

"THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD"

A Short Film

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**NOTE: All characters are Black unless otherwise noted**

**INT. LESLIE AND DEANDRE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY**

Sunlight wafts in through cream-colored blinds. It cascades across the cozy bedroom as LESLIE (26, thicker-framed, dark-skinned beauty) and her pink bonnet nuzzle in the nook of her boyfriend DEANDRE's (25, slim-fit, crisp beard, and tight durag) ample chest. The rays drip off their bodies like honey as Deandre gently kisses Leslie's forehead.

DEANDRE

Mmm, good morning, Hot Dog Breath.

LESLIE

Morning, Cabbage Breath.

DEANDRE

Cabbage Breath?

LESLIE

Mmm hmm. **Hot** cabbage.

DEANDRE

Well come get you some of this hot cabbage then!

Deandre and Leslie laugh as he tries to kiss her.

**INT. L&D'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY**

Showered and casually dressed, Leslie puts the finishing touches on a birthday cake in the kitchen while Deandre brushes his hair in the living room.

DEANDRE

Come on, Leslie! Why do I have to go to Ms. Joyce's birthday party?

LESLIE

Deandre, you moved in a month ago and haven't spent 5 minutes getting to know the neighbors. Besides, Ms. Joyce is a sweetie pie.

DEANDRE

And a total perv! Half of her long-winded stories are just Reconstruction Era sexcapades with her and Frederick Douglass!

LESLIE  
(laughing)  
Did you get red icing from the store?

DEANDRE  
Top cabinet.

Leslie reaches in, but is annoyed by what she pulls out.

LESLIE  
Is this from Whole Foods? You know  
how I feel about them.

DEANDRE  
I know. "They're the physical  
embodiment of White colonialism and  
gentrification." But it was on sale.

LESLIE  
Wait, the one they're building near  
here hasn't opened yet.

DEANDRE  
I went to the one by my old place.

LESLIE  
You went all the way to Beverly Hills  
just to shop at Whole Foods?

DEANDRE  
You wanted red icing, I got you red  
icing. What's the problem?

LESLIE  
The problem is there's a Black-owned  
grocer a half-mile away and you went  
to the chain trying to put them out  
of business. Inglewood has enough  
gentrifiers doing that already.

DEANDRE  
So I'm a gentrifier now? Can Black  
people even do that?

LESLIE  
Yes! No...? I don't know!

DEANDRE  
You know, you could've just moved  
into my place. Starbucks, shops;  
Everything we needed was right there.

LESLIE

(annoyed)

Not this again. Dre, your place was half the size and twice the rent. Plus I don't have a car and my mom's restaurant is walking distance from here!

DEANDRE

Fine. Sorry I brought it up.

Leslie pauses, wanting to dilute the acidity of the moment. She meets Deandre in the living room and the two embrace.

LESLIE

I just... Sometimes it feels like outsiders are picking the bones of the neighborhood clean. I didn't mean to blow up at you. I'm sorry.

DEANDRE

Nah, I'm sorry. You grew up here and this place means something. I get it.

LESLIE

I really want you to be part of this community. We're all we've got around here.

DEANDRE

OK. I can do that.

And with a kiss, the squabble is put to rest. Leslie heads back to the kitchen.

LESLIE

Thanks. I'm gonna finish the cake. Do you mind checking the mail? Hopefully my Fashion Nova head scarf is here.

Leslie turns the water on in the sink.

DEANDRE

For someone so eco-friendly you sure buy a lot of fast fashion.

LESLIE

Huh?

DEANDRE

Nothing! Be right back.

**EXT. SUNRISE APARTMENTS - MAIL ROOM - DAY**

CLOSE UP "Sunrise Apartments: Mail Room" sign just before Deandre walks across it.

**INT. SUNRISE APARTMENTS - MAIL ROOM - DAY**

Deandre enters the mail room where ABRAN (late-20s) a lanky, Dominican-American artist in a paint-stained t-shirt, opens his mail.

DEANDRE  
Hey, Abraham.

ABRAN  
(flatly)  
It's Abran.

DEANDRE  
Oh! Yeah, my bad man. Abran. Got it.

Abran opens a letter he takes from the mailbox.

MANUEL  
*¡Maldición!*

DEANDRE  
Everything OK?

ABRAN  
They're raising our rent again! This is the last thing we need right now. I knew this would happen the moment they broke ground on that damn Whole Foods.

DEANDRE  
I mean you can't put that all on Whole Foods can you?

Manuel stares daggers into Deandre, then storms out of the room cursing in Spanish.

**EXT. SUNRISE APARTMENTS - COURTYARD - DAY**

Deandre, Leslie, stand around a table with a few other residents, including Abran and his wife NIKKI (early 30s, with business-casual vibe). Together they sing the Black version of "Happy Birthday" to MS. JOYCE (70s), a short yet spunky senior with more pep than step in her.

EVERYONE

Happy Birthday, to ya! Happy Birthday  
to ya! Happy Birthday!  
Happy Birthday, to ya! Happy Birthday  
to ya! Happy Birthday!

Cheers as Ms. Joyce blows out the candles on her cake.

DEANDRE

(whispering to Leslie)  
We still blowing on cakes? After a  
whole-ass pan--

LESLIE

Shhh!

ABRAN

What did you wish for, Ms. Joyce?

MS. JOYCE

If I tell you, Idris Elba won't show  
up at my door butt naked with a bow-  
tie.

NIKKI

Ooh, Ms. Joyce! What time he gonna be  
there?

ABRAN

Hey! No dirty talk in front of the  
baby.

Abran places his hand on Nikki's stomach.

NIKKI

Abran, the baby's the size of a  
walnut. He or she will be fine.

MS. JOYCE

Thank you all for doing this for me.

LESLIE

Of course, Ms. Joyce. You mean the  
world to us.

A few of the partygoers take notice as POLICE OFFICER #1  
(30s, solid white man) and POLICE OFFICER #2 (40s, Latino  
man) enter the courtyard.

POLICE OFFICER #1

Excuse me. Who's party is this?

MS. JOYCE

Ooh, y'all got me strippers!? They look soft. Hope you got a discount.

Leslie and Nikki shake their heads nervously.

POLICE OFFICER #2

We received a noise complaint from the condos next door. I'm gonna have to ask you to keep it down.

LESLIE

Noise compliant? It's 2 o'clock on a Saturday afternoon.

POLICE OFFICER #1

I'm sorry, ma'am, but keep it down or I'll have to shut it down.

Leslie opens her mouth to speak, but Deandre interjects.

DEANDRE

No problem, officer.

Leslie shoots Deandre a look as the officers take leave. The whole vibe of the party has officially gone to shit.

LESLIE

They called the police?

MS. JOYCE

You know, ever since they opened those damned condos it's been this bullshit.

NIKKI

It's OK, Ms. Joyce.

MS. JOYCE

No it's not! This place is more than a neighborhood. It has a soul, a spirit that has breathed life into the community for generations, and here they yuppies comes trying to snuff it out for their cafe's and Apple Stores. In 10 years this place won't even be recognizable.

Abran checks the cooler.

ABRAN

Do we have any more ice?



LESLIE  
 Damn, I knew I forgot something.  
 (to Deandre)  
 Can I borrow the car.

DEANDRE  
 (Looking around)  
 Actually, I'll go with you.

**INT. DEANDRE'S CAR - DAY**

Deandre and Leslie drive to the store for some ice. Leslie stares out the window and notices a small Mom & Pop convenience store at the corner.

LESLIE  
 I just can't believe someone would call the cops on a little old lady's birthday party.

DEANDRE  
 I can. Folks want to protect their investments.

LESLIE  
 What investments? Those overly-priced condos next door?

DEANDRE  
 Yeah, and soon to be our overly-priced apartments.

LESLIE  
 What do you mean?

DEANDRE  
 I saw Abran in the mail room. Him and Nikki got another rent increase.

LESLIE  
 (sigh)  
 It's like they're trying any way they can to push out out of our own neighborhood.

**EXT. GROCERY STORE - FRONT ENTRANCE/PARKING LOT - DAY**

A young PETITION GIRL (10, with pigtails), stands at a table outside the door with a petition. Her older GUARDIAN (70s, male) sits at a table behind her politely waving. Deandre carries bags of ice as he and Leslie almost walk past.

PETITION GIRL

Excuse me! Would you sign our petition calling on the city to fix the pothole problem in Inglewood?

DEANDRE

Shouldn't you be selling Girl Scout cookies or something?

LESLIE

(elbowing Deandre)

Where do I sign, sweetie?

The girl gives Leslie the petition and a pen. Leslie signs, but when she offers it to Deandre, he's already walked off.

LESLIE (cont'd)

(to the girl)

Thank you.

The girl hands Leslie a flier before she leaves.

PETITION GIRL

There's a city council meeting tonight if you're interested. I hope you'll come!

Leslie smiles and slow jogs to catch up to Deandre.

**INT. DEANDRE'S CAR - DAY**

Leslie hops in the passenger seat as Deandre preps the car to drive back to Ms. Joyce's birthday party.

LESLIE

You couldn't wait two seconds?

DEANDRE

You try holding bags of ice in your arms.

LESLIE

There's a city council meeting tonight. Wanna go?

Leslie hands Deandre the flier. He glances at it, then tosses it in the back seat.

DEANDRE

City council meeting? Sounds boring. And I work in finance.

Deandre pulls out of the parking lot and onto the road. When he does, he immediately hits a pothole.

DEANDRE (cont'd)  
Dammit! Stupid potholes!

Leslie stares out the passenger window as Deandre pulls up to a red light. Leslie's face scrunches up in confusion.

LESLIE  
(blankly out the window)  
Someone should make a petition...

DEANDRE  
Babe? You alright?

Leslie stares at the shiny new Starbucks on the corner, completely and utterly nonplussed.

LESLIE  
How did a Starbucks get there?

DEANDRE  
Looks brand new. I didn't even notice it when we left.

LESLIE  
Because it wasn't there when we left. It was a convenience store. It's always been a mom & pop.

DEANDRE  
What are you talking about? Even Starbucks can't build a fully functioning franchise in 30 minutes.

LESLIE  
Yeah. Yeah I guess you're right. But I would've noticed it being built at some point.

DEANDRE  
Babe, you barely drive. You probably just missed it.

LESLIE  
Yeah, you're probably right.

The light changes. Leslie stares at the Starbucks as they slowly pull away.

**EXT. UNNAMED CORPORATE OFFICE BUILDING - DAY**

Regular city hustle and bustle outside an office building.

**INT. DEANDRE'S JOB - MEETING ROOM - DAY**

Deandre sits down at a conference room table as others file in. JOSH (30s), a tall, smug White man sits beside him. SARAH (20), a white woman, sits across.

JOSH

Deandre! What's up, man?

DEANDRE

You know me. Living the dream!

SARAH

How's the new apartment?

JOSH

New apartment?

DEANDRE

I moved in with my girlfriend a few weeks ago. We're over in Inglewood.

JOSH

Yikes. You left Beverly Hills to live at the corner of Crack and Crime?

SARAH

Seriously, Josh? Don't listen to him, Deandre. Inglewood is really turning itself around with the new stadium and everything.

DEANDRE

Well it's not like it was a warzone or anything, Sarah.

SARAH

I know. I just meant there are a lot of enhancements. Safety, less homeless. Stuff like that.

DEANDRE

That's what I said, but my girlfriend Leslie disagrees. She and some of the neighbors think the area's losing it's essence or whatever to gentrification.

JOSH  
Ooh, is the Soulful Spoon still open?

DEANDRE  
Funny story, my girlfriend's family owns that restaurant. Wait, you've been to the Soulful Spoon?

JOSH  
Hell yeah! Best apple butter biscuits in town. But I drive a Benz, so...  
(in a whisper)  
I have to get mine to go.

Stunned, Deandre takes a moment to fix his face.

DEANDRE  
...Right.

**EXT. SOULFUL SPOON RESTAURANT - DAY**

Establish Soulful Spoon restaurant.

**INT. SOULFUL SPOON RESTAURANT - DINING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY**

Guests enjoy their meals inside. Leslie enters from the front, smiles, and walks toward the back to the kitchen.

Her mother, CLARA (60s,) a delightful woman with a hint of southern charm - and sass - serves a couple their meals.

RESTAURANT GUEST  
Thanks, Clara.

Clara smiles, then turns to follow her daughter. Her smile immediately disappears as she walks to the kitchen.

**INT. SOULFUL SPOON RESTAURANT - KITCHEN - DAY**

LESLIE  
Hey, momma.

CLARA  
Hey, momma, nothing! How are you gonna take over the restaurant for me if you're always late?

LESLIE  
I know, I know. I'm sorry.

CLARA

This restaurant has been in our family for over 30 years. It's survived city hall, the gangs, and gluten-free everything. But Lord only knows if it can survive my daughter's inability to keep time!

LESLIE

I said I'm sorry. I'll be on time. Or you know, try.

Leslie gives her mom a kiss on the cheek.

CLARA

Mmm hmm. How's my future son-in-law? He settling in OK?

LESLIE

Momma, we talked about this. Deandre and I are not getting engaged any time soon.

CLARA

I know. Y'all shackin' up.

Leslie gives her mom an exasperated look.

CLARA (cont'd)

I'm not judging! Now your Grandma June!? That woman was the definition of a prude.

(laughing)

Your father and I had her convinced we were saving ourselves for marriage. If she only knew what we did in the back of his cutlass-

LESLIE

Mom!

Clara turns and starts walking through the kitchen. Clara hands Leslie an apron as Leslie follows close behind her.

CLARA

Alright, alright. I was thinking today you could help me organize these receipts.

LESLIE

Can I work the kitchen today?

CLARA  
 There's more to running a restaurant  
 than cooking, Leslie.

Clara hands Leslie a box of receipts as KAREN (30s), a white woman, walks by.

LESLIE  
 Who is that?

CLARA  
 (flipping through a notebook)  
 Girl, that's just Karen.

LESLIE  
 Karen?

CLARA  
 Yes, Karen. The same one who replaced  
 LaKeisha after she moved away.

LESLIE  
 LaKeisha moved!? When?

CLARA  
 Months ago! After her landlord raised  
 her rent. Now quit stalling and help  
 me organize these receipts!

Karen takes food out to customers while Leslie stares at her, puzzled.

CLARA (cont'd)  
 Leslie!

Leslie snaps out of it and follows her mother.

**INT. LESLIE AND DEANDRE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Leslie paces around the room as Deandre undoes his tie.

LESLIE  
 Momma acted as if Karen had always  
 been there, but I swear I've never  
 seen that woman a day in my life!

DEANDRE  
 Maybe you just never paid attention  
 to her.

LESLIE

We have like, 8 employees, including me. I'd have noticed her. Something about her is just...off. And what about LaKeisha?

DEANDRE

What do you mean?

LESLIE

I just saw her like two days ago! I'm telling you, something's not right, Deandre.

Deandre gives Leslie a puzzled look.

LESLIE (cont'd)

You think I sound crazy, don't you?

Deandre stands up and hugs Leslie.

DEANDRE

I think you sound stressed. But I know exactly what will make you feel better. How about some cheap wine, greasy combos from Fatburger, and a Living Single marathon on Hulu?

LESLIE

Ooh, Daddy now you're talking my love language.

**SMOOCH.**

**EXT. ABRAN AND NIKKI'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - DAY**

Leslie walks to Nikki and Abran's place, but is surprised to find boxes outside. Abran walks toward the apartment pushing an empty dolly. Nikki steps out holding a box.

ABRAN

(jogging to Nikki)  
Babe, I told you I got it. The doctor said you should take it easy, remember? For the baby?

NIKKI

I know, but we have to be out of here by tomorrow and-  
(as Leslie walks up)  
Oh, hey girl.



LESLIE

Hey... I came to give you back the bowl I borrowed for Ms. Joyce's party. Are you guys moving?

Abran takes the box from a teary-eyed Nikki, revealing her HUGE and sudden baby bump. Leslie's speechless.

ABRAN

We lost the eviction case after the last rent increase. So we're out.

LESLIE

But Deandre said you only got the notice the other day. And evictions take months. And I'm sorry, but how far along are you, Nikki?

NIKKI

Doctor says 8 months, but feels more like 80.

Nikki grabs her stomach after a cramp hits.

ABRAN

Come on, Nik. Lets lie you down. Do you mind if we finish this later, Leslie?

LESLIE

Yeah, no problem.

Abran helps Nikki inside. When he closes the door behind them, a sign with the word EVICTION in red hangs on it.

**INT. LESLIE AND DEANDRE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Deandre and Leslie argue in their bedroom.

LESLIE

No, Deandre! I'm telling you. Something's not right! How is Nikki 8 months pregnant when she was barely showing just days ago!?

DEANDRE

I don't know, but there has to be a reasonable explanation for it.

LESLIE

What could possibly explain that?

DEANDRE

Maybe it's a prank or something. Like on a game show.

LESLIE

You think we're on a game show?

DEANDRE

Mabybe. Or maybe you just forgot how far along Neechie was.

LESLIE

Nikki! Her name is Nikki! You've met her dozens of times! She's lived down the hall from me for two years!

DEANDRE

OK, well I'm sorry I don't remember all your friends' names.

LESLIE

They're your friends too, Dre!

DEANDRE

No, they're not. Leslie, these are your people. Not mine.

And there it is. Leslie grabs Deandre's pillow and the top sheet off the bed.

DEANDRE (cont'd)

What are you doing?

LESLIE

I'm going to bed. But you? You're going sleep on the couch.

DEANDRE

I thought we promised not to pull that card on each other. Remember? No person has power over the other in cohabitation? Or whatever it was you saw on that Iyanla episode.

LESLIE

Fine.

Leslie puts back the pillow and sheet, then picks up her pillow AND the blanket.

LESLIE (cont'd)

Then I'll go.

Leslie storms out to the living room.

DEANDRE  
 Leslie, baby come on.  
 (staring at the bed)  
 Hold up, did you take the blanket!?

**INT. LESLIE AND DEANDRE'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

The next morning, Deandre eats cereal on the couch. Leslie enters as she pulls her hair into a ponytail. Tension is THICK.

LESLIE  
 (flatly)  
 I gotta swing by the pharmacy before work. Do you mind if I take the car?

DEANDRE  
 No, go ahead.

Without another word, Leslie grabs the keys off the counter and heads for the door.

DEANDRE (cont'd)  
 Have a good--

DOOR SLAMS.

DEANDRE (cont'd)  
 ...day.

**INT. SUNRISE APARTMENTS - MAIL ROOM - DAY**

Deandre checks the mail. However, he finds a letter from the Social Security Office addressed to "Joyce Carson" in his pile. He sighs, and walks out of the mail room.

**EXT. MS. JOYCE'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - DAY**

Mail in tow, Deandre walks down to Ms. Joyce's apartment door and knocks. He waits for a moment, then knocks again.

DEANDRE  
 Ms. Joyce? It's Deandre. I got some of your mail by mistake.

Deandre knocks again. But when the door opens, AMY (40s), an Asian woman holding a mop, answers. Deandre's confused.

DEANDRE (cont'd)  
Hi... Is Ms. Joyce available?

AMY  
I'm sorry, but there's no Joyce here.

DEANDRE  
But this is her apartment. Who are you?

AMY  
I'm Amy. And I'm sorry, but you have the wrong apartment.

Amy tries to close the door, but Deandre keeps it open with his hand. He shows Amy the letter with Ms. Joyce's address.

<p>DEANDRE Then why is her address on this letter? (into the apartment) Ms. Joyce, are you in there?</p>	<p>AMY .....Brian! Honey, get in here!</p>
--	--

Just then, BRIAN (40s), a burly white man with a logger-type vibe approaches from the hallway. His hand lightly taps the gun at his waist.

BRIAN  
There a problem, sweetheart?

Deandre looks at the gun Brian openly taps.

DEANDRE  
No problem. Must have the wrong apartment. My mistake.

Deandre steps back as the door closes. He gets his phone and dials. After a few rings, Leslie's voicemail comes on.

LESLIE (O.C.)  
Hi, you've reached Leslie. Leave a message at the beep.

BEEP.

DEANDRE  
Leslie, call me back. Something's happened to Ms. Joyce. I think... I think you might be right. Call me.

**EXT. ROMANO'S RESTAURANT (FORMERLY SOULFUL SPOON) - DAY**

Leslie's phone rings as she stands in front of what used to be her family's restaurant. She lets her phone go to voicemail as she reads the temporary signage covering up her mother's restaurant name: *COMING SOON! Romano's Italian Eatery!*

LESLIE  
What the hell?

**INT. ROMANO'S RESTAURANT (FORMERLY SOULFUL SPOON) - DAY**

Leslie rushes into the empty restaurant toward the kitchen.

LESLIE  
(yelling)  
Mom! Mom, are you here?

RITA (40s), a White woman with a Brooklyn accent, steps out.

RITA  
Excuse me, but we're not open for business until next week.

LESLIE  
Who the hell are you?

RITA  
Rita Romano, the owner of the restaurant you're trespassing in!

LESLIE  
Can't trespass on my own shit. Move!

Leslie brushes past Rita.

LESLIE (cont'd)  
Mom! Mom, where are you!? Mom!

Rita pulls out her cell phone and dials 911.

RITA  
Hello, I need the police right away.  
There's a crazy Black woman in here.  
(whispers)  
I think she may be on drugs!

Leslie turns back to Rita, fear rising from her voice.

LESLIE

What the hell is going on!? If this is a prank show, this isn't funny!

(to Rita)

Who is behind this? Nick Cannon? Ashton Kutcher? The dad from "Full House?"

Leslie looks around, but none of her co-workers are there. Instead a handful of White employees gawk at HER. Rita's voice is inaudible in the background as reality hits Leslie.

LESLIE (cont'd)

Mom....?

Leslie stands frozen as reality crashes into her like a train. Choking back a sob, she staggers out the restaurant.

**EXT. LESLIE AND DEANDRE'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR - DAY**

Deandre sprints to his apartment, but his key doesn't work. After a few seconds of fumbling, the door opens.

**AND IT'S JOSH ON THE OTHER SIDE!**

JOSH

Deandre! What's up, man?

DEANDRE

Josh!? What the hell are you doing in my apartment?

JOSH

Last I checked, this was my apartment, bud. You were right. Inglewood really was an up-and-coming neighborhood once they started clearing out the undesirables.

Deandre checks the number on the door, then barges in.

JOSH (cont'd)

Dude! What the hell!?

**INT. JOSH'S APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Deandre's eyes widen in horror. The living room has been completely stripped of any trace of Deandre and Leslie, and replaced with Josh's "dude bro" aesthetic.

DEANDRE  
This can't be right.

JOSH  
Dude, what are you doing?

Josh places his hand on Deandre's shoulder and Deandre turns and shoves Josh onto the couch.

DEANDRE  
This is our apartment!

JOSH  
That's it! I'm calling the police!

Josh pulls out his cell phone. Deandre frantically runs out.

JOSH (cont'd)  
(yelling out the door)  
And I'm telling HR too!

**EXT. SUNRISE APARTMENTS - MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY**

Deandre exits the property just as Leslie pulls up, hitting a pothole. Leslie steps out of the car looking dazed.

DEANDRE  
Babe, you were right! Something weird is going on. Ms. Joyce disappeared and that prick Josh from work has our apartment! My key doesn't even work! Leslie? Did you hear what I said?

LESLIE  
(quiet, almost to herself)  
She's gone. The restaurant too.

DEANDRE  
Who? Who's gone?

LESLIE  
My mom.

DEANDRE  
Oh shit. Babe, I'm so so-

LESLIE  
Isn't this what you wanted? To upgrade everything in Inglewood? Because we weren't good enough?

DEANDRE  
What? No, I--

LESLIE  
Liar.

DEANDRE  
Leslie, I--

LESLIE  
(screaming)  
Liar! Liar! You're a fucking liar!

Leslie punches Deandre's arm before collapsing in on her grief. He catches her and they fall to their knees together.

LESLIE (cont'd)  
I just want my mom. Where is she? Why is this happening?

DEANDRE  
I don't know, but we gotta get out of here. Maybe if we figure out when this all started... Starbucks! The one you said appeared out of nowhere. Leslie? Leslie, do you hear me?

LESLIE  
Deandre? Where did the potholes go?

Deandre looks up to see the freshly repaved street lying eerily beneath them.

DEANDRE  
Holy shit.

LESLIE  
(with an epiphany)  
It didn't start with Starbucks. It started with that girl! The one with the petition you wouldn't sign and the council meeting flyer.

DEANDRE  
The one at the store. And then I tossed her flyer for the city council meeting. Babe, you're a genius! Come on!

Deandre helps Leslie up. She heads to the driver's side and they speed off.



**INT. DEANDRE'S CAR - DAY**

Leslie drives as she and Deandre travel through Inglewood. They're in awe at the drastic changes to the city. The area looks more like Beverly Hills or NoHo than Inglewood.

LESLIE

I don't understand. How did everything change so fast?

Deandre takes Leslie's free hand. Whatever this is, they're in it together.

DEANDRE

I don't know, but we're gonna get it back.

**EXT. GROCERY STORE - FRONT ENTRANCE/PARKING LOT - DAY**

Leslie and Deandre park and run to the entrance. Customers huddled around the "petition girl's" table disperse.

DEANDRE

Hey! Kid, we need your-

The remaining customers disperse to reveal a young girl standing holding a clipboard. But it's not the Black girl with the petition, but a white GIRL SCOUT (10)!

GIRL SCOUT

Hi! Would you like to buy some cookies? They're really good.

LESLIE

Deandre...?

Leslie takes a couple of slow steps back.

DEANDRE

Where's the other kid? The little girl with the petition?

The girl scout stares, expressionless. Her CHAPERON (30s) a white man, looks on, concerned.

DEANDRE (cont'd)

(yelling)

Where is she!?

GIRL SCOUT CHAPERON

(walking over from table)

Hey! What's your problem, pal?

A SECURITY GUARD (40s,) walks up to the scene.

SECURITY GUARD  
Sir, is there a problem?

DEANDRE  
Leslie? Babe, we gotta go.

Deandre turns around, but instead of Leslie, he finds a WHITE GIRLFRIEND in her 20s standing in her place! She's all smiles in her Ugg boots, her long hair flowing against her thick scarf. She holds two coffees in her hands.

WHITE GIRLFRIEND  
Hey babe! I went and got us a couple pumpkin spiced lattes while you were inside. Who's Leslie?

DEANDRE  
Leslie!? Leslie, where are you!?  
(to White Girlfriend)  
What did you do with her!?

WHITE GIRLFRIEND  
Babe, you're scaring me!

SECURITY GUARD  
(grabbing Deandre)  
Alright buddy, you gotta go.

DEANDRE  
Don't touch me!

Deandre SWINGS at the guard and the two begin to tussle.

DEANDRE (cont'd)  
Where is she!? Leslie!

The Girl Scout screams as she hides behind her chaperon.

GIRL SCOUT CHAPERON (O.C.)  
Someone call 911!

Deandre makes quick work of the guard, now crumpled on the ground. His eyes filled with fear as his chest rises and falls with each passing second.

Deandre surveys the crowd of horrified onlookers. Tears mix with the sweat on his face as he cries.

DEANDRE  
(to no one in particular)  
Please! Bring her back!  
(MORE)

DEANDRE (cont'd)  
 You have to bring her back!  
 (quietly)  
 She's all I have.

Deandre falls to his knees. When he does, a gust of wind sweeps over the parking lot, sending a flier rolling across Deandre's lap. He picks it up and reads it: CITY COUNCIL MEETING! TONIGHT!

LESLIE (O.C.)  
 (echo)  
 ...It started with that girl! The one with the petition you wouldn't sign and the council meeting flyer.

Deandre rises, wiping his tears while CLUTCHING onto the flier. Police sirens blare off in the distance. Deandre pats his pockets, searching for the keys, but they're not there.

DEANDRE  
 Shit! Leslie had the keys.

Deandre quickly looks around and spots a Lyft car.

DEANDRE (cont'd)  
 Don't worry, baby. I'm gonna fix it.

He runs quickly to the Lyft and hops in the back seat.

LYFT DRIVER  
 Uh, Janet?

DEANDRE  
 No, but if you take me to this address, you can have this.

Deandre hands the man all the money in his wallet.

LYFT DRIVER  
 Shit, you ain't gotta tell me twice!  
 (offering takis)  
 Takis?

And with that, they're off!

**INT. CITY HALL - MEETING ROOM ENTRANCE - NIGHT**

A sign on the door marks the city council meeting. Muffled clapping come from inside. Deandre bursts through the doors.

**INT. CITY HALL - CITY COUNCIL MEETING - NIGHT**

The meeting is filled with mostly-White faces. And every one of them, including the CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT (White, 50s) standing at the podium, turns silently to Deandre when he enters as if of a singular hive mind.

WHITE CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT  
Hello, friend. Please. Have a seat.

The president motions to a corner seat in the front row. Deandre makes his way to it. The attendees follow his every step with frozen smiles and a silent gaze. Once Deandre is seated, everyone turns their back to the president.

WHITE CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT (cont'd)  
I'm happy to report that we have made substantial progress in turning the city around. We've taken Inglewood from eyesore to well-polished gem!

The attendees give a light clap.

DEANDRE  
The fuck you have!

WHITE CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT  
Oh? Does our guest doubt the positive changes we've made to the area?

Deandre rises from his seat.

DEANDRE  
Positive changes? You mean like displacing the people who were here first and replacing them!? Like you did to Leslie?

WHITE CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT  
We replaced them with more desirable citizens. Surely you can appreciate such enhancements.

DEANDRE  
And what makes you more desirable? Huh? Your money? Your class? The people of Inglewood are good people. We don't deserve what you've done!

WHITE CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT  
"We"? I don't recall seeing you around much before our improvements.

DEANDRE

Well I'm here now, and I want them back. Everyone you replaced. Homes and businesses too.

WHITE CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT

I'm sorry, but that's not possible. We've brought new businesses, jobs, even new roads to Inglewood! And we will not tolerate any disruptions to our progress.

BOOM! The two police officers from Ms. Joyce's birthday party BURST through the doors.

WHITE CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT (cont'd)

Here he is, officers. The Undesirable.

The crowd begins a low, repeated chant.

ENTIRE MEETING

Undesired. Undesired. Undesired.

POLICE OFFICER #1

You again? Come here!

Deandre tussles with the police before running for an exit.

**EXT. INGLEWOOD CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

Dazed, confused, and with his clothes ripped, Deandre stumbles through the now opulent streets of Inglewood. When sirens blare in the distance, he darts into an alley. When the sirens fade away, he leans against a wall and cries.

DEANDRE

(to himself)

I'm sorry, Leslie. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry.

Deandre drifts off to sleep.

**INT. LESLIE AND DEANDRE'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - DAY**

Sunlight streaks through the blinds on Deandre's face, stirring him awake. After a moment, he realizes where he is - IN HE AND LESLIE'S BED! The only thing missing is,

DEANDRE

(shouting)

(MORE)

DEANDRE (cont'd)  
Leslie!? Leslie!?

Deandre runs out of the bedroom and into the living room, where a confused Leslie has just woken up on the sofa.

LESLIE  
Deandre!?

The lovers run to each other, tears streaking down their faces as they embrace.

DEANDRE  
I was so scared. I thought I had lost you! I'm so sorry, baby. I should've listened to you. I love you.

LESLIE  
I love you too. I'm so glad you're OK! Does this mean everything else-

Leslie's phone rings. She answers.

LESLIE (cont'd)  
Mom?

CLARA (O.C.)  
Girl, where are you!? Your shift started 30 minutes ago!

LESLIE  
(holding back tears)  
Mom, is it really you? Where are you?

CLARA  
At the restaurant! You know, the one you claim you wanna take over when I retire. Now hurry up and get down here so you can relieve LaKeisha.

LESLIE  
LaKeisha's back?

CLARA  
What do you mean, "back"? She never left. Now hurry up and get down here!

**EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX - COURTYARD - DAY**

Deandre and Leslie walk through the courtyard and spot familiar faces, including Abran and a still-not-showing Nikki. Abran carries bags of diapers, but sets them down to unlock their apartment door.

ABRAN  
Let me get that for you, sweetheart.

NIKKI  
Abran, I'm pregnant, not infirm. I  
can open a door.  
(to Leslie)  
This man is gonna drive me crazy!

DEANDRE  
Hey Abran, let me know if you need  
any help putting a crib together!

ABRAN  
Alright... Thanks, man!

Leslie smiles and nudges Deandre. Just then, the wind blows  
a piece of paper at the couple's feet. Leslie picks it up.

LESLIE  
Deandre, look!

It's a flier for another City Council meeting! TONIGHT!

MS. JOYCE  
Oh, thank you! The wind just up and  
snatched that out of my hand.

Deandre and Leslie walk over to Ms. Joyce.

MS. JOYCE (cont'd)  
Y'all going to the City Council  
meeting tonight?

Deandre looks at Leslie, then back to Ms. Joyce.

DEANDRE  
Yeah. Yeah, we are.

LESLIE  
If you want, you could ride with us,  
Ms. Joyce.

DEANDRE  
Maybe we could organize a carpool.

MS. JOYCE  
Oh that would be wonderful!

DEANDRE  
You out for your afternoon walk?

MS. JOYCE

Sure am! Gotta keep these old bones limber in case Dwayne Johnson decides to show up and show out!

DEANDRE

Would you like some company? For the walk, I mean. Not for whatever you have planned for The Rock.

MS. JOYCE

That would be splendid!

LESLIE

I'd better get to work before my mom kills me.

DEANDRE

Want to take the car?

LESLIE

Thanks, but I think I'll walk. I wanna take all of this in.

Leslie and Deandre kiss before parting in opposite directions, Leslie to work, and Deandre with Ms. Joyce.

MS. JOYCE

I ever tell you about my threeway with a young Billy Dee Williams and the guy in the Chewbacca suit?

Deandre sighs.

**INT. CITY HALL - COUNCIL MEETING ROOM - NIGHT**

It's standing room only in the city council meeting. Citizens of all shades talk while an exasperated BLACK CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT tries to restore order with his gavel.

BLACK CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Order! Order! All in favor of a 6-month moratorium on rent-based evictions while the city crafts a longer-term solution, say "Aye".

CITY COUNCIL

Aye!



BLACK CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT

All opposed?

(silence)

Motion carries!

The crowd erupts in jubilation. Deandre looks across the room and spots the petition girl, giving a sweet smile. He nudges Leslie, who is equally shocked. But when an attendee walks across the girl's path, she disappears.

BLACK CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT (cont'd)

Alright. Now is there any additional business to bring to the floor?

Deandre and Leslie raise their hands.

**CUT TO BLACK:**

DEANDRE AND LESLIE (O.S.)

Potholes!

Cheers from the audience.

**THE END**