

Behind the Wall

by
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INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN

What's the point of an apartment when all a person can see is a few faces and a wall?

IIORU (11) stares up and breathes rhythmically. His eyes are large and his frighteningly dark hair is tangled in sweat. The blood on his face inches down slowly like the run of a marker pressed firm on thick paper.

HEN (12), his brother, sits up from the carpet, lifting himself with the hand holding the gun. His hair is a mess and black sickles hang below his eyes. He's crying, but clean.

While Iioru is small for his age and Hen large, their faces still approximate one another's.

HEN
(scared)
You wanted it too...

Iioru doesn't respond.

HEN (CONT'D)
You made this, not me. You did this.

Iioru stands up and walks across the gray apartment, his left leg limping slightly. He steps over the lifeless body of a woman, her face melting into the carpet. His foot lands carelessly on a finger as he approaches Hen. Iioru's head reaches Hen's shoulders.

Their eyes meet. Iioru's hand takes his brother's and pulls it to his chest. The barrel of the gun kisses Iioru's sweatshirt and stares straight and forward with no resolve.

IIORU
Shoot me here, then.

Iioru moves the gun up to his left temple.

IIORU (CONT'D)
No, here. This is better. You won't mess up here.

Hen's finger wobbles on around the gun.

IIORU (CONT'D)
Don't shake. Move back to the door with me.

Iioru guides Hen backwards into the door. Hen jumps as his back slams into it.

IIORU (CONT'D)
 So you say that I shot mom, came
 for you, and you took the gun from
 me. Actually...

Iioru moves the gun back down to his heart.

IIORU (CONT'D)
 This is more likely...and more
 appropriate.

HEN
 Do I wipe it off?

IIORU
 No.

HEN
 What about what I did to you?

IIORU
 Only we know about it. All you
 need to decide is whose life is
 more important: yours or mine.

Iioru pulls the gun close to his chest.

HEN
 I know you matter more...

Hen's finger begins to pull back on the trigger.

HEN (CONT'D)
 ...but I'm...

Iioru breathes in, closes his eyes, and smiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - OUTSKIRTS - MORNING - **THREE WEEKS PRIOR**

SUPERIMPOSE: **THREE WEEKS PRIOR**

A green grass field sits between a parking lot and a matrix of gravestones. Each blade is mildly frosted from the coming winter. December sits calmly in the gray air.

INT. CAR - STILL - CONTINUOUS

Iioru is covered in a child's sports coat, all black. His hair is slicked back like a vampire and his lips are bright red from the cold. Air passes through his lips as he breathes, rubbing his hands for warmth, and looking up at Hen for some sort of direction.

Hen is dressed similarly, though his clothing is not quite as even and particular.

The both sit uncomfortably in the back seats of a still car.

IIORU

This suit itches, and it's cold in here.

Iioru pulls at his tie for air.

HEN

Keep your mouth shut or we'll get into more trouble.

IIORU

Sorry.

HEN

What'd you do anyway?

IIORU

Nothing.

Iioru bends over and begins collecting pieces of dust in the palm of his hand.

HEN

What are you doing?

IIORU

Thirteen, fourteen...

HEN

Can't you sit still for two seconds?

Iioru stops.

IIORU

What does it matter? I'm not making noise and I'm cold.

HEN

The funeral's going to start soon. I don't want to be here either.

IIORU
Why can't we be with mom?

HEN
You should know better than me.

IIORU
My leg is fine. No one would notice.

A pause.

IIORU (CONT'D)
She looks sad.

HEN
Dad's dead, Iioru, of course she's sad. Why aren't you?

IIORU
Because mom's still alive.

HEN
Barely.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - AMONG THE GRAVESTONES - CONTINUOUS

Straight brown hair falls from the top of MELCHAIA'S (38) head and hangs just above her shoulders. It looks particularly dark today among the black dress falling underneath her black petticoat.

She doesn't cry, but rather breathes in and out very slowly, watching her boys, in her car, from across the field, fearful.

From the car door window, Iioru waves.

Melchaia quickly turns back to the CROWD among her. She passes though a vast number of black-suited couples and individuals in the group, heading under a tent where others are seated.

She approaches the PRIEST and whispers in his ear.

He nods and begins the service.

PRIEST
Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to mourn the untimely death of Balthazar Jendeieh.

Etcetera.

FADE TO:

INT. JENDEIEH HOME - **TWO WEEKS LATER**

SUBTITLE: TWO WEEKS LATER

Iioru draws on a legal pad, adding clouds to the scenery to join the lone bird in the sky.

Sitting on the couch, Iioru manages to stay in his own world as the world around him is packed into cardboard boxes and carried outside by Hen and Melchaia.

The room is fairly bare, only faded squares on the walls where things used to be. Besides the boxes and the couch, the only items still out in the open are a lamp and a box of Froot Loops.

By the door, Hen lifts a difficult box tearing at the seams.

MELCHAIA

Hen, how well did you tape that?

HEN

It's fine. Why isn't Iioru helping?

Melchaia shakes her head and picks up another box. She heads out the door.

Hen puts the box down and walks over to Iioru. Iioru looks back up.

IIORU

Yes?

HEN

What are you drawing?

IIORU

Yesterday.

HEN

Oh. I see.

IIORU

That's the sky, and that's Dad.

Iioru points to the bird.

Hen rolls his eyes.

HEN
Stupid gimp.

IIORU
I'm not a gimp.

HEN
Whatever.

Hen sits on the couch.

HEN (CONT'D)
You know why mom doesn't want you
helping us?

Iioru looks away as his mother appears in the doorway.

HEN (CONT'D)
Because you're retarded, and your a
gimp.

IIORU
Stop it!

MELCHAIA
Hen, put the box in the car.

HEN
Whatever.

MELCHAIA
Iioru, maybe you should go to your
room until we're ready.

Iioru doesn't protest. He slides off the couch and limps up the staircase, heading into shadow.

INT. JENDEIEH HOME - IIORU'S ROOM

Iioru enters his room, struggling to walk, and tears the drawing off the legal pad. He drops the pad and pen on the floor and collapses down awkwardly onto his back.

He stares at the ceiling and holds his drawing up.

After a few moments, Iioru rolls onto his stomach and crawls over near the corner.

There's a panel in the wall. Iioru twists it gently and slowly removes it. In the revealed space is a shoe box marked "Dad".

Carefully, Iioru folds his paper into smaller and smaller pieces. Once he's satisfied and the paper is meticulously thin and even, he pulls out the shoebox and places it inside.

INSERT: SHOE BOX

Ticket stubs, a cologne bottle, and other general items are inside the box. Iioru closes it.

BACK TO SCENE.

As Iioru picks up the wall panel to replace it, he slips and cuts his finger on the side. He barely reacts.

He lifts his thumb and turns it horizontal. Entering his mouth at this odd angle, Iioru closes his lips around it.

INT. JENDEIEH HOME - BATHROOM

Iioru pulls his bad leg up on the sink, then the rest of him, and opens the mirrored medicine cabinet with his good hand. He finds nothing inside and slides down to the floor.

He continues to search the bathroom, finding nothing in the usual places. Iioru checks the toilet paper roll for toilet paper and finds none. He looks around the cabinets and behind the sink.

As he reaches behind the sink he begins to feel something. He stops and then reaches further. After some time he pulls out a HAND GUN.

INT. JENDEIEH HOME - UPSTAIRS HALLWAY

Iioru is crossing from the bathroom to his room when Hen drudges up the stairs.

HEN

What'd you do, Iioru?

Iioru just looks up at him, with his hands behind his back.

HEN (CONT'D)

You're such a baby. What was all that noise?

IIORU

I cut my finger.

HEN

On what?

IIORU
On paper.

HEN
Moron.

IIORU
I just wanted to, uhm...

But Hen has already begun to head back down the stairs.

HEN (O.C.)
We're leaving in an hour.

INT. JENDEIEH HOME - IIORU'S ROOM

Iioru hides the hand gun in the shoe box behind the wall and replaces the panel with care.

FOOTSTEPS climb the stairs. A DOOR OPENS.

Iioru pulls himself onto the bed and keeps his thumb in his mouth. He closes his eyes with difficulty.

Porcelain CLANKS outside the door a few times and then FOOTSTEPS roam the hallways once again.

The door to Iioru's bedroom opens and Melchaia stands beneath the frame.

MELCHAIA
Iioru, were you in the bathroom recently?

He shakes his head.

MELCHAIA (CONT'D)
Are you sure?

IIORU
Yes, I'm sure.

MELCHAIA
Iioru.

IIORU
What?

MELCHAIA
Are you lying?

IIORU
Sometimes a lie is in our best
interest, right?

MELCHAIA
That's not funny.

IIORU
I'm not lying.

MELCHAIA
Why is your thumb in your mouth?
It's bad for your teeth.

IIORU
Paper cut.

MELCHAIA
Okay, well don't fall asleep.
We're leaving in a little bit.

IIORU
What about the bed?

MELCHAIA
We sold the bed.

IIORU
What am I going to sleep on?

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN -
LATER

Iioru and Hen stare at the bare floor in the small, gray city
apartment.

Melchaia is occupied, attempting to reprogram the telephone
and mount it on the wall.

MELCHAIA
Damn it.

Melchaia puts the phone down on the table.

MELCHAIA (CONT'D)
I'm making tea. You don't want
any, right?

Iioru shakes his head. Hen doesn't answer.

MELCHAIA (CONT'D)
Right. The pizza will be here
soon.

IIORU
Do we have any pillows?

MELCHAIA
Look in the box.

FADE TO:

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN -
NIGHT

Iioru's asleep on an empty pizza box. Hen's sprawled in an
uncomfortable position across the floor.

Melchaia sits in the kitchen and watches her kids, her face
damp. She grabs a small towel and pushes it across her eyes.

FADE TO:

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN -
MORNING

Melchaia is asleep on the kitchen counter. Hen nudges her.

HEN
Mom.

Nothing.

HEN (CONT'D)
Mom, wake up.

Melchaia GROANS and rustles.

HEN (CONT'D)
Mom, come on...

Iioru's busy drawing a picture of a goldfish with very large
scales on his yellow, ruled note pad.

HEN (CONT'D)
Iioru, come here.

IIORU
But I'm busy.

HEN
Just come here for a second.

IIORU
Why?

HEN

Mom's going to take us to get school supplies.

IIORU

I thought we couldn't buy things for awhile?

HEN

Well the new school says we need stuff.

IIORU

Okay.

HEN

So?

IIORU

So what?

HEN

Ugh, never mind! Mom!

Melchaia turns over.

MELCHAIA

What?

HEN

You said we could get school supplies today. Can we go now?

MELCHAIA

Let me talk a shower.

HEN

You smell fine.

MELCHAIA

You're a liar.

Melchaia peels herself off the counter and heads toward the apartment's back hallway.

IIORU

Mom, come look at my picture.

MELCHAIA

Iioru, I can't look at every picture you make.

IIORU

I know, but look at this one.

MELCHAIA

Not right now.

IIORU

But I drew all the parts on it.
That's its brain.

Iioru holds up the pad and point's to a small dot on the goldfish.

Melchaia squints.

MELCHAIA

I don't see anything.

IIORU

That's because it's a goldfish. It was the only kind I could make because the pad is yellow. It's brain is small so it can only remember for three seconds.

MELCHAIA

That's ridiculous...but sounds kind of nice.

IIORU

It's true, I read it in the dictionary.

MELCHAIA

Well, if it's in a book, it must be true.

IIORU

Yeah, that's what I thought.

Melchaia lazily brushes her son's head with hand and heads down the hall.

MELCHAIA

I'm going to take a shower now...

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - SHOWER - LATER

Melchaia watches the water from the shower head run back over her forehead.

There's a knock on the door.

HEN (O.S.)

Mom, I have to pee.

MELCHAIA

Pee in a cup.

HEN

I want to pee in the toilet.

MELCHAIA

It can wait.

HEN

But Mom!

MELCHAIA

Hen, I'm in the shower. Find another place for your piss or wait two minutes!

HEN

Fine.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN

Hen walks out of the hallway and over to Iioru. He begins to unzip his pants.

HEN

Hey retard.

Iioru looks up at his brother.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - SHOWER

There's a loud, girlish SCREAM from Iioru in the living room. Melchaia immediately turns her attention and rushes out of the shower.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN

Melchaia runs in as Hen stands over his brother who is soaked in urine.

MELCHAIA

What did you do?

Hen turns around, zipping up his pants.

HEN

Nothing.

MELCHAIA

Did you pee on your brother?

HEN

No.

MELCHAIA

Hen, go to your room!

HEN

I don't have one.

MELCHAIA

Then go sit in the kitchen where I
can't see you.

HEN

Whatever.

Hen walks into the kitchen and stands behind the counter.

MELCHAIA

Sit.

He does.

MELCHAIA (CONT'D)

Iioru, the shower's still running.
Why don't you get in and get
cleaned up.

Iioru limps down the hall, his shirt stuck to his chest. His face is wet, but no good eye could really tell if it's due to tears or urine.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - BATHROOM

The bathroom is fairly clean for a city apartment. The majority of the dirt is built up around the exposed pipes which run into a large hole in the ceiling. Aside from that, the bathroom consists of the running shower, the sink, the toilet, and a cabinet.

Iioru walks over to the toilet and takes off his shirt. He rings it out into the bowl and the water begins to tint yellow.

After he's satisfied, he flushes the toilet and stares into the swirl.

Sitting back against the wall, Iioru takes off his pants and curls hugs his knees. His left leg is held in a padded brace. With a swift motion, he snaps it off and removes the padded bandage beneath.

A deep gash stares back at him and he pokes it with his finger. The scab cracks a bit.

Iioru lets his head drop back against the wall as he is lost in a daze.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - BATHROOM - LATER

There's a KNOCK on the door.

Iioru snaps from his trance and looks away from the toilet.

MELCHAIA (O.S.)
Iioru? Are you okay?

Iioru nods.

MELCHAIA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Iioru? It's been thirty minutes.
Are you okay?

IIORU
Yeah, I forgot to get in.

MELCHAIA (O.S.)
What do you mean, you forgot?

IIORU
I forgot to get in the shower.

MELCHAIA (O.S.)
Well. Okay...?

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - LATER

A TV has been set up on the floor. Hen is watching.

Iioru enters wearing fresh clothing and a moist head of hair.

Melchaia is sipping tea in the kitchen.

IIORU
Mom?

MELCHAIA
What?

HEN
Shh!

MELCHAIA

Don't complain from the doghouse,
Hen.

IIORU

Mom?

MELCHAIA

I said what.

IIORU

Are you mad at me?

Melchaia looks away.

MELCHAIA

Why would you ask something like
that?

IIORU

I don't know. Because you seem
like you're mad at me.

MELCHAIA

I'm just sad about what happened to
your father. Bad things happen,
and so do accidents, but they
happen for a reason.

IIORU

What reasons?

MELCHAIA

Sometimes we don't know right away,
but life has a way of teaching us.

IIORU

Mom?

MELCHAIA

What?

IIORU

Are you mad at me?

MELCHAIA

Iioru.

IIORU

Mom?

MELCHAIA

Why would you ask something like
that?

IIORU

I don't want you to be mad at me.

Hen turns from the television to look at the two of them.

Melchaia places her hand over her heart.

IIORU (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to walk--

MELCHAIA

N-no, no I'm not mad at you.

Melchaia gets up off her chair and walks down the hall,
SHUTTING some unseen door behind her.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN -
LATER

The lights are off and the boys are asleep on the floor in
piles of sheets. Hen is by himself with most of the pillows
while Iioru sleeps with the dictionary.

Iioru opens his eyes.

IIORU

Hen?

No answer.

IIORU (CONT'D)

Hen, are you awake?

Hen GROANS.

IIORU (CONT'D)

Sorry.

HEN

What do you want?

IIORU

I'm scared.

HEN

Why?

IIORU

For school tomorrow.

HEN

Don't be scared.

IIORU

How?

HEN

I don't know. Think of something happy.

IIORU

Like what?

HEN

Something you want to happen.

IIORU

I want to have a nice teacher and make lots of friends.

HEN

Well shut up and think about it then.

IIORU

Okay.

HEN

Good night.

IIORU

Good night.

EXT. DARN STREET - CORNER - THE NEXT MORNING

Iioru is waiting outside as the bus pulls up to the corner. He's bundled up for a semi-cold January day. He wears a snow hat with ear flaps, torn up from age.

Down the street, at Building 21, Melchaia is rushing Hen out the door.

MELCHAIA

I'm not going to be late for my first day and neither are you. Now, button your coat.

She pushes him toward bus.

HEN

Okay, I get it!

Iioru gets on the bus and stands in the door, waving his brother over with a big gloved hand.

Hen runs up to the bus and hesitates.

IIORU

Hen?

Hen bites his lip and jumps inside.

INT. SCHOOL BUS

Hen rushes toward the back and finds an empty seat. Iioru stays up front and takes the first one he sees, trying to hide his limp as best he can. Beside him is a sixth-grade boy named ANTHELION (12).

ANTHELION

Hi. You must be new.

IIORU

Why?

ANTHELION

I usually sit alone.

IIORU

I'm sorry.

ANTHELION

No, it's okay. You can stay.

The bus pulls away and begins to drive.

IIORU

Oh. My name's Iioru. What's your name?

ANTHELION

Anthelion.

IIORU

You have a weird name like me.

ANTHELION

Yep. Hey, let me tell something before the other kids talk to you, okay?

IIORU

Like what?

ANTHELION

Whatever they tell you is B.S.

IIORU

Okay. What's B.S.?

ANTHELION

It's a bad word. That's why we abbreviate.

IIORU

Okay.

ANTHELION

It means something is not true.

IIORU

I will try to remember that.

ANTHELION

But remember that what the kids say is B.S.

IIORU

Why?

ANTHELION

Because they're mean.

IIORU

Why are they mean?

ANTHELION

Because they say things that aren't true.

IIORU

I see. It's a vicious cycle.

EXT. SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY - LATER

Kids rush into the tall brick school building. Vines crawl up the walls in limitless patterns and the windows are large and wide.

Iioru hobbles off the bus with Anthelion and heads toward the building.

Hen rushes past them with a wild pack of other boys.

INT. SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY - MAIN ENTRY WAY - MOMENTS LATER

Iioru waves goodbye to Anthelion and turns into the office on his left.

INT. SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY - OFFICE

Hen is already in the office. Iioru approaches the desk as MRS. AGATHA "ELBOWS" JOHANSSON fingers through a folder holder.

IIORU

Excuse me?

HEN

This is my brother. He needs a schedule too.

MRS. JOHANNSON

Iioru, is it?

Mrs. Johansson pulls two files and places them on the counter.

MRS. JOHANNSON (CONT'D)

Hurry, classes are starting.

INT. SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY - ROOM 331 - MOMENTS LATER

The room is filled with children at desks, colorful drawings, maps, objects, cubbies, coats, and other classroom props.

Among all the extraneous things, however, is one simple teacher. Her name is LISA LANGHSHAUFT (29), and she is an understated beauty with a grandmother's taste in dress-wear.

She addresses the CHILDREN:

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT

Did everyone have a fun winter break?

A few hands go up.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)

Well, we'll hear from all of you with stories in a little bit, but there are a few things to go over, okay? First of all, we have a new student. He's probably just--

Iioru enters the classroom.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)

--about to arrive!
(turns to Iioru)
You must be Iioru.

Iioru nods.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)
Wonderful. Welcome. Go take any
empty seat you want.

Iioru quickly finds one in the front of the room, making his best effort to walk normally, and seats himself. Some of the children whisper, but he doesn't notice.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)
Since you're new here, Iioru, why
don't you tell us about yourself
and then you can be the first to
talk about your winter break.

A FEW KIDS GROAN.

IIORU
I'd rather not.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
Oh, but we'd love to get to know
you.

IIORU
I really don't think I should.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
Oh, Iioru, please share.

IIORU
My dad shot himself.

INT. SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY - CAFETERIA - LATER

Iioru abandons the food line in search of a table. He holds a tray full of mashed potatoes, sloppy joe, and vanilla pudding.

Off in the distance he sees Anthelion sitting alone and heads over to his table.

IIORU
Hi.

ANTHELION
Hi!

IIORU
Can I sit with you?

ANTHELION

You didn't ask on the bus.

IIORU

But you said--

ANTHELION

Okay. Well, yeah, I guess. Okay, then. How are you?

IIORU

I'm doing well. It's like my old school so far.

ANTHELION

Is that a good thing?

IIORU

No. But I like my teacher somehow. She probably thinks I'm strange, but that's okay. We're doing math and English in the afternoon so that should be more fun.

Anthelion laughs.

ANTHELION

That's fun?

IIORU

More fun than winter break stories.

ANTHELION

(sarcastic)

Oh, of course.

Three boys pass by the table and stop. They're all sixth graders, like Anthelion. The tall one with the black hair in the bowl cut is RON BEERMAN (12), the fat kid is GEORGE O'CONNOR (12), and the shortest, most awkward of them all is JIMMY CARTER (12). He'll be a snow boarder some day.

JIMMY

What a surprise.

ANTHELION

Go away, Jimmy.

JIMMY

Always after the little ones, huh?

ANTHELION

Jimmy, just leave me alone.

JIMMY

Right.

(turns to Iioru)

You better be careful around him.

Iioru nods as Jimmy and his pals walk away.

ANTHELION

I hate Jimmy Carter.

IIORU

His name is Jimmy Carter?

ANTHELION

Yeah.

IIORU

That's ironic.

ANTHELION

Why?

IIORU

Never mind.

ANTHELION

Hey, what are you doing after school?

EXT. SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY - AFTERNOON

The school bell rings and it's not before a few kids filter out of the doors. Soon many children are exiting, including Hen and a pack of other boys.

Iioru and Hen exit, talking and smiling.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - LATER

The lights are off and nobody's home.

The door knob rattles and Melchaia enters. She walks in, her heels CLICKING on the floor, and puts her purse on the kitchen counter.

MELCHAIA

Hen?

Melchaia looks around.

MELCHAIA (CONT'D)
Hello? Anybody home?

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - BOYS' ROOM - MOMENTS
LATER

The room is mostly empty, filled with boxes.

MELCHAIA
Shit.

From the other room, a cell phone is RINGING.

Melchaia turns toward the noise.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - HALLWAY

Melchaia hurries down the hallway to:

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN

Her arm leaps into her purse and quickly grabs the RINGING
cell phone. She answers it.

MELCHAIA
Hello?
(pause)
Yeah, I'll be down in a minute.

EXT. 21 DARN STREET

Melchaia signs a clipboard for a DELIVERY MAN standing
outside a large, running truck.

He runs off to the back of the truck to start pulling things
out with his DELIVERY PARTNER.

Melchaia sits on the front steps of the building.

FINN (34), bright-smiled and clean, comes walking down the
street.

DELIVERY MAN
M'am?

MELCHAIA
Yes?

DELIVERY MAN

Do you want to inspect the
furniture before we take it up?

MELCHAIA

You seem like nice men. I'm sure
you'll take care of it.

FINN

Hello there. Are you new to the
neighborhood?

MELCHAIA

Yeah.

Melchaia turns away and Finn goes around to her other side,
outstretching his hand.

FINN

I'm Finn.

MELCHAIA

Hi.

FINN

How are you?

MELCHAIA

All right.

The delivery men approach the door with a bed frame.

MELCHAIA (CONT'D)

Just bring it up to 2A. I left the
door open.

The men nod and head in.

FINN

What are you gettin'?

MELCHAIA

Nothing.

FINN

Oh. You wouldn't need assistance
assembling it, would you?

Melchaia smiles.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - BOYS' ROOM - MOMENTS
LATER

Two mattresses lean against the wall beside open boxes.
Packing material is strewn about the floor, approximating a
desert of tiny white kidneys.

One bed is perfectly built. Finn is busy working on the
second as Melchaia watches from the corner in her business
suit.

FINN

Oh, well I'm good for a lot odd
jobs, you know.

MELCHAIA

Well, it was very kind of you to
offer.

FINN

No problem at all. I'm glad to
help a lady like yourself.

MELCHAIA

Let's be honest with each other,
Finn.

FINN

I don't follow?

MELCHAIA

Are you married?

FINN

No.

MELCHAIA

Single?

FINN

Yes m'am.

MELCHAIA

That's all I'm saying.

FINN

Hey, now, if you're thinking--

MELCHAIA

It's okay.

Finn blushes.

FINN
Well, in that case...

MELCHAIA
I'm not interested.

Melchaia begins to head into the other room.

FINN
I'm sorry, miss?

MELCHAIA (O.S.)
It's okay. Just finish the bed and
we'll call it a day.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN

Melchaia heads into the kitchen as Iioru is walking in the front door. His leg seems a bit better.

Finn begins searching for a glass in the cupboards as Melchaia begins to yell.

MELCHAIA
Where have you been?!

IIORU
I went to a friend's house.

MELCHAIA
You didn't tell me.

IIORU
You didn't provide a means for me
to tell you.

MELCHAIA
I'm sorry Iioru, I didn't get my
extension until today. I didn't
think you'd be the type to make a
friend so fast. Where is your
brother?

IIORU
I have no idea.

MELCHAIA
Don't lie for him.

IIORU
I'm not. Can I do my homework now?

MELCHAIA

Fine. From now on, if you're going to be home late you call the house and leave a message.

IIORU

The answering machine doesn't work.

MELCHAIA

I know. I just added voice mail.

IIORU

Can we afford that?

MELCHAIA

Go do your homework!

Iioru drags his bag to the couch and pulls it onto his lap. He retrieves a math text and a notebook and gets to work.

MELCHAIA (CONT'D)

Sorry...

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - LATER

Iioru's finished homework has piled up to the right of him and he's occupied himself with a pad of yellow paper and a pencil. He's drawing his room.

Hen ENTERS NOISILY, tracking in dirt on his shoes.

Iioru puts a finger over his mouth.

IIORU

Mom's in the other room, she's going to hear you.

HEN

So?

IIORU

So, you're in trouble. She already yelled at me and I was home five hours ago.

HEN

It's eleven already? Jeez...

IIORU

If you go apologize, maybe she won't yell again.

HEN
I didn't do anything.

IIORU
It's just a suggestion.

HEN
I'm gonna hit you if you're lying.

IIORU
I didn't say...

Hen GRUNTS at his brother and walks down the hall.

Seconds after the door opens, Melchaia begins to YELL.

MELCHAIA (O.S.)
Where the hell do you come off
getting home this late?! I was
worried sick! You have to call if
you're going to be out, do you
understand that? I don't ask for
much!

(pause)
Don't walk away from me when I'm
talking to you!

HEN (O.S.)
Whatever.

Hen re-enters and smacks Iioru on the face.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - MORNING

Iioru and Anthelion are seated together again. Anthelion
examines Iioru's black eye.

ANTHELION
What's wrong with your face?

IIORU
Nothing.

ANTHELION
Did somebody hit you?

IIORU
I fell on the couch.

ANTHELION
Yeah, sure you did.

IIORU

Well it doesn't matter. It hurts
and it's there.

ANTHELION

Okay. I should warn you, though.
People are going to make fun of
you.

IIORU

Why?

ANTHELION

They're going to say "does your
face hurt?" and you're going to
"yes", and they're going to say
"well it's killing me!" If anyone
asks you that, just leave.

IIORU

Okay.

INT. SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY - ROOM 331 - MOMENTS LATER

Iioru enters the classroom and Lisa notices his face.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT

Oh my God, Iioru! Are you okay?
Does your face hurt?

Iioru glares at her and takes his seat.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)

Iioru, who did this?

IIORU

Nobody.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT

Let me take you to the nurse.
First your leg, now this.

IIORU

No, it's fine. I already put a
balm on it.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT

You put a balm on it?

IIORU

Yeah.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
Where did you get a balm?

IIORU
I found it in the trash.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
Why are you going through trash?

IIORU
I'm not. I mean, I wasn't. It
just caught my eye on my way out
the door this morning.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
Are you sure you're okay?

IIORU
I'm fine.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
You'll tell me about any trouble,
okay?

IIORU
Okay.

More of the class has now filtered in and Lisa takes her place at the front of the room. She leans on her desk and waits for the rest to enter.

Lisa looks at the clock. It's 8:47am.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
(enthusiastic)
Come on, everyone, you're late,
let's move.

She waits. Quickly, the seats are filled.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)
Okay, since we're still getting
back into the swing of things, I'm
sure most of you played video games
or watched television in loo of
your homework last night, so I'm
going to postpone my usual check
until after recess. Aren't I nice?

Iioru smiles.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)
 I thought that this morning would
 be a good opportunity to talk about
 writing, since we spend most of our
 time on grammar and spelling. You
 may think it's boring...

Iioru raises his hand.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)
 ...but you're going to need writing
 skills...
 (notices Iioru)
 ...for your whole life. Iioru,
 what is it?

IIORU
 I don't think it's boring.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
 Oh-okay.

SOME KID (O.C.)
 Ass kiss.

The children giggle.

Iioru sulks in his chair.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
 Okay, let's not be immature. Iioru
 pointed out something that's very
 important. I don't think I'm
 giving you enough credit. Does
 anyone else like writing?

A couple of hands go up.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)
 See? Not so bad.

A couple of other hands go up.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)
 And I bet some of you like to draw
 too.

Iioru's hand goes way up and some other kids follow.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)
 Or play sports?

Hands of many boys shoot up. Iioru slowly lowers his.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)

Let's not make fun of each other for what we like, okay? When you're older and you have to get a job, if you aren't doing what you love to do because you think someone's going to make fun of you, you're not going to be very happy, right? It's very important to do what makes you happy, no matter what anyone else thinks.

Iioru grins, self-assured.

INT. HARTFORD PUBLISHING - 3RD FLOOR - LATER

Melchaia sits at her desk writing on manuscripts with red pen. She circles the word "listen".

MELCHAIA

Hmph...

From behind her, a frumpy yet attractive woman approaches with nerves cycling around her like peaking waveforms. She's a curly blond with twiddling fingers, conservatively dressed and standing on end. This is PATTY (42).

PATTY

Excuse me, um...I'm sorry I don't know your name. Are you new?

Melchaia answers without turning around.

MELCHAIA

Mostly.

PATTY

Oh, okay, um, what's your name?

MELCHAIA

Melchaia.

PATTY

Oh, that's neat! I'm just Patty. It's kind of boring beside yours.

Melchaia swivels around in her chair and stares into Patty's eyes.

The clock ticks.

Someone posts a note on the desk behind Patty.

The phone RINGS twice, then it's answered.

REBECCA (O.C.)

Thank you for calling Hartford Publishing. This is Rebecca, how may I help you?

MELCHAIA

Well, Patty, is there something I can help you with?

PATTY

Well George left early today, and he's really tall. The problem is I put my bagel in the fridge but the cream cheese wouldn't fit. There was room on the top level but I'm kind of short as you can see but I don't mind, I mean, I look okay for my height.

MELCHAIA

I've never met George.

PATTY

Well he's tall. And he put my cream cheese on the top shelf for me, but then he got sick and left early. I told him to take Tylenol but I think he didn't want to because he's already destroying his liver with alcohol. I think I made him mad but I'm hungry and I just want my lunch.

MELCHAIA

Is there a stool you can use?

PATTY

Well when you came here today, Melchaia, I noticed you.

MELCHAIA

Why?

PATTY

Because you're so tall and beautiful, so I thought I'd ask...

INT. HARTFORD PUBLISHING - 3RD FLOOR - BREAK ROOM - LATER

Melchaia and Patty share a bagel and cream cheese.

PATTY
So you have children?

MELCHAIA
Are you sure this is plain? I
taste chives.

PATTY
I could check?

Melchaia swallows.

MELCHAIA
I have two boys.

PATTY
What are they called?

MELCHAIA
Hen and Iioru.

PATTY
I never had kids. My husband, I
mean, ex-husband, wasn't into that.

MELCHAIA
It's just as well. All they do is
get into trouble.

INT. SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY - ROOM 331

The bell rings and the kids head off for lunch.

Lisa stops Iioru on his way out.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
Hold on a second.

IIORU
Okay.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
You're a very eager learner, aren't
you?

IIORU
Yes, Miss Lisa.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
Oh, sweetheart, you can just call
me Lisa.

IIORU
That's informal.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
Well formal would be Ms.
Langhshauft.

IIORU
I guess you're right.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT
Iioru, I may be getting ahead of
myself, but maybe we could talk
about some after school learning
programs a little later. Does that
sound alright?

Iioru nods repeatedly.

MISS LISA LANGHSHAUFT (CONT'D)
Okay good. Go eat! We can't have
you starving now.

INT. HARTFORD PUBLISHING - 3RD FLOOR - BREAK ROOM

MELCHAIA
Hen could eat an entire cow. That
might be his only talent so far.

PATTY
No sports to go without the smarts?

MELCHAIA
You're funny.

PATTY
Then why aren't you laughing?

MELCHAIA
Tired, maybe.

PATTY
You still seem to carry yourself
very elegantly, Melchaia.

MELCHAIA
Patty, why the compliments? Is
that who you are?

PATTY
I don't know...you just seem very
nice.

MELCHAIA

Can I ask you something personal?

INT. SUNSET PARK ELEMENTARY - CAFETERIA - MOMENTS LATER

Iioru and Anthelion are sitting at the end of a long, wood-print lunch table.

Jimmy Carter and his "gang" walk by the table with Hen now added to the group.

JIMMY

Hey faggots.

HEN

Hey, he's not a faggot, he's a gimp.

JIMMY

Which one?

HEN

That one.

Hen points to Iioru.

JIMMY

What do you know?

HEN

He's my brother. Trust me, he's just a gimp.

JIMMY

Like, for real?

HEN

Yeah, for real.

ANTHELION

Shut up!

Iioru tries to hit Anthelion on the shoulder but misses and just nicks his arm.

IIORU

Anthelion, it's fine.

JIMMY

See, I told you he was a fag. Anyone who hangs out with the Ant is a fag.

IIORU

Why are you picking on him, Jimmy Carter? What'd he do to you?

JIMMY

Ask him what he did to my little brother. Perv.

Jimmy and company head off to their own table.

IIORU

What are they talking about?

ANTHELION

He's lying.

IIORU

We can talk about it if you want.

ANTHELION

I just want to have lunch, okay?

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Iioru sits on the couch, doing his math homework. He's working from an Algebra book.

Melchaia walks in the door, sluggish.

Iioru perks up when he sees her, carefully bookmarks his place as quickly as he can, and bounces off the couch.

IIORU

Mom! Mom! Guess what!

Melchaia ignores him and walks into the kitchen.

IIORU (CONT'D)

Mom! Mom?

MELCHAIA

Iioru, not right now.

IIORU

I'm doing grammar exercises, Mom! After school!

MELCHAIA

Wow.

IIORU
My teacher gave me grammar
exercises! Mom!

MELCHAIA
Iioru, I'm tired. Where's your
brother?

Iioru's glow fades from his face.

IIORU
I don't know.

MELCHAIA
Didn't you see him when you went
home?

IIORU
I wasn't thinking about him.

MELCHAIA
That boy...

The phone rings. Melchaia turns to it. It's next to her
head.

MELCHAIA (CONT'D)
Iioru, would you answer that? My
head is ringing too...

Iioru walks over to the phone and picks it up. He puts it to
his ear with both hands as if the contraption was meant for a
creature twice his size.

IIORU
Hello?
(pause)
May I ask who's calling?
(pause)
Umpatty?

Melchaia grabs the phone from her son.

MELCHAIA
Sorry Patty, that was my son.
(pause)
No, don't worry about it. Thanks
for calling.
(pause)
Saturday night I'll take you out
for dinner.
(pause)
Of course.
(pause)
(MORE)

MELCHAIA (CONT'D)

Yes.

(pause)

Bye.

IIORU

Mom, are you going out?

MELCHAIA

Don't start with this again.

IIORU

I'm sorry...I want to help.

MELCHAIA

You've done enough. Go do your homework.

Melchaia puts the phone in its cradle and walks into the hallway until she disappears behind the shadows.

FADE TO:

INT. ELEGANT BISTRO - SATURDAY NIGHT

The restaurant is formal and colored warm.

Melchaia and Patty sat politically at a small table with bread and garlic.

MELCHAIA

You're feeling awkward.

PATTY

I've never been out with a woman...like this...before.

MELCHAIA

Neither have I. Not legitimately, anyway.

PATTY

This is such a change. Me and my husband were high school sweethearts. We married our second year of college and we were both going to be writers, except he was terrible and, well, we're both editors so you know where that leads. Gosh, he was an ass. What was your husband like?

MELCHAIA

Before or after he died? Because
he was very boring afterwards.

Patty LAUGHS but quickly catches herself.

PATTY

Sorry.

MELCHAIA

No, it's fine. He makes a better
man dead than alive.

PATTY

How did he die?

Melchaia hesitates.

MELCHAIA

Suicide.

PATTY

Oh my, that must have been hard on
the kids.

MELCHAIA

It's hard on all of us. Sometimes
I just need to get away from it.
So, thanks for being here with
me...

INT. PATTY'S APARTMENT - LATER

Patty and Melchaia kiss ferociously as they grab and pull at
one another. They stumble backwards in the dark apartment
and over to a plush couch. Melchaia lays Patty down and
hovers over her, hands pressed into the fabric beneath her
neck. The velvet creaks.

MELCHAIA

Is there a light? I want to see
you.

PATTY

Behind my head.

Melchaia reaches up and pulls the cord. The lamp lights the
area.

MELCHAIA

Much better.

Melchaia, breathing heavily, stares blankly down at Patty as her hair slowly slips over her shoulders and in front of her mouth.

PATTY

Is this...too fast for you?

MELCHAIA

I'm sorry, it's just been...

PATTY

We can stop if you want. We don't have to do anything tonight.

MELCHAIA

How am I doing this already? It's hardly been two weeks.

PATTY

It's been years. You've been waiting years.

MELCHAIA

No, this isn't right.

Melchaia begins to collect her things.

MELCHAIA (CONT'D)

Not now. Patty, I'm sorry I'm such a wreck. I have to check on the kids. I can't leave Iioru by himself. I'm sorry.

INT. 21 DARN STREET - APARTMENT 2A - LIVING ROOM / KITCHEN

Hen and Iioru sit in the kitchen, leaning against the cabinets.

HEN

When did mom say she's going to be home?

IIORU

I still don't know.

HEN

Is there--

IIORU

No. You ate the last carrot.

HEN

Then I'm leaving.

IIORU

What are you going to find outside?

HEN

Something! She can't go out and expect us to stay here with no food in the house.

IIORU

You know we don't have a lot of money right now.

HEN

We can afford food. We're not that poor.

IIORU

Are you sure?

HEN

How is she going out tonight if we can't afford to eat?

IIORU

Just stay here, and she'll be back. Then she'll order a pizza or something.

HEN

Why don't we order a pizza?

IIORU

We don't have any money.

HEN

You know, just because Mom tells you to do something doesn't mean it's the right thing to do.

IIORU

It's different for you.

HEN

Yeah? I guess it is. I'll leave and you stay. Go call your perverted friend or sulk. Just shut up and let me do what I want.

Hen walks for the door.

IIORU

Why are you doing this?

Hen stops...

HEN

Fuck you.

...then continues out the door.