WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

"Pilot"

Written by

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SCENE A

FADE IN:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT OF A HISTORICAL BUT RUN-DOWN NEIGHBORHOOD IN PASADENA. UNTENDED LAWNS, PEELING PAINT, AND CHAIN LINK FENCES REFLECT THE ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE COMMUNITY. A STATION WAGON WITH MICHIGAN PLATES ROLLS DOWN THE BLOCK.

CUT TO:

INT. STATION WAGON - SAME

DAVE AND GEMMA JOHNSON (30’S) AND THEIR SON, BRADLEY (6) RIDE IN THE PACKED CAR.

BRADLEY

Are we almost there? I have to pee.

DAVE

Yep. Just a few more blocks.

BRADLEY

This is our new neighborhood?

GEMMA

That’s right.

BRADLEY

(LOOKING OUTSIDE) Why do all the houses have bars on the windows?

DAVE

They don’t all have bars.

BRADLEY

That one does, that one does, that one does...
GEMMA
(SIMPLEST ANSWER) They’re to keep the windows from getting broken.

BRADLEY
Oh. By all the robbers who live here?

GEMMA
What? Where did you hear that?

BRADLEY
Grammy said she checked the internet and our new neighborhood is full of robbers. Then she gave me a cookie.

GEMMA
(TO DAVE) Your mother is terrifying.

DAVE
You say that like I don’t know.

BRADLEY
(SQUIRMING) Dad, I really have to go.

GEMMA
Just a couple more minutes, baby.

DAVE
Buddy, I know it looks a lot different from Michigan, but inside these homes it’s people and families just like us.

GEMMA
And wait’ll you see our new house.
DAVE

It’s a Craftsman, built back in nineteen-fifteen.

GEMMA

With a swimming pool!

DAVE

(HONKING HORN) And-a-big-ol’-hot-tub!

GEMMA

Plus, in California, it’s sunny all the time, which means--

DAVE

(HONKING HORN) No-more-snow-clothes!

(OFF GEMMA’S LOOK) What? It took like an hour just to get his boots on.

BRADLEY

Uh oh.

DAVE

What, is it happening?!

BRADLEY

No. But I really wish you hadn’t talked about our swimming pool.

DAVE SEES BRADLEY’S ABOUT TO LOSE IT AND HITS THE GAS!

CUT TO:
SCENE B

EXT. BARNES FRONT PORCH/INT. STATION WAGON - SAME TIME

CALVIN BARNES (50’S) STEPS OUT ON THE PORCH OF HIS CRAFTSMAN BUNGALOW. HE HAS A SMALL RADIO, THE SUNDAY PAPER AND A CUP OF COFFEE AND LOOKS DELIGHTED TO BE EXACTLY WHERE HE IS. HE SETS DOWN THE RADIO AND TURNS IT ON. STEVIE WONDER’S “WE CAN WORK IT OUT” PLAYS AND CALVIN HAPPILY GROOVES A LITTLE AND SINGS ALONG TO HIMSELF BEFORE SETTLING DOWN INTO HIS CHAIR.

INTERCUT:

INT. STATION WAGON - SAME

IN CONTRAST, THE JOHNSONS ARE AT DEFCON 1.

BRADLEY

I’m not gonna make it!

GEMMA

Think about something else!

DAVE

Yeah, like how fun it’ll be to walk to your new school every day with Mom!

GEMMA

Right! And since I’m the new principal, everyone’s gonna think you’re the coolest kid in school.

BRADLEY

I’d laugh at that but I’m afraid I’ll start to leak. (THEN) Here it comes.

DAVE

No no no! We’re here!

GEMMA

Watch out for the trash cans!

CUT TO:
SCENE C

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - CONTINUOUS

THE STATION WAGON’S BRAKES SCREECH AS IT SLAMS INTO A LINE OF TRASH CANS ON THE CURB.

INTERCUT:

EXT. BARNES FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS

CALVIN STARING O.S. AT HIS TRASH CANS IN DISBELIEF.

CALVIN

What the--?!

CUT TO:
SCENE D

EXT. JOHNSON FRONT PORCH – CONTINUOUS

THE JOHNSONS RUN ONTO THE RIVER ROCK FRONT PORCH OF THEIR CRAFTSMAN HOME. DAVE FUMBLES TO FIND THE KEY TO GET INSIDE.

BRADLEY

Dad, hurry!

DAVE

I know, I know, I know. I just have to find the key...

DAVE HURRIEDLY SEARCHES HIS MASSIVE KEYCHAIN.

GEMMA

What are all those keys to?

DAVE

Our old neighbors’ houses.

GEMMA

But we don’t live there anymore.

DAVE

I know but I wasn’t ready to let go!

BRADLEY

That’s it. This is happening whether we like it to or not.

BRADLEY STARTS TO UNDO HIS PANTS.

DAVE

No no! Not on the river rock porch!

DAVE QUICKLY SCOOPS BRADLEY UP AND SWINGS HIM OVER THE SIDE WALL OF THE PORCH AND HOLDS HIM THERE AS HE PEES BELOW FRAME.

DAVE/BRADLEY

(RELIEVED SIGH)
DAVE NOTICES SOMETHING O.S.               *

ANGLE ON:                                  *

CALVIN SITTING IN HIS PORCH SIX FEET AWAY, STARING AT DAVE      *
AND THE STILL URINATING BRADLEY.               *

      DAVE                                         *

      Hi. We’re your new neighbors.                 *

CALVIN GETS UP SHAKING HEAD AND GOES INSIDE.   *

      CALVIN                                      *

      (SOTTO) There goes the neighborhood.         *

AND WE...                                      *

      FADE OUT.                                   *

END OF COLD OPEN                               *
SCENE E

FADE IN:

INT. BARNES LIVING ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

CALVIN STOMPS INSIDE WITH HIS NEWSPAPER. HIS SON, MALCOLM (25), IS AT THE TABLE EATING A BOWL OF CEREAL.

MALCOLM

What was that noise outside?

CALVIN

Our new neighbors showing up to ruin my day.

MALCOLM

Why? What’re they like?

CALVIN

Like the marshmallows in your cereal -- white and soft.

MALCOLM

These are actually rainbow. The colors make me happy. (THEN) Besides, why do you care if they’re white?

CALVIN

I don’t. I just know their kind.

MALCOLM

What kind is that?

CALVIN

The kind that don’t know what they don’t know but think they do.
MALCOLM

So... white?

CALVIN

What I’m saying is this has been a black neighborhood for generations. A community of people bonded by a common experience. And the whole time we’ve been here, the only white folks who ever bothered coming around were the police and the Mormons, and I don’t know which of them scared me worse.

MALCOLM

Definitely the Mormons. They act like the people in “Get Out.”

CALVIN

But y’see, that’s all gonna change now. Once one white family moves in, more are definitely going to follow and soon our kind will be squeezed out by folks who have no idea what it’s like to live in the minority.

MALCOLM

Y’know, that actually makes sense... Too bad you said the same thing when the first Mexican family moved in.
CALVIN

They are not a minority! Look around, you can’t walk down the street without getting hit by a soccer ball or attacked by a vicious animal!

MALCOLM

A rooster is not a vicious animal.

CALVIN

(PUTTING FOOT ON CHAIR AND PULLING UP PANT LEG) Tell that to my beak marks!

MALCOLM REACTS TO HIS FATHER’S LEG AND GETS UP WITH HIS FOOD.

MALCOLM

Think what you want to think, but you can’t stop change. You’ve got to adapt or die like the dinosaurs.

CALVIN

Who are you calling a dinosaur?

MALCOLM

You. And if you don’t believe me, put some lotion on that nasty ass scaly leg.

AS CALVIN CHECKS HIS LEG AND MALCOLM EXITS, WE...

CUT TO:
SCENE H

INT. JOHNSON LIVING AREA - DAY (D1)

WE ARE IN THE RESTORED LIVING/DINING ROOM OF THE JOHNSON’S CRAFTSMAN. GEMMA’S ON THE PHONE AS DAVE ENTERS FROM THE CAR.

GEMMA

(Into Phone) Fine! But if you’re not here first thing in the morning, I’m ripping you a new star-hole on Yelp!

GEMMA HANGS UP.

DAVE

I’m gonna go out on a limb here and guess the movers are running late.

GEMMA

They pulled off the road in Vegas!

DAVE

Why?

GEMMA

They said “weather.” But in the background I heard slot machines and Pour Some Sugar on Me.

DAVE

So technically someone was making it rain.

GEMMA

I’m serious. All our stuff’s on that truck, where are we supposed to sleep?
DAVE
We could go to Vegas, see if the
movers got comped a suite. (OFF HER
LOOK) Okay, I know it sucks. But
they’ll be here tomorrow and until
then we’ll put up the camping gear.
It’ll be fun, Bradley’ll love it.

GEMMA
You just want to sleep in a tent.

DAVE
Totally, it’s like having a fort!

BRADLEY ENTERS FROM THE BATHROOM.

BRADLEY
I tried to wash my hands but the sink
doesn’t work. Looks like Grammy was
right about California and the drought.

DAVE
The water valve probably just needs to
be turned on. It’s in the basement.

DAVE CROSSES DOWN THE HALLWAY TO THE BASEMENT DOOR.

GEMMA
Sweetie, the weekend Dad and I came
out to look for a house, what else did
Grammy tell you?

BRADLEY
That nobody likes a snitch.

DAVE COMES UP FROM THE BASEMENT.
DAVE
It’s rusted. I can’t get it to turn. *

GEMMA
What about a wrench?

DAVE
Yeah. Too bad ours is in the parking lot of a Nevada strip club. *

GEMMA
You wanna go to the store and get one? *

DAVE
No, I’ll just go over and ask our neighbor if I can borrow his. *

GEMMA *

The guy next door? The one whose lawn you just watered with our child? *

DAVE
It’ll be fine. I bet we’ll wind up laughing about it. *

GEMMA *

He didn’t look like a big “laugher” to me. *

DAVE *

Trust me, everyone wants to be friends with the guy with a big-ol’-hot-tub!

DAVE EXITS.

BRADLEY
I think he should’ve gone to the store.

CUT TO: *
SCENE J

EXT. BARNES FRONT YARD – MOMENTS LATER

CALVIN IS IN THE DRIVEWAY WASHING HIS TRUCK, A LOVINGLY MAINTAINED VINTAGE FORD PICK UP WITH TOOL RACKS AND A STORAGE BOX IN THE BED AND “CALVIN’S APPLIANCE REPAIR” PAINTED ON THE DOOR. DAVE APPROACHES AS CALVIN CAREFULLY POLISHES CHROME.

DAVE

Wow, what a beautiful truck.

CALVIN

(FLAT) Thank you.

DAVE RUNS HIS HAND ALONG THE SIDE, ADMIRING THE LINES. CALVIN DOES NOT LIKE IT.

DAVE

What year is it?

CALVIN

Ninety-six.

CALVIN IMMEDIATELY WIPES DOWN WHERE DAVE TOUCHED THE TRUCK.

DAVE

It’s in amazing shape.

CALVIN

Yeah, well, I take care of my things, they take care of me.

DAVE

I hear you. I’m Dave.

DAVE STICKS HIS HAND OUT TO SHAKE. CALVIN HOLDS HIS UP.

CALVIN

Calvin. I’ve got stuff on my hands.

DAVE

Oh I don’t care.
DAVE GRABS HIS HAND AND SHAKES IT.  CALVIN DOES NOT LIKE IT.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Hey, sorry about earlier. My son had
an emergency. (RE: TRUCK) Hey, you do
repairs -- maybe you can fix his leak.

CALVIN
Maybe. Right after I fix my trash
cans.

DAVE
Oh, yeah, sorry about that, too.
Moving has been quite an ordeal.

CALVIN BEGINS CLEANING UP AS DAVE STARTS TO PRATTLE.

DAVE (CONT’D)
I mean, it took us a week to drive
here from Michigan and now our stuff
isn’t here. Not to mention the whole
having to move away from all our
friends and family back home. But my
wife got a new job here she’s excited
about and I needed clients for my new
company, so you do what you have to
do, right? Wow, do people ever tell
you you’re really easy to talk to?

CALVIN
No.
DAVE
Well, I guess that’s what neighbors are for! Hey, speaking of, I was wondering if you have a wrench I could borrow? My water valve is rusted shut.

CALVIN
I got one in my toolbox.

CALVIN INDICATES HIS TOOLBOX ON THE GROUND NEARBY.

DAVE
Fantastic! I don’t want to interrupt so I’ll just grab it myself.

AS DAVE REACHES FOR THE TOOLBOX, CALVIN SPRAYS THE HOSE IN FRONT OF HIM, STOPPING HIM IN HIS TRACKS.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Whoa!

CALVIN
Sorry. My finger slipped.

DAVE
Sure... Probably ‘cause of the wax.

CALVIN
Look, I don’t know what it’s like where you’re from--

DAVE
Oh it’s beautiful. There are trees everywhere and everyone’s so frien--

CALVIN HOLDS HIS HAND UP, THAT’S NOT WHAT HE MEANT.
CALVIN

But around here you don’t just walk up
and start touching other peoples’
things like they’re your own. Those
tools, those were my father’s tools.
And this truck? Nobody touches this
truck. So please, do me a favor and
just keep your hands to yourself.

DAVE PLAYFULLY BENDS OVER THE BUCKET OF SOAPY WATER.

DAVE

Okay, but what if I wash them first--

CALVIN SPRAYS THE BUCKET. SOAPY FOAM STICKS ON DAVE’S FACE.

DAVE (CONT’D)

Okay, I hear you. Sorry to interrupt.
I’ll just go to the store and buy one.

DAVE TURNS TO LEAVE WHEN ON THE FRONT PORCH, CALVIN’S
GRACIOUS BUT FIRM WIFE, LORETTA, OPENS THE FRONT DOOR.

LORETTA

Calvin -- why do you keep spraying
that man with a hose?

DAVE

(SOAPY FOAM STILL ON HIS FACE) It was
an accident. (WAVES) Hi, I’m Dave.

LORETTA

Loretta. How can I help you?

DAVE

We just got here, our things haven’t
arrived. I need to borrow a wrench.
LORETTA

Well, Calvin, give him one. He’s our
neighbor.

CALVIN GLARES AT DAVE, “SNITCH,” THEN GRUDGINGLY OPENS HIS
TOOLBOX AND GETS DAVE A WRENCH.

CALVIN

Bring it back. I know where you live.

DAVE

Yep! Right next door!

AS DAVE LEAVES, WE...

CUT TO:
SCENE K

INT. JOHNSON LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

GEMMA IS THERE WITH BRADLEY WHEN DAVE ENTERS WITH A WRENCH.

GEMMA

Hey, you got a wrench!

DAVE

(UPBEAT) I got a wrench!

GEMMA

(PLAYFUL) Is that man your friend now?

DAVE

(UPBEAT) I got a wrench!

BRADLEY

Do any kids live there?

DAVE

I didn’t see any, buddy.

BRADLEY

Can we go back over and ask?

DAVE

Maybe later. Right now that man seems like he needs a reeeeeally long nap.

BRADLEY

So our neighbor is cranky and there are no kids next door. Guess I’ll go to my room and play with my toys. Oh wait, that’s right, I don’t have any.

BRADLEY SULKs UPSTAIRS.
DAVE

Aren’t kids his age supposed to be
full of wonder?

GEMMA

He is. Half the time. The other half
he’s an emotional terrorist. (THEN)

How about you? You doing okay?

* DAVE

*I’ll be fine. I just have to adjust.

SHE PUTS HER ARMS AROUND HIM.

* GEMMA

Thank you again for saying yes to all
this. I know none of it was your idea.

* DAVE

Well, I could never say no to you.

* GEMMA

Because you love me so much?

* DAVE

Yes. And because next to my mother
and our new neighbor, you’re the

scariest person I know.

SHE LAUGHS AND KISSES HIM. THEN HER EYES GO WIDE AS SHE
SEEMS SOMETHING OVER HIS SHOULDER OUT THE FRONT WINDOW.

* GEMMA

Four policemen just pulled their guns
out and went into the house next door.

* DAVE

Should we get down?
GEMMA

I think so!

THEM QUICKLY LET GO OF EACH OTHER AND DROP TO THE FLOOR.

DAVE

Ow!

GEMMA

What happened?! Are you okay?!

DAVE

Yeah. The keys to the station wagon just stabbed me in the groin. (THEN, * RE: POLICE) Why do they need guns? *

GEMMA

Maybe there was a murder or something.

DAVE

A murder?! Who are you, my mom?!

GEMMA

What do we do?!

DAVE

You stay here. I’ll look out the window.

GEMMA

Okay, but be careful.

DAVE STARTS TO ARMY CRAWL TO THE FRONT WINDOW. AFTER A CRAWL OR TWO HE STOPS, FISHES THE CAR KEYS OUT OF HIS POCKET, AND RESUMES. WHEN HE GETS THERE, HE SITS UP WITH HIS BACK Pressed AGAINST THE WALL AND SHOULDER SHIMMIES UP NEXT TO THE WINDOW.

GEMMA (CONT’D)

Just a quick peek, okay?
DAVE

(DEEP BREATH) Here I go...

DAVE QUICKLY PEEKS AROUND THE EDGE OF THE WINDOW.

GEMMA

What’d you see?

DAVE

Nothing, I kind of pulled back at the last second. (THEN) I’ll try again.

DAVE TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND SETTLES HIMSELF. MUSTERING HIS COURAGE HE SLOWLY PEEKS AROUND THE WINDOW WHEN “BAM BAM BAM” — THERE’S A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. DAVE ALMOST SHITS HIS PANTS.

MARTY

(THROUGH DOOR) Hi, I’m Marty! My mother told me you just moved in! *

DAVE COMES OFF THE WALL AND QUICKLY OPENS THE DOOR. *

DAVE

Quick, quick, come in.

MARTY

What’s going on?

DAVE CLOSES AND DEADBOLTS THE DOOR, TERRIFIED.

DAVE

The police just went in next door with their guns out!

MARTY

Ohhh. They’re just arresting Victor.

DAVE

Who’s Victor?
MARTY
The crackhead who lives there.

GEMMA
A crackhead lives next door?!

MARTY
Only recently. He was living here before it got renovated. (LOOKING AROUND) Beautiful job by the way!

DAVE
This was a crackhouse?!

MARTY
No, the crackhouse is a block over. This is where its customers lived. (NOTICING) I can’t believe the stains they got out of this floor!

GEMMA
The Realtor didn’t tell us that!

DAVE
She said it was an “up and coming” neighborhood!

MARTY
Well, now that you’re here, I guess she’s right!

GEMMA
We knew there were some issues here, but nothing like this!
DAVE

Yeah! None of the websites we looked at mentioned anything about shootouts!

MARTY

Oh there won’t be a shootout.
Victor’s not a violent individual.

DAVE

Okay, but doesn’t crack have a way of making people... “unpredictable?”

MARTY

True, but as a mathematician I can tell you the odds of a bullet traveling from next door at an angle through both sets of walls and hitting someone in here are incredibly small.

DAVE

Well, I guess that’s a relief.

MARTY

("HMMM") Although Uncle Earl did lose an ear on New Year’s Eve when that bullet fell out of the sky.

GEMMA

I’m going to the back of the house!

MARTY

Good idea! I can’t wait to see what they did with the kitchen!

CUT TO:
INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

DAVE, GEMMA AND MARTY ENTER. DAVE AND GEMMA ARE ON EDGE.

MARTY
Marble countertops! Historically
inaccurate but beautiful nonetheless.

GEMMA
So how often does this sort of thing
happen around here?!

MARTY
Not very, but certainly more than in
nicer parts of town. Of course in
those areas a house with cabinets like
these would cost twice as much!

DAVE
I need a glass of water. Except we
don’t have any glasses. Or any water.

MARTY
Oh, that reminds me -- since your
things haven’t arrived, my mom wants
to invite you over for Sunday supper.

GEMMA
Uh, that’s very nice, but we just got
here and we wouldn’t want to intrude.

DAVE
(QUICKLY) Especially on your dad.
MARTY

Oh when it comes to socializing he doesn’t have much say. Mostly because he hates everyone.

DAVE AND GEMMA EXCHANGE A LOOK, THEY’RE KIND OF STUCK.

GEMMA

Well, I guess a home-cooked meal would be nice after a week on the road.

MARTY

Then it’s settled. Come over at five.

(STARTS TO GO) Oh, and if Victor tries to escape through your backyard, keep him out of the pool. He’s not a swimmer.

MARTY EXITS AND ON DAVE AND GEMMA’S OVERWHELMED FACES, WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

SCENE 1

FADE IN:

INT. BODEGA - LATER (DAY 1)

A SMALL, LATINO CORNER MARKET - THE KIND OF PLACE YOU CAN GET
SOFT DRINKS, BASIC GROCERIES, CIGARETTES AND LOTTO TICKETS.
NITA (40’S, LATINA) AND HER MOTHER, ABUELA (OLDER THAN TIME)
ARE BEHIND THE COUNTER WATCHING A TELENOVELA ON A SMALL TV.

DAVE ENTERS, STILL A LITTLE RATTLED FROM THE POLICE. HE
TAKES A HAND BASKET AND BEGINS SHOPPING FOR MILK, EGGS, ETC.

WHEN NITA SPEAKS WITH CUSTOMERS, IT WILL BE ENGLISH. WHEN SHE
SPEAKS WITH ABUELA IT WILL BE SPANISH WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES.

NITA

Hola.

DAVE

Hello.

ABUELA

(SPANISH) I think this gringo is lost.

NITA

(TO DAVE) Can I help you?

DAVE

No thanks. Just grabbing a couple
things for breakfast tomorrow.

NITA

(SPANISH, TO ABUELA) He says he
doesn’t need help.

ABUELA

(LOOKS AT HIM, IN SPANISH) He’s wrong.

DAVE HOLDS UP A SMALL BUNCH OF BLACK AND YELLOW PLANTAINS.
DAVE
These are funny looking bananas.

NITA
They’re plantains. They’re like bananas only sweeter.

DAVE
Oh. Well, who doesn’t like sweeter?

ABUELA
(SPANISH) No one is this stupid -- I smell a cop.

DAVE ARRIVES AT THE REGISTER WITH HIS GROCERIES.

NITA
(TO DAVE) Do you need anything else?

DAVE
No, this will do it. Actually, can I ask you a question -- my family and I just moved in around the corner and we had an incident with the police today.

ABUELA
(SPANISH) Don’t believe him. He’s trying to throw you off his scent.

DAVE
(RE: ABUELA) Is she talking about me?

NITA
She says you have a nice face.
DAVE
Oh. (TO ABUELA) Well, tell her I think she has one, too.

ABUELA
(SPANISH) I will cut you and cook you, you lying pig.

DAVE
Boy, I wish I knew another language... Anyway, we knew coming in it was going to be rougher than our neighborhood back home, but do you think it’s safe?

NITA
Oh yes. I raised my daughters here.

DAVE
Well, that’s a relief.

NITA
And I only got robbed twice last year.

DAVE REACTS, HORRIFIED.

ABUELA
(SPANISH) We got robbed five times.

NITA
(SPANISH) Have mercy on him, Mama. He’s pale enough as it is.

DAVE
Twice in one year? That’s terrible!
NITA  
(SHRUGS) It happens when you have a  
business anywhere in gang territory.  

DAVE  
This is a gang territory?!  

ABUELA  
(SPANISH) The Crazy Lanes Devil  
Bloods. They are going to love you.  

DAVE  
(STUNNED) I don’t know what to say...  

NITA  
It’s okay, mister.  

DAVE  
Dave, call me Dave.  

NITA  
Okay mister Dave. You don’t need to  
worry. You seem like a very nice man.  

DAVE  
That’s nice of you to say, but what  
does it have to do with being safe?  

ABUELA  
(SPANISH) Nothing, but many will come  
to your funeral.  

NITA  
(OFF DAVE’S CONFUSED LOOK) She says  
it’s going to be fun having you here.  

AS SHE HANDS DAVE HIS BAG OF GROCERIES, WE...  

CUT TO:
SCENE M

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - CONTINUOUS

DAVE EXITS THE BODEGA, NERVOUS AS HELL. AS HE MAKES HIS WAY HOME, HE PASSES A GROUP OF YOUNG BLACK MEN CHILLING BY A CAR.

DAVE

(OVERLY FRIENDLY) Hi. (HOLDING UP BAG)

Just buying some groceries. They told me plantains are sweeter than bananas!

DAVE TURNS A CORNER AND FINDS HIMSELF BEING FOLLOWED BY MALCOLM, WHO IS WALKING HOME, TOO. MALCOLM’S WEARING HEADPHONES AND IS LOOKING AT HIS PHONE SO HE DOESN’T NOTICE DAVE NERVOUSLY CHECKING OVER HIS SHOULDERS AS THEY WALK. SUDDENLY A PACK OF CHIHUAHUAS ATTACKS THE FENCE NEXT TO DAVE CAUSING HIM TO DROP HIS GROCERIES. HE BENDS TO PICK THEM UP BUT STANDS AND STICKS HIS HAND OUT AS MALCOLM APPROACHES.

DAVE (CONT’D)

Hi, I’m--

MALCOLM

Whoa, what the--?!

DAVE’S HOLDING A PLANTAIN LIKE A GUN. HE DROPS IT IN HORROR.

DAVE

Oh my God! I’m so sorry!

MALCOLM

Man you almost gave me a heart attack!

DAVE

I know, sorry. (JOKING) Boy, that’d be a bad way to go, huh? Not a lot of street cred from a drive by fruiting.

MALCOLM

What do you mean, “street cred?”
DAVE
I have no idea. (EXTENDING HAND) I’m Dave, I just moved here.

MALCOLM
Malcolm. I live next door to you.

DAVE
You do?! Oh geez, that’s a relief!

MALCOLM
Why is that “a relief?”

DAVE
Not a clue. (THEN) I’m sorry I’m acting so weird. Things have been crazy stressful since we got here.

MALCOLM
Wasn’t that like an hour ago?

DAVE
It seems like so much more.

MALCOLM
Well, you need to chill. Being jumpy around here is gonna scare people.

DAVE
(CHUCKLES) Kind of ironic, isn’t it?

MALCOLM
Why?

DAVE
I don’t know.

MALCOLM SHAKES HIS HEAD AND CONTINUES PAST DAVE, AS WE...  

CUT TO:  

SCENE P

EXT. BARNES FRONT PORCH - LATER THAT EVENING

DAVE, GEMMA AND BRADLEY STEP ONTO THE PORCH. THEY’VE CLEANED UP AS BEST THEY CAN AND DAVE IS HOLDING A BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE. HE’S VISIBLY WORRIED AS HE KNOCKS ON THE DOOR.

GEMMA

Honey, relax, if you’re nervous you just make it worse.

DAVE

How can it get worse? Two of the four people who live here already hate me.

GEMMA

You don’t know that.

BRADLEY

Yeah. Maybe all of them do.

MARTY OPENS THE DOOR.

MARTY

Hello, hello! Come in...

RESET TO:

INT. BARNES LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MARTY HOLDS THE DOOR AS DAVE, GEMMA AND BRADLEY ENTER.

GEMMA

You have a lovely home.

MARTY

Thank you but I don’t actually live here. I just come over on Sundays.

DAVE

Where do you live?
MARTY
In a gated community in Altadena.
After growing up here it was important
to me to live somewhere with a guard.

DAVE
So you grew up here?

MARTY
Born and raised.

BRADLEY
Did you like it?

MARTY
No, it was terrible. (THEN) I wasn’t
like most children so I got picked on
for liking things like homework and
reading and going to school.

BRADLEY
I like those things, too.

MARTY
Oh. Well... hopefully you’re a faster
runner than I was.

DAVE AND GEMMA REACT AS LORETTA ENTERS FROM THE KITCHEN.

LORETTA
Hello everyone, I’m Loretta. Welcome
to our home.

GEMMA
Thank you so much for having us. I’m
Gemma and this is our son, Bradley.
THEY ADLIB HELLOS. DAVE OFFERS HER THE BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE.

DAVE

We brought this. We were going to open it on our first night in the house but since you invited us over, we thought we would share it with you.

LORETTA

Oh, that’s so nice. But I didn’t think Mormons were allowed to drink.

DAVE AND GEMMA SHARE A CONFUSED LOOK.

GEMMA

We’re not Mormon.

LORETTA

You’re not?

DAVE

No.

LORETTA

Hm. You’re just so friendly and polite, and I figured you’d only move here if you thought Jesus was keeping you safe.

DAVE

(RE: CHAMPAGNE) Can I open this? I feel like I could use a drink.

LORETTA

I’m sorry, we actually don’t drink alcohol in this house either.
BRADLEY

Why? Are you Mormon?

LORETTA LAUGHS.

LORETTA

No, sweetie, we’re black. We’re the real kind of Christian. (THEN) Marty, go tell your brother and father it’s time to come to the table.

MARTY

(YELLING O.S.) Dad, Malcolm, it’s time to come to the table!

LORETTA

(ANNOYED) I could’ve done that. You know I don’t like yelling in my home.

CALVIN (O.S.)

(YELLING) Is it on the table?

LORETTA

(YELLING) Yes!

MALCOLM ENTERS FROM ANOTHER ROOM. DAVE VISIBLY TENSES UP.

MALCOLM

Smells good, Mom.

DAVE

Hey, Malcolm.

MALCOLM

(PISSED) What are you doing here?

DAVE

Your mom invited me!
MALCOLM BREAKS INTO BIG, GENUINE SMILE.

MALCOLM

Man, I’m just messin’ with you.
 Seriously, you need to relax.

HE CLAPS DAVE ON THE SHOULDER. DAVE SMILES, EMBARRASSED.

DAVE

Sorry, I’m not usually this uncool. I
don’t know what’s wrong with me.

CALVIN ENTERS BEHIND HIM.

CALVIN

(SHARP) You bring back my wrench?

DAVE SPINS AROUND, STARTLED AGAIN.

MALCOLM

I think I got an idea.

LORETTA

Calvin, where are your manners?
 That’s no way to welcome a guest.

CALVIN ROLLS HIS EYES AND TURNS TO GEMMA AND BRADLEY.

CALVIN

Hello, my name’s Calvin. Welcome to
our home. (TO DAVE) Now won’t you
please introduce me to my wrench?

DAVE TAKES THE WRENCH OUT OF HIS POCKET AND HANDS IT OVER.

LORETTA

Alright everyone, take a seat before
the food gets cold.

THEY ALL MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE TABLE AND SIT.
LORETTA (CONT’D)

Now, everybody hold hands for grace.

BRADLEY

Who’s Grace?

DAVE AND GEMMA LOOK EMBARRASSED. LORETTA SHAKES HER HEAD.

LORETTA

Looks like I’m gonna be praying for
your family for a whole lotta reasons.

AS THEY ALL TAKE HANDS, WE...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARNES DINING ROOM – LATER

EVERYONE IS LOOKING DOWN AT THEIR PLATES, EATING IN AWKWARD
SILENCE. DAVE NODS TO GEMMA TO START THE CONVERSATION.

GEMMA

So, Marty, you said you live in
Altadena. What do you do?

MARTY

I work at Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

GEMMA

Oh. Did you work on the Mars Rover?

MARTY

Actually I’m developing a much more
interesting project -- a small,
extremely stable device for measuring
interval durations in outer orbits.

MALCOLM

That’s nerd for “space clock.”

MARTY SHOOTS MALCOLM A LOOK.
DAVE
What about you, Malcolm, do you work?

MALCOLM
Why?! Just because I’m a young black man you don’t think I have a job?!

DAVE
No, that’s not what I meant at all.

MALCOLM
(BIG SMILE) Man, I can’t help myself. Messin’ with you is just too much fun!

LORETTA
What do you do for a living, Dave?

DAVE
Um, I’m an independent conflict mediator -- which means when two parties have a disagreement, they bring me in to see if I can help.

LORETTA
And how exactly do you do that?

DAVE
The first thing I do is sit down with everyone and listen to both sides.

CALVIN
(TO DAVE) So you make enough money to buy that big ol’ house by sticking your nose in other people’s business?
Blue Rev. (mm/dd/yy) 40.

GEMMA
He doesn’t stick his nose in. They *
hire him to help solve their problems. *

CALVIN
Hmph, sounds like a made up job to me. *

GEMMA
What do you mean “made up job?” *

CALVIN
I mean the kind of job where rich *
people pay other rich people to fix *
problems that aren’t really problems *
because all of them are already rich. *

LORETTA
Calvin, not in front of the child. *

BRADLEY
It’s okay. Grammy says the same thing. *

GEMMA
(TO CALVIN) So what, fixing things *
only counts if you use a toolbox? *

DAVE
I always say the most important thing *
in my toolbox is a positive attitude. *

CALVIN
At least what I do is honest work. *

GEMMA
You’re calling him dishonest? *
CALVIN
I’m saying you both are.

LORETTA
Calvin...

GEMMA
What’s that supposed to mean?!

CALVIN
It means that you’re lying to
yourselves that you belong here.

DAVE
Loretta, these potatoes are amazing!
What is this, goat cheese?

GEMMA
Okay, Calvin. I hear you. I see you.
But now it’s my turn to talk.

MALCOLM
Oh dang, did she just do a finger wag?

BRADLEY
She does it when she’s mad.

GEMMA
You may think you know us, but you
don’t. We are nice people and my
husband is good at his job. So good
that when the company he worked for
said they were cutting his pay and
benefits after eight years, he told
them they could kiss his ass.
DAVE
I just politely declined their offer.

GEMMA
So when I got a job here that gave us benefits, at a school my son and I can walk to together from a house that we love and could afford, he said “Okay, let’s do it.” And do you know why?

MALCOLM
Did you see that? Her neck just moved!

MARTY
Like that rooster down the street!

GEMMA
(TO CALVIN) Because he’s a good man. And he puts his family and other people first, and he deserves respect.

A BEAT.

LORETTA
I like you.

GEMMA
Thank you.

LORETTA
But you gotta lot of nerve coming here, yelling at my table about respect.

GEMMA
(WILTING, RE: CALVIN) He started it.
LORETTA

Then let me end it. You think your husband is a good man? Well so is mine. And yes, he may need to work on his manners, but the reason he’s tough is because he has to be to make it in a world that hasn’t given him a thing.

CALVIN

You tell her, baby--

LORETTA

Don’t interrupt me, Calvin. (TO GEMMA) So before you come in here waving your finger and craning your neck, just know, if you mess with the lion, you deal with the lioness.

CALVIN

You’re my Nala, Queen!

AS GEMMA STARTS TO RESPOND, SHE, CALVIN AND LORETTA START TALKING OVER EACH OTHER. DAVE TRIES TO GET THEIR ATTENTION.

DAVE

Guys... Guys... (SLAMS TABLE) GUYS!

EVERYONE TURNS AND LOOKS AT HIM, “DID HE JUST DO THAT?!”

DAVE (CONT’D)

Sorry, that came out louder than I thought. (THEN) But as a licensed conflict mediator, I think I can help.

MARTY

The odds of that seem extremely low.
DAVE
Calvin, you are clearly a proud man, with a business and a home and a family you’ve worked very hard for. And all your old friends you grew up with and knew your whole life are moving away and you don’t recognize the people around you anymore. I get that, because everything I just said, describes how I’m feeling, too. And Gemma, you are an amazing woman. You are fearless and powerful and you will do anything it takes to care for your family. And if someone comes after a person you love, watch out, because that love makes you fierce. Sound like anyone else at this table?

LORETTA RAISES HER HAND.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Exactly, you know what I’m talking about!

TO HER SURPRISE, DAVE HIGH FIVES HER RAISED HAND.

DAVE (CONT’D)
So, I think if we all can take a biiig step back, we’ll see that we have more in common than it might seem.

(MORE)
DAVE (CONT’D)

And if we have things in common, I feel like -- can we all get along?

A BEAT. DAVE’S DONE IT. CONFLICT MEDIATED. OR...

MALCOLM

Did you seriously just quote Rodney King to a room full of black folks?

DAVE

Uh, yes... But not intentionally.

CALVIN THROWS UP HIS HANDS, LORETTA ROLLS HER EYES, MALCOLM LAUGHS AND GEMMA COVERS HER EYES...

BRADLEY

(TO MARTY) You said the odds were low.

AND WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. JOHNSON/BARNES FRONT PORCH – LATER THAT NIGHT

ALL IS QUIET WHEN DAVE STEPS OUT FOR SOME NIGHT AIR. HE TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND COUGHS AS A CLOUD OF SMOKE FLOATS BY.

MALCOLM (O.S.)

Sorry, man, my bad.

REVEAL MALCOLM SITTING BY THE SIDE OF HIS HOUSE, SMOKING.

DAVE

(COUGHING) That’s okay. You keep saying I need to chill out.

MALCOLM SMILES AND NODS.

DAVE (CONT’D)

Sorry about what I said at dinner tonight. I swear I mean well, but it seems like every time I do something here it comes out the wrong way.

MALCOLM

Yeah well, it’s hard when people don’t see you the way you see yourself.

DAVE

Yeah... Speaking of which, the real reason I was so weird walking home today is because I was scared of you.

MALCOLM

(HE KNOWS) Is that right?
DAVE
Yeah. I thought you were following me. Gonna do something... Sorry.

MALCOLM TAKES A DRAG OFF HIS SMOKE AND LOOKS INTO THE NIGHT.

MALCOLM
Yeah well, every time I walk into a store someone follows me, too, so I know how it feels.

DAVE
Not good, huh?

MALCOLM
Not good at all...

THERE’S A QUIET BEAT.

DAVE
Alright, well, I better get to bed.

DAVE STARTS TO GO INSIDE.

MALCOLM
Hey man, I owe you an apology, too.

DAVE
You do?

MALCOLM
Yeah. (BIG GOTCHA SMILE) I drank your champagne.

MALCOLM HOLDS UP THE BOTTLE. DAVE LAUGHS.

MALCOLM (CONT’D)
You better not tell my mom.
DAVE
Don’t worry. My mother taught me nobody likes a snitch.
MALCOLM LAUGHS.

DAVE (CONT’D)
Night, man.
MALCOLM
Night... Welcome to the neighborhood.
DAVE GOES INSIDE, SMILING LIKE HE JUST MADE HIS FIRST FRIEND.

DAVE
(SOTTO, SWAGGERY) I can’t believe I thought I was uncool.
AND WE...

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE