RAY
Well, now what?

Domingo gestures to T and together they push the dumpster out of the way to reveal a GOLDEN DOOR.

RAY (CONT’D)
Wwwwhhooootttttaaaaaaaaa...

DOMINGO
Now, for the secret knock.
Domingo pounds on the door relentlessly. A PEEP HOLE slides open. EYES emerge. They scan the men.

GUARD (V.O.)
Password.

DOMINGO
It’s me, Domingo.

GUARD (V.O.)
That’s not the password.

DOMINGO
I know it’s not, but it’s me, Domingo, your cousin.

GUARD (V.O.)
...password.

DOMINGO
I don’t know the password. I forgot it.

GUARD
...Password.

DOMINGO
Ok, fine. The password is, I’m gonna tell your moms it was you who put the dent on her new volvo, and not your sista Keisha. Then I’m gonna watch as she pulls out her whip that she beats your daddy with, and watch her whip your ass a few hundred times.

The eyes blink. The peep hole closes. The door is unlocked, and opens.

GUARD
Damn, man. Why do you have to do me like that.

INT. THE SECRET PLACE - EVENING

The secret place is a massive WAREHOUSE full of male enthusiast bargain shopping.

T, Domingo, and Ray move through the sea of testosterone passing BOOTHs full of SEX MAGAZINES, MOVIES, MOTORCYCLES, BIG SCREEN TV’s, CAR RIMS, and everything you could possibly want in a male fantasy SWAP MEET.
Ray marvels at the majestic sight of it all.

RAY
Wow...

T
Damn straight, wow. They got everything you could possibly want here.

DOMINGO
Even a way to get that girl you’re crazy about.

JOSE, 40’s, manager of the secret place, approaches the men, escorted by his entourage of BODY GUARDS.

JOSE
Domingo, T, long time my friends.
Long time.

They greet each other. Jose sees Ray.

JOSE (CONT’D)
And who’s this?

DOMINGO
He’s the reason why we’re here.

T
This is Jose, he manages the secret place.

RAY
Ray Jackson, pleasure to meet you sir.

Ray extends his hand, Jose shakes it.

JOSE
Pleasure to meet you Ray Jackson.

T
He’s got a little problem with his voice.

JOSE
I didn’t notice anything wrong it.

RAY
(high pitch)
See, that’s why I’m saying.
Jose, T, Domingo, along with everyone else quickly cover their ears as Ray unleashes a high pitch squeal.

TV screens crack. Dogs start howling. A man about to take a zip of his BOTTLED BEER is dumbfounded when the glass shatters in his hands. FLUROSCENT LIGHTS shatter. Fragments of GLASS rain down. CAR ALARMS blare in the distance.

The sound dissipates. The crowds aren’t sure what just happened. Jose, T, and Domingo turn to Ray, who’s not sure what to say.

INT. THE SECRET PLACE - ELECTRONIC BOOTH - LATER

Jose steps out of the booth and hands Domingo a TINY DEVICE.

JOSE
This should help your friend with his high estrogen count.

Domingo, T, and Ray examine it.

T
What is it?

JOSE
It’s a low cut filter that reduces high frequencies, and amplifies low tones.

The three stare at Jose with blank expressions.

JOSE (CONT’D)
It changes your voice.

T/RAY/DOMINGO
Ooohhh...we knew that...yeah..

DOMINGO
Hey, it’s got a Chris tucker setting!

Domingo turns it on.

DOMINGO (CONT’D)
(Chris Tucker voice)
Can you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth.

They laugh.

T
Let me try it.
RAY
Try the Barry White setting.

T clicks it.

T
(Barry White voice)
Hello ladies. Give me your panties.

They laugh.

JOSE
I wouldn’t go messing with the settings too much. If you go any lower on the frequencies you can boil water. Any higher, and you can beam messages into space.

RAY
How are you suppose to use it?

JOSE
You strap it on to the origin of a man’s voice.

T
His throat?

JOSE
No.

DOMINGO
(smacks T)
His abdomen, stupid.

JOSE
Wrong again.
(a beat)
His balls.

The men are quiet at first, then:

RAY
But it’s velcro.

JOSE
That’s the price you pay for cheap, and meaningless infatuation my friend.

EXT. RAY’S HOUSE - NIGHT

Two story house with lit windows.
INT. RAY’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

There’s a knock on the door. Ray opens it. Becka comes storming in.

BECKA
Why aren’t you dead Ray? You told me over the phone that you were dying and wanted me to come over so you could sign your life savings over to me. But you seem to be ok. Why aren't you dead?

RAY
(Barry White Voice)
Just wanted you to come over so I can say, hello...HELLO.

Becka’s smiles. She’s impressed.

BECKA
(All smiles)
Whoa, Ray, you sound so different.

RAY
Do I? I didn't notice

BECKA
I like it.

RAY
Have you had dinner?

BECKA
No, I was about to when you called.

RAY
Please, have some of mine.

He claps twice.

CANDLES come alive showcasing a DINNING TABLE. The main course has been set. SEXY JAZZ MUSIC plays in the background.

Ray escorts Becka to the table. He pulls up her CHAIR.

BECKA
Thank you.

She sits down. Ray pops the CORK off a BOTTLE of CHAMPAGNE.

RAY
Say when.
He pours while gazing into her eyes.

BECKA
When.

He sets the bottle down, and sits across from her.

He takes a bite of his chicken, suckling every ounce of meat, gazing longingly at her.

She bites, and suckles the juices off her chicken. Gazing longingly at him.

BECKA (CONT’D)
So tell me Ray, what happened? Last time we talked, you didn't sound so...yummy.

RAY
It turns out that I hit a late phase of puberty. Better late than never, right?

She laughs. He laughs, until his laughter changes frequencies. Radio bits echo out.

BECKA
Are you okay?

RAY
(Static)
Yeah...it's just...I can't...uhhh
(static stops)
I'll be right back.

He rushes into the bathroom

INT. RAY’S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Panicking, Ray reaches into his crouch and screams as the Velcro tears off pubic hairs along with the device.

He blows off the hairs and inspects the device, not knowing what he's looking for until he finds the MANUFACTURING SEAL, “Made in China.”

RAY
China!
INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

DOMINGO and T are smoking a JOINT, and playing video games. Domingo’s PHONE buzzes. He picks up.

               DOMINGO
            Yo.

               RAY (V.O.)
            This thing was made in china.

               DOMINGO
            What?

INT. RAY’S HOUSE - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

               RAY
            It was made in China. Since when do the chinese understand a black man's needs. It’s going nuts on me. Literally, it’s going nuts. What am I supposed to do now?

               T (V.O.)
            Work it. If you want this girl, work it good.

Ray hangs up. Takes a deep breath and walks back out.

INT. RAY’S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Becka is not at the dinner table.

               BECKA (O.S.)
            Over here sexy.

He spots her lying on the couch like a sexy vixen. She taps the cushion next to her. Ray gulps, and sits next to her.

               BECKA (CONT’D)
            You're not nervous are you?

               RAY
            (Barry white voice)
            Me, hahaha, never

               BECKA
            Good. I like confident men.

She leans in close and rubs his leg.
BECKA (CONT’D)
I had you wrong Ray. I figured you out as some high pitch loser, but now... now, I'm seeing a whole different side of you, and you know what?

RAY
What?

BECKA
I like it.

She growls. He laughs nervously. She leans in close to kiss him when she stops and sniffs the air.

BECK
You smell that?

Ray sniffs the air.

RAY
Smells like hot dogs.

They look down. Ray’s crouch is on fire. He screams and quickly gets up.

He tries to put out the flames by slapping his crouch.

Becka looks in horror.

RAY (CONT’D)
(Array of frequencies)
...call 911...

BECKA
What?

RAY
(Array frequencies)
I said call 911...

BECKA
I can’t understand you.

RAY
(Chris Tucker voice)
Can you understand the words that are coming out of my mouth? Call 911.

BECKA
Chris tucker?
Ray is in pain. He stomps his feet and unleashes a Michael Jackson shout.

RAY
HE-HEEEE...

The FIRE ALARM comes on. Ray takes off his pants, along with the device, and tosses them into the corner of the room, where they explode!

The wall catches on fire. Ray and Becka watch as the fire races up the ceiling.

EXT. RAY’S HOUSE - NIGHT - LATER

FIREFIGHTERS are trying to put out Ray’s house. The raging inferno has brought out the NEIGHBORHOOD.

BECKA
How the hell did this happen? We were having such a wonderful time.

RAY
(normal voice)
I don’t know.

BECKA
Aaaagghhhh--you’re voice.

RAY
What?

BECKA
What happened to your voice. Where’s my short Barry White.

RAY
He’s gone.

BECKA
Gone?

RAY
I can explain.

BECKA
What? Nevermind, I’m leaving. This is all too weird.

RAY
No wait.

Ray blocks her path.
RAY (CONT'D)
Look, Beca, I like you, I think the world of you. Since the first time I saw you at work I thought you were the most beautiful girl that I’ve ever seen. If you can just get past the voice I know I can give you an unforgettable and wonderful experience. Please, just a chance. Just one chance.

Becka thinks for a moment. Then:

BECKA
NOPE! Bye!

She walks away. Ray is devastated. His house, meanwhile, burns to the ground.

EXT. RAY’S BURNT HOUSE - LATE NIGHT

T and Domingo make their way through Ray’s burnt home. They find Ray laying in what was once his bed.

T
You can stay at our place you know.

RAY
You’re place has roaches. I hate roaches.

DOMINGO
So you’d rather sleep in this.

RAY
(defeated)
What does it matter. What does anything matter anymore when you have a broken heart.

T
And a burnt home.

RAY
...and a burnt home.

T
And all your shit is gone...

RAY
...And all my shit is gone.
T
And you got nothing left.

RAY
...you’re not making me feel any better.

THUNDER. T and Domingo look up. It starts sprinkling.

RAY (CONT’D)
Of course.

The duo share a look and then make their way to Ray. Each takes a spot on the bed.

RAY (CONT’D)
What are you guys doing?

DOMINGO
Getting ready for bed.

T
Yeah, we’re tired.

RAY
You don’t have to do this.

DOMINGO
Sure we do. We’re friends.

T
Friends look after each other.
Girls come and go-

DOMINGO
But friends are forever. Someday you’ll meet the right girl Ray.

T
Yeah, a girl that doesn’t require you to place foreign explosives in your balls to impress her.

Ray smiles. The rain is coming down. The three are shivering.

T (CONT’D)
You sure you don’t want to stay at our place. The roaches aren’t that big.

DOMINGO
Yeah, not anymore. We killed the king roach.
Took us two days but we cornered his ass and took him down.

After a moment:

RAY
Ok. let’s go.

The three get up and walk down the neighborhood.

RAY (CONT’D)
You think true love is out there for me.

DOMINGO
It’s out there for all of us.

T
For each and every single one of us.

THE END