

# WHITE ALLY

d. williams

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**representation:**

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characters

tiana - 23, Black  
a promising architecture student

wyatt - 27, white  
a math teacher at a charter school

notes on the dialogue

the page count looks long, but wyatt and tiana have a short-hand and speak at a clip that should have the play clocking in at 90 minutes

beats and slight pauses are indicated by “...”

interruptions are indicated by “ / ” and “--”

lights.

night in a small, but trendy apartment in bed stuy.

living room. couch. kitchen. a large window looking down on franklin ave.

two signs taped to the window that read “hate has no place here” and “i stand with ukraine.”

tiana sits on the couch, a rolling suitcase nearby.

she looks out of breath.

wyatt is softly pacing, watching from afar.

...

...

...

wyatt

did you want me to call your mom? orr

...

on the stove a tea pot starts to whistle.

wyatt moves and takes it off the stove.

he pours a cup of tea and brings it to tiana.

tiana

thank you.

wyatt

did you want sugar or something?

tiana

no.

wyatt

i should've just picked you up at the megabus.  
dammit.

tiana

i've ridden the subway before.

wyatt

not in new york. not alone in new york.

tiana

yes i have.

wyatt

he had a - a camcorder you said?

tiana

like an old school  
like this retro family camcorder or something

wyatt

and he's just standing there  
in the / subway station

tiana

subway, yeah  
holding this busted thing out to me

wyatt

...and what'd he say?

tiana

he said  
so i'm at the kiosk thing buying a card for the subway  
and it's just sorta me down there. like i can hear people but they're--

wyatt

far off, yeah

tiana

and so this man comes up to me and was like--  
i mean i just thought he was a normal guy  
the camcorder was weird but even with his mask on, he looked like this normal kid  
younger than me i mean  
and he's like excuse me, i got an emergency  
i'm an actor and i need someone to help me film an audition

wyatt

i should've picked you up, i'm so stupid

tiana

and  
i don't even know  
he was alone with this camcorder just going up to strangers and like  
i felt bad for him!  
but it was stupid to even acknowledge--

wyatt

*never* acknowledge

tiana

i know

wyatt

you don't acknowledge and you just walk away.  
it's hella dismissive but it's just a new york thing you'll get used to.  
people around here are used to it.  
i never should've asked you to hoof it all the way to brooklyn on your own.

tiana

it wasn't a big

wyatt

this is my fault.

tiana

it's not. stop.

wyatt

dammit.

(asking her to continue the story)

but so then

tiana

but so yeah

this sad boi is like it'll be super quick, i promise

and so i go--

gah i don't even know why but i was like okay gimme the stupid camera

thinking i can spare two seconds so he doesn't have to keep going up to randos

and so he goes back up the stairs, like almost up to the street

and i'm down at the bottom by my kiosk

and he goes like action!

so i hit record and he starts walking down the stairs

real slow and like

weird.

like a modern dance thing

and i'm like: what the fuck kinda audition is *this*?

like, i shoulda known then, but

...

but he's halfway down now, still maybe twenty feet from me

floating down the stairs

closer.

then he shifts to one side and leans against the wall

like leans against the rail

closes his eyes

and then

and then he just pulls his dick out.

wyatt puts his head in his hands and walks to the kitchen.

tiana picks up her tea, breathes deeply and takes a sip.

tiana

and i was just like, oh my god  
so i turn--

wyatt punches the wall of his apartment.

wyatt

AAAARRGGGGG!!

his hand goes through the drywall.

tiana  
(standing)

OH, WHAT THE FUCK?

wyatt

ow! christ!

wyatt collapses to his knees and grabs his hand.

wyatt

fuuuuuck.

tiana

jesus!

wyatt

arg, ...*dang it!*  
i'm sorry, i'm so sorry.

he holds up his limp hand. tiana comes over to the damaged wall.

tiana

wyatt!

...

you punched a damn hole in your wall!

wyatt

i know.

there's a um  
i'm so sorry, but would you mind grabbing an ace bandage?  
in my bathroom above the sink.

tiana exits.

wyatt stands and examines the hole in the wall.

he's almost a little impressed.

wyatt

whoa.

tiana enters with the bandage.

tiana

you got a ziploc?

wyatt walks to his couch.

wyatt  
(sitting)

ya under the sink.

tiana grabs a ziploc bag, fills it with ice from the freezer.

wyatt

ow.

tiana comes over, wraps his hand and the ice bag over the following.

wyatt

i'm sorry

tiana

say sorry to your wall, killer

wyatt

no, i mean like



oh tiana

i'm sorry that that *happened* to you wyatt

yeah tiana

it just really fucking pisses me off wyatt  
like what the fuck?

the minute i get here. tiana

what is wrong with people? *men*. what is wrong with men. wyatt  
toxic.

she finishes the wrap.

there. tiana

just know this is not indicative of, like wyatt

i know. tiana

don't want you to be freaked out by the subway all summer wyatt

it's okay. tiana

wyatt

i know the whole subway thing is its own struggle  
navigating. if you don't know the layout and haven't ridden the--

tiana

it's not. it's fine.

wyatt

well i should have met you

tiana

i'm not a kid anymore, wyatt.

wyatt

know what?  
i think we should call the police.

tiana

what?

wyatt

don't you think?

tiana

yeeeeeeah. i dunno.

wyatt

i can talk to the cops  
if you're uncomfortable. it'll be totally fine.

tiana

really i just wanna chill here with you right now and  
and just not think about it, you know?

wyatt

of course. of course.

tiana

like, let's just sit here and

totally  
wyatt

and just sit.  
tiana

you're safe here, t.  
wyatt

i know. thank you.  
tiana

she leans in slowly and hugs wyatt.

wyatt, perhaps surprised, hugs her back - though rather gingerly with his injured hand.

she leans back and breaths in and out, re-centering herself.

and sorry if i freaked you out with my, like  
punch. with my punching the wall.  
wyatt

yeah what the fuck bro?  
tiana

i was mad!  
wyatt

and that primal scream was just--  
tiana  
(approving)

i was *shocked*, really  
wyatt

interrupting my damn story.  
tiana

wyatt

i know, that was my bad. keep going.

tiana

nah that was it

wyatt

no, like in the subway  
what'd you do? after he--

tiana

oh, i was just like fuck this kid - sorry bye  
and ran to my train

wyatt

you said sorry?  
tiana, i'd really encourage you not to feel like--

tiana

no i mean  
i don't know what i said  
i just got outta there

wyatt

and did he try to follow you or

tiana

oh no. i don't think so.  
like the train was right there  
i was on there for like four stops before i realized i was still holding the thing

she reaches down to her things and removes a small camcorder

wyatt

holy shit. you kept it?

tiana

not like i meant to

wyatt

we should--!  
look i know you might feel a certain way about it  
but i think it might be a good idea to take this to the police.  
this is evidence.

tiana

here. do what you want with it.

she holds it out to him.

wyatt

you really don't want to?

tiana

man, i wanna stop thinking about it and start my summer.  
i really do.

wyatt

okay. heard.  
i'm sorry.

she lets the camera drop onto the coffee table.

then she stands and starts bouncing around, shaking out her arms.

tiana

watch me shake this out right now

wyatt  
(smiling)

what are you

tiana

let's go. put out your hands up, you gotta help me

he puts up his hands hesitantly.



tiana

you're stuck with me for three months  
gonna have to learn to be my punching bag, kid!

wyatt

oh lol, like i'm not already your punching bag

tiana

oh shut up

wyatt

go spar with the wall like i did

tiana

spar with the wall he said. that wasn't sparring.  
the wall won.

she punches toward his hands again.

wyatt moves his hand out of the way and his bandage comes loose.

wyatt

aw, damn.

he sits down on the couch and tries to fix it.

tiana keeps bouncing around the room, looking at the photos and artwork  
wyatt has around the apartment.

tiana

i brought your letter

wyatt's eyes go wide.

wyatt

you did.

tiana

i got the weird letter you emailed me about writing

“wyatt champlin is a dedicated friend and a man of character. any school--”

wyatt

amazing! that’s--  
it wasn’t too much of a

tiana

“any school would be lucky to have him as part of their faculty.”  
i did exactly what your email said.

wyatt

tiana, my savior. for real.

tiana

don’t know why you want a letter of recommendation from me anyway  
you already got a job

wyatt

yeah well  
it’s not actually a letter of rec

tiana

oh. so what is it.

wyatt

i didn’t tell you?  
it’s like  
it’s just this random charter school thing. for my file.  
like a what-do-you-call-it  
ugh, not a testament, but  
what’s the word--

tiana

testimonial?

wyatt

yes! exactly.  
to be honest i’m not exactly sure what they need this stuff for myself  
i’m still new over there



but this is huge! coming from you this is huge.

tiana

uhh no sweat.

wyatt

can't wait to read it.

anyway i can repay you, just lemme know!

tiana

how about a tour

wyatt

the tour! you bet. it's kind of a quick one.  
kitchen, living room obviously

tiana

it's nice.

wyatt

yeah it's a good fit for now.  
you saw the bathroom, my bedroom is in back

tiana

and the view.

she sits on the window sill and looks out.

wyatt

yep.

tiana

it's dope, wyatt. really nice.

wyatt

thanks. yeah.

tiana

and it's a nice area?

wyatt

bed stuy? *oh* yeah. *oh* yeah.

it's sort of like classic brooklyn. with the bodegas and the brownstones and all that.  
you'll love it.

tiana

classic brooklyn, for rich white folk.

wyatt

yeesh. that's real, though. it's bad.  
not like i'm rich but yeah. part of the problem.

tiana  
(clarifying)

that *you're* part of the problem.

wyatt

i mean that's obvious, right?

tiana

i guess it is.

wyatt

this is gonna sound lame but i did a fair amount of research before i moved in.

tiana

why would that sound lame?

wyatt

i dunno. like, performative like  
like i'm trying too hard or something?  
but it just felt like something i need to do. just for my own, like--  
it just felt important to know the history of gentrification in the neighborhood i'm  
moving into.

tiana

um. okay but you still moved in.

wyatt

well yeah because my school was here! i moved here to teach at the neighborhood school. which like no teachers in new york do by the way.

tiana

that's not a pass.

wyatt

yeah no. of course not. i know i'm complicit in this.  
like i know that *deeply*. i mean i see it at my school.  
but honestly i don't know how to square it.

tiana

square what

wyatt

just like  
how to be near my kids.  
live near my students and also not be this gentrifying fuck-head, who--

tiana

well there are options

wyatt

no of course--

tiana

like how about you shuttle in from jersey.  
there are a lot of options, like i literally *just* came up with that.

wyatt steps back and looks at her.

tiana

what.

wyatt smiles.

tiana

(also smiling now)

what!

wyatt

look at us!

tiana

oh stop. i knew you were gonna--

wyatt

we're right back at it! i love this

tiana

here he goes.

wyatt

no i miss this, t. for real.  
our discussions?

tiana

(overlapping)

you don't have to *name* a thing every time it happens--

wyatt

our *debates*! i mean come on!  
i don't have someone i can do this with anymore.

tiana

i see some lady all over your instagram, she doesn't talk?

wyatt

no, she does but--  
come on. don't tell me you and whats-his-name have debates like we used to

tiana

who's what's-his-name

wyatt

your boyfriend! the guy that

tiana  
i don't--  
ricky?

wyatt  
sure! i dunno.

tiana  
oh. me and ricky broke up.

...

this seems to mean something to both of them.

wyatt  
oh. i  
really?

tiana  
yes.

wyatt  
i  
didn't know that.

tiana  
yep.

wyatt  
sorry to  
i mean i didn't mean to like bring up the--

tiana  
oh it's completely fine, wyatt.  
he was a boy and i wanted a man.

...

huh. wyatt

...

but  
yeah. what was i  
wyatt  
(a little lost, trying to backtrack)

what *were* you saying? tiana

yeah. the. wyatt

wyatt, the gentrifier. tiana

okay but wyatt  
yes but look.  
i know i'm just another young professional moving into new apartments built on the  
bulldozed houses that used to belong to black and brown families.  
that a lot of those houses were remortgaged during the housing crisis and foreclosed on.  
i know this.

do you though? tiana

i do! i really do. wyatt  
and it took me a long time to decide whether or not it was worth--  
not 'worth it' but  
if i was okay participating in that. for the trade off.

so it's a trade off then tiana

wyatt  
 i try to think of it that way honestly, yeah  
 because at the end of the day

tiana  
 (done with this)

okay

wyatt  
 no listen, at the end of the day it was more important to me to be *part* of the community  
 i'm serving. if i'm gonna teach these kids, i want to be part of their lives.  
 not just some white guy taking the train in from hoboken.

tiana  
 fine, i get that--

wyatt  
 complicated, right?

tiana  
 from certain angles

wyatt  
 it's hard to reconcile but  
 i dunno! i'm trying. i'm trying my best...

...

tiana  
 but wait. didn't you just get a new job--?

wyatt  
 oh shit, side note, this is cool - look over there.  
 that pizza place?

he points.

tiana  
 yeah?

wyatt  
was in a few episodes of *girls*. you believe that?

...

tiana  
of what?

wyatt  
of girls! the show. lena dunham?  
it was on hbo.

tiana  
uh huh.

wyatt  
but they turned it into a coffee shop - for the show  
*hollywood*

tiana leans and looks up and down the street.

tiana  
which way is the subway?

wyatt  
(pointing)  
you came from down that way. see?

tiana  
oh yeah.

wyatt  
this is franklin. so you'll head back that way to get the A train.

tiana  
probably grabbing drinks with my friend later tonight so



oh? you're  
wyatt

yeah.  
tiana

i didn't know you knew anybody else in--  
wyatt

later on tonight  
tiana

that's great. i mean fun.  
wyatt

past your bed time old man.  
tiana

oh whattt come on!  
wyatt

we'll see. they haven't texted me back  
tiana

cool cool.  
wyatt

wyatt walks up and stands next to tiana.

so's this a guy friend, a girl friend, err  
wyatt

she stands and walks around the living room.

this place is great.  
tiana

thanks. and once i leave for my trip next week you'll have the run of the place  
wyatt

dope

tiana

'til august  
really appreciate you watching my spot while i'm gone

um duh!

wyatt

just don't forget to water the plants and we're golden

she tosses her suitcase onto the couch

ayyyyye new digs

wyatt

yeah. and i have this curtain thing we can put up after dinner to sort of make it its own space

siiiiick curtain-room

tiana

and the futon is pretty nice to be honest  
it's not like

wyatt

siiiiiiiick futon-bed curtain-room

exactly. you're a real new yorker now

wyatt

i know, i live in a busted new york apartment and everything!

wyatt  
(faux offended)

hey! i'm trying to do a favor here.

tiana

it's a girlfriend.

wyatt

huh?

tiana

that i'm meeting later on tonight  
a girl *who-is-a-friend*

wyatt  
(trying to play it cool)

oh. for sure.

tiana grins at his reaction.

tiana's phone rings, she glances at it.

tiana

aw shit. it's my mom...

wyatt

oh, do your thing.

tiana hesitates. then picks up.

tiana

hi ma

wyatt starts clearing his stuff out of the living room area, making a space for tiana, while she talks on the phone.

tiana

yeah i made it. i was about to text you.  
the place is nice! it's real nice

shmeb, just a one bedroom  
wyatt

yeah that's  
he's just making jokes  
hi wyatt  
tiana

hi sherine!  
wyatt

he says hi  
mm i don't really know  
me and him are gonna make dinner and then i might  
tiana

salmon!  
wyatt

ummm i think so?  
yeah.  
tiana

with a lemon dill, like  
wyatt

no it's *super* safe he said.  
subway is like right there, don't even worry.  
i already sent you the address!  
no, i'll send it again...  
yes  
well i'm not gonna have my phone on later so  
yeah  
i will  
ma, i said i will  
yes  
no he's right here  
tiana

fine

tiana holds out the phone to wyatt

tiana

she wants to talk to you.

wyatt

oh great.

wyatt goes to take the phone but tiana holds onto it.

tiana

(whispered)

DO NOT TELL HER ABOUT THE SUBWAY.

wyatt gives her a look.

tiana

(whispered)

wyatt!

wyatt

(whispered)

fine.

he takes the phone.

wyatt

(big, familiar)

hey sherine!

you too, it's been a minute!

i know. i think the last time we

shut up, that was it! with that weird ass waiter who

yesss

“say it don't spray it” lol!

(he laughs)

oh my god, it's nothing. i'm happy to do it! happy the timing worked and she was able to crash here.

even with the covid mess, short term rentals in the city are still  
 exactly  
 well don't even mention it  
 no no she's thanked me about a million times already  
 more like a zillion!

he walks over and lightly punches tiana's shoulder

she sticks her tongue out at him.

tiana

(whispered, sarcastic)

thank you thank you thank you

wyatt

(overlapping)

she's  
 no, it's no bother really  
 plus she's only gotta put up with me for another few days  
 then i'm gone most of the summer with my trip so

tiana comes over and tries to frantically wave wyatt off: stop talking about  
 the trip!

wyatt

(confused, then trying to backtrack)

oh she didn't tell you about my trip to  
 yeah  
 well it's a very short, um  
 no no just going up to block island for a day trip

tiana and wyatt have a silent side convo with mouthed words and wild  
 gestures.

wyatt is like wtf why am i in the middle of this?

tiana is like keep talking, fool!

wyatt

no that was a slip of the  
i meant to say *weekend* trip  
it's a weekend thing! very quick.  
plus she's gonna be great. don't even worry about--  
well i don't know the dates off the top of my head but

wyatt sits on the couch and rubs his temples

tiana paces behind him

wyatt

no i will. i'll send the dates to you.  
yes. i hear ya. i'm sorry.  
uh huh  
uh huh  
yes sounds good  
did you wanna talk to tiana again or just--  
nope. totally. i'll have her text you later tonight then.  
okay  
okay you too  
bye bye

he hits end and hangs his head.

tiana

why'd you do that.

wyatt

what?

tiana

say you'd make me text her later tonight

wyatt

i didn't say 'make'  
she asked me if

tiana

you're not my babysitter.





--since we've seen each other? but i'm a grown ass woman now wyatt

wyatt

don't tell me! tell your mom

tiana

i do tell her!

wyatt

also not sure if you heard, but i totally just covered for you so you're welcome  
you want a drink or what.

tiana

yes!

he starts taking out booze and mixers from a top cupboard. assembling  
them on the counter.

tiana watches him for a beat.

...

tiana

i meant to tell her  
i wasn't try to, like--

wyatt

it's whatever.  
just feels gross lying to your mom

tiana

look, i'll text her. straighten it out.

wyatt

thank you, i think that's a good idea.

tiana

i know you think i'm this sheltered little thing.  
that mom protects me

wyatt  
("she does")

i mean

tiana  
if she didn't beg me to stay in-state i probably

wyatt  
you coulda been in new york already.

tiana  
i *would have* been in new york. i bet.  
columbia has a nice program...

wyatt  
well you made it. eventually.

tiana  
i know i did. this summer is supposed to be different, wyatt  
it's half the reason i said yes to this internship

wyatt  
right

tiana  
i got a chance to find myself here

wyatt  
you will. look, i know this summer is gonna be special.  
it's gonna be exactly what you need it to be.

tiana  
yeah.  
(nodding to herself)  
i know.

...

tiana  
she just made partner.

wyatt  
your mom?

tiana  
mm hm.

wyatt  
get the fuck out! zhaire told me she was trying to quit.

tiana  
she was so they made her a partner.

wyatt  
oh shit! damn, i gotta text her congrats.

tiana  
you should.

wyatt  
actually hold up, that reminds me  
i got something for you.

wyatt moves over to his bookshelf, he grabs a small framed photo.

wyatt  
it popped up the other day and i thought it might be funny to get it printed

he hands it to tiana. she looks at it and lights up.

tiana  
ahhhhh! oh my god! where'd you get this?

wyatt  
facebook! where else?

tiana

stopppp this is a trip!  
 look at us! we're a bunch of babies, ahhh  
 bunch of cuties

wyatt

straight cheesin'.  
 senior prom cheesin'

tiana

pshh *junior* prom. i was a junior.

wyatt

oh right right.

wyatt comes around to look over her shoulder.

they smile, looking at the photo.

tiana

that was a fun night. a fun surprise.

wyatt

i can't take credit. it was zhaire's idea.

tiana

noo, you made the trip down so you get the credit

wyatt

and only one day's notice!  
 i'll never forget it. i was walking out of lipton headed to my last final of the semester  
 when i get a call from your brother like

(a zhaire impression, into a phone)

"wyatt, tiana's prom date dropped out. nyu can wait. i need you down here, brodie."  
 so i hopped on a bus back to pottstown, borrowed my dad's suit and

tiana

(still looking at the photo)

and showed up on my porch

the look on your face  
wyatt

it was nice. it was really nice.  
tiana

yeah, fun night...  
wyatt

know what i'm gonna do?  
tiana  
i'm gonna put it right on my drafting table, and every time i look at it  
i'll think back to all of your corny-ass dance moves!

whaaat? get--  
wyatt

aha!  
tiana

you gotta be thinking of someone else, cuz i was on a roll that night!  
wyatt

i knew you'd have something to say about it.  
tiana

i do because i am *objectively* a good dancer!  
wyatt

oh quit. that is such a lie.  
tiana

i am!  
wyatt

well put up or shut up! let's see it  
tiana

wyatt

you think i'm scared?  
 alexa! play the love and basketball soundtrack

wyatt's alexa blinks and starts to play 'love and happiness' by al green.

oh. my god. did you just  
 tiana

what? what happened?  
 wyatt  
 (playing coy)

did you just pull out love and basketball?  
 tiana

i know you love this movie  
 alexa! on shuffle, alexa!  
 wyatt

alexa blinks and plays 'my prerogative' by bobby brown.

i *do* love this movie--  
 tiana

oh, HERE WE GO!  
 wyatt

wyatt starts dancing. he's not horrible, but it's still pretty embarrassing

one of the greatest soundtracks of *all time*--  
 tiana

i know, right?  
 wyatt

and it's being disrespected right before my eyes!  
 tiana

he does the sprinkler.

tiana

you are NOT doing the sprinkler to bobby brown right now.  
you are not doing that to me.

wyatt

hell yes i am. classic!

(to the song)

“that’s my prero-gativvvvve”

tiana smiles and shakes her head as she watches him dance around the room, hating how much she loves it.

wyatt

come on, you love it

i know you rode the bus all the way from pa for this one

wyatt busts out another move - less of a joke now, his hips are actually moving.

it’s kind of sexy.

tiana

ooo alright, not bad, not bad. viral teacher man can dance.

wyatt

would you stop calling me that! the video did *not* go viral

tiana

it did!

wyatt

you’re just gonna leave me hanging up here??

wyatt goes to tiana and takes her by the hands, tries to get her up out of her seat.

tiana

i don't wanna put you to shame! don't wanna break your spirit.

wyatt

well that's impossible so

tiana

fine you asked for it.

tiana gets up off the couch, sways her hips.

tiana

how about those drinks, killer.

wyatt

oh yeah

tiana dances by herself.

wyatt shimmies into the kitchen and starts making the drinks.  
he watches her.

wyatt

there you go!

tiana

see, *now* it's a party.

wyatt

whooh!

the song ends and changes to 'i want to be your man' by roger, an 80's  
funk slowjam. the track is dated and a little extra, but it's cute.

tiana

uh oh! this is it right here, this is my jam.

wyatt

from the school dance scene! in the movie  
actually wait--



tiana

take me now omar epps! that man is *sexy!*

tiana sings the words.

wyatt walks into the living room and grabs the camcorder from earlier.

he hits record and starts playfully circling tiana, she plays to the camera over the following.

tiana

okay spielberg

wyatt

i'm doing the scene! recreating the scene from across the gym?

tiana

i know! i showed *you* this movie

wyatt

pretty sure it was your brother, but okay

tiana

put that thing down, you're killing my vibe

wyatt

yeah?

he sets it down, but forgets to stop recording.

the small red light on the camcorder glows.

tiana

now look who's leaving *me* hanging.

wyatt

aw, no i'm not

wyatt walks closer.

tiana is still singing the words to the song, leaning into the cheesiness.

tiana  
(singing)

those other girls don't matter, no, they can't spoil my viewwwww  
i must...make you...understaaaaaand

tiana  
iiiiiii wanna be your man

wyatt  
iiiiiii wanna be your man

pretty good!

tiana

four years of chamber choir.

wyatt

come on, wyatt.

tiana

what

wyatt

come dance with me.

tiana

wyatt comes close, tiana puts her arms around him.

they smile and giggle as they slow dance in the living room.

look at us, just like in the movie

wyatt

i know...

tiana

she rests her head on his shoulder.



what's up. tiana

are you like starving? wyatt

i mean, i'm okay for now  
what is it? tiana

wyatt doesn't hear her. he finishes texting.

tiana moves. she sits on the couch and waits.

he hits send and puts his phone away

sorry. sophie is only just getting out of work now so she's gonna be another 45 minutes  
prolly. wyatt

oh... *sophie*? tiana

yeah. my girlfriend. wyatt  
she was gonna stop by. if that's cool.

ahh. tiana  
(hurt)

i thought i mentioned that. wyatt

no. tiana

wyatt

sorry. yeah.

(suddenly up)

she's like super pumped to meet you!

tiana

right.

wyatt

she's picking up the salmon at this spot near her office so  
we're kinda stuck waiting, meep moop

tiana

okay

...

wyatt spots his half-made drinks on the counter.

he claps his hands together.

wyatt

alright drinks! someone needs a drink.  
my *sistahh* needs a drink.

wyatt examines a bottle of wine.

tiana

what?

wyatt

said i got a whole set up over here, what are you drinkin' *siiistahhhh*?

tiana

no, what is that

wyatt

what.

tiana

what you said

...sister?

wyatt

you didn't say it like that

tiana

oh

yeah i mean

that was our joke. the three of us

sistahh

wyatt

...

tiana

i used to call you my sister!

because you'd always be tagging along with me and  
remember?

wyatt

i do.

but i don't remember you ever saying it like that.

tiana

...

...

wyatt smiles.

what's funny

tiana

come on

wyatt

what tiana

you're saying it like i'm trying to wyatt

like you're trying to what? tiana

like i was doing some kinda wyatt

some kinda blaccent? tiana

wyatt  
(as if this were still a joke)  
tiana! are you--  
i was *not* saying it with a  
i don't even know what that means

tiana  
well it sounds like you are familiar

wyatt  
i didn't say anything!  
i said sister

tiana  
actually you said sis / ahh

wyatt  
sistahhhh  
whatever, that's *technically* correct i gue--

tiana  
am i making you uncomfortable, wyatt?

wyatt

nooo. you are not, as a matter of fact.

because it was not a *blaccent* because it's from something. i didn't just randomly

tiana

what's it from

wyatt

tiana. hey.

tiana

i just wanna know!

just tell me what it's from and we can move on.

wyatt

(now serious)

you know that i would *never*...

a frustrated pause, tiana let's him sit in it.

...

wyatt

can we just like relax?

tiana

oh i'm relaxed.

where's my drink?

wyatt

okay

okay so i got gin, i got vodka, and i got this bourbon i haven't opened.

tiana

good bourbon?

he looks at the label.





tiana

darth vader says sista?

wyatt

yeah!

well kinda. at the end when him and luke are fighting  
or luke is like hiding somewhere and vader is trying to lure him out by getting inside his  
head and making him *turn*  
making him turn to the dark side and he's like - vader is like  
"ohh your sIIstahhhh" like talking about leia.

tiana

...

wyatt

remember?

tiana

i never seen it.

wyatt

shut the fuck up! you've never seen return of the jedi?

tiana

i've never seen any of 'em

wyatt

shut. the fuck. up. we're watching star wars.  
(walking toward his tv)  
for real. we're watching it right now.

tiana

i'm really not.

wyatt

(immediately retreats back to the drinks)  
yeah no not right now but we *should*

like over the weekend before i leave for my trip on monday.

tiana

we'll see

wyatt finishes tiana's drink and brings it over to her.

wyatt

but so wait tell me more about your fuckinn uh

tiana

what

wyatt

come on! this super fuckin fancy

tiana

(doing his voice)

this feckinnn super fancy feckin thing?

wyatt

it is though, right?

the fancy internship thing you won. tell me about it.

tiana

i already told you

wyatt

yeah but i wasn't listening

tiana

pshhh

wyatt makes his own drink, maybe a martini.

wyatt

no for real, i wanna hear about it again

are you psyched? you seem psyched.

tiana

i'm pretty psyched. i'm pretty into it.

wyatt

so what, so there was this contest at penn state and you like

tiana

yeah so it's this design competition the department holds every year.

wyatt

damn

tiana

if you win, you get this summer internship with SOM

wyatt

and you won

tiana

of course i won! i win everything out there, everyone in my class hates me hah!

wyatt

damn that's so amazing. and this place is like  
they're legit

tiana

SOM?

wyatt

yeah

tiana

ummm yah they're legit. i mean look at their website.  
they're like  
they're like the nike of architecture firms. they're like the apple.

wyatt

super elite

tiana

yes

wyatt

super prestigious

tiana

they started in chicago a million years ago and like *designed* that skyline, bruh. the hancock center, the sears tower or whatever they call it now.

wyatt

wow

wyatt brings his drink into the living room and sits next to tiana.

tiana

yeah and their modern stuff is like  
i mean come on, the time warner building in columbus circle  
the new world trade center

wyatt  
(pointing)

you mean the *freedom tower*??

tiana

yes man, it's SOM. the scale is just massive.  
not just in new york and chicago either. all over the world  
dubai? that crazy tall building in dubai?

wyatt

from mission impossible: ghost protocol!

tiana

ummm sure.

wyatt

it's the fourth one. it's very good.

tiana

whatever.

my point is that SOM isn't some residential firm.

wyatt

oh no, so residential firms are like

tiana

i mean i *like* residential work

but the projects SOM gets are like

wyatt

are like intense

tiana

yeah

wyatt

damn, tiana!

tiana

yeah so it's big

wyatt

you're gonna be fucking famous!

tiana

nahhh

wyatt

but actually you like are though

tiana

i mean maybe!

hah, no it's just an internship

wyatt

so they must be paying you like huge--

tiana

wellll  
sorta  
usually you make like minimum wage

wyatt

noooo  
but they did the freedom tower!

tiana

only since i won this thing they're actually giving me a stipend  
two grand.

wyatt

hey at least you're hustling

tiana

but also they tried to stick me in interiors and i was like ummmmm no

wyatt

oh, is that bad?

tiana

i mean not if you fuck with interiors  
but i don't!  
every internship i've had, they always stick the women in interiors. like no matter what

wyatt

oh, that's messed up

tiana

yeah and like they *saw* my project. they saw the design i won for.  
so i was like, this ain't it. told 'em i wouldn't take the internship unless they moved me to  
the actual architecture department

wyatt

there you go!  
good for you, t. advocating for yourself--

wyatt's phone dings again. he pulls it out and reads.

tiana

sophie?

wyatt

(texting back)

yeah. she wants me to start on the veggies so  
yeah.

(texting back, absently reading it to himself as he types)

“great...idea...babe...”

wyatt hits send and gets off the couch. walks into the kitchen.

wyatt

keep going. i'm listening.

he moves to the fridge and starts taking out vegetables, puts them on  
the counter.

tiana

so sophie's a new one?

wyatt

(pretending not to hear)

what's that?

tiana

sophie is a new one?

wyatt

new girlfriend?

tiana comes over and sits at the breakfast bar that separates the living  
room and kitchen.

tiana

yeah.



wyatt  
no, we've been together for a little while now

tiana  
oh. cute.

wyatt  
yeah you're really gonna like her, i think.

tiana  
where'd y'all meet.

wyatt  
so in, um  
this is gonna sound ridiculous but in thailand?

tiana  
oh no way, she's thai?

wyatt rinses the vegetables in the sink over the following.

wyatt  
no no, she's white. she's also white.  
we were both over there teaching, actually  
it's this program that helps guide local kids through the process of getting into western  
colleges. you like, prepare them

tiana  
sounds like a wyatt job.

wyatt  
how's that

tiana  
ambitious. big ideas. save the world.

wyatt  
they're doing really great work

tiana

and so you met sophie and you hit it off then

wyatt

yeahyeah, she doesn't actually teach anymore but yeah we hit it off  
that's where we're going in a few weeks actually  
kinda bouncing around asia for a few months  
we had the whole thing planned before the covid shit hit, so now it's like, yesss finally.  
finally get to make it happen

tiana

so she's going with you.

wyatt

didn't i say that earlier?

tiana

when you were texting me you made it sound like a solo thing

wyatt

oh. nahhh.

wyatt starts chopping a few of the vegetables.

wyatt

it's actually kinda weird. her family is like *super* fucking rich  
which is  
yeah, weird. but i guess it does come in handy with stuff like this.

tiana

wait, you mean they're paying for you to go to thailand?

wyatt

well  
yeah i mean they're helping

tiana

ummm that's not weird, that's fucking dope.

wyatt

it is. but. yeah

there's just this weird dynamic in their family. like they're nice and all

but they also do this annoying thing where they're like willingly oblivious to their status.

like the mom is always talking about how broke they are

and i'm like ummm you have two houses nancy

like get real

tiana

damn and what'd she say?

wyatt

oh god no, i didn't actually say that

tiana

psh, you're scared

i would just go and say it to her

wyatt

yeah well

sorta tricky

tiana

i'd just say it.

wyatt

oh come on

tiana

i would!

wyatt

you would not.

tiana

you know i would!

wyatt

maybe i'll give you her number and we can find out

tiana

do it! see what happens.  
i heard about them houses, nancy!

wyatt

but sophie's cool.

tiana

so wait. does she *live* here.

wyatt

umm, yeah. can't you tell?

tiana

why would i be able to tell?

wyatt

the furniture and, like, the decor. it's sorta femme, yeah?

tiana

i guess i was just confused because earlier you said she was 'stopping by' for dinner.

wyatt

did i?

tiana

you did.

wyatt

hm. well. yeah she lives here. with me.

...

sorry.

tiana

why are you sorry.

wyatt

i don't

...know actually.

...

an awkward silence. wyatt continues to tend to the vegetables, avoiding eye contact as best he can.

tiana's phone PINGS with a text. she picks it up and reads. she gets another text. then another. PING PING PING.

she reads and laughs.

wyatt

that your friend?

tiana

it's, ahh

no. it's someone else.

wyatt

oh.

tiana texts back.

wyatt

wait so tell me about the design that you won the thing for the contest thing.

tiana hits send and drops her phone.

tiana

you really wanna know or are you just trying to get my attention?

wyatt

i wanna know! i do.

tiana

so there's this, um, 'we work' type space in baltimore. in an old school. like office space for start ups and whatever--

wyatt

ooo you see that apple plus show yet?

tiana

i don't have that one

wyatt

jared leto. *unrecognizable*.

tiana

so the place is like 'we work' but it's not 'we work'. still sorta corporate and shitty, they just copied the 'we work' idea. and it's in this neighborhood in baltimore that--

wyatt

waitwait

what part of baltimore?

tiana

uhhh, i think it's--

wyatt

know what they call the bad part of baltimore?

...

bad part of baltimore is called *baltimore*.

heh.

tiana

have you *been* to baltimore?

wyatt

oh come on it's a joke

tiana

mm hm

wyatt

like, crime *is* a problem in baltimore. it's okay to acknowledge that.

tiana

you're gonna tell the wrong joke to the wrong person one day.

wyatt pulls a pan out of the cupboard.

wyatt

no you're right, i shouldn't poke fun.

i actually read that while homicides in baltimore have been down 15 percent, the--

tiana

can i finish my story?

wyatt

yup, yes - my bad! i wanna hear this

wyatt turns on the oven, spreads his vegetables on the pan and puts them in the oven over the following.

tiana

former public school, now a bougie startup tech space thingy

wyatt

got it.

tiana

and everyone in the neighborhood is really upset because this used to be a public space that served the community, only now it's another building full of hipster carpenters and craft breweries

so *i* find this place and start doing some research.

turns out there's all this unused space in the school.

the hallways are like 20 feet wide. and they go on forever. it's completely under-utilized.

wyatt

hmm

tiana

so my proposal was to turn these hallways into a *public library*.

to let the public back in and make it a *shared* space.

the building already has the existing infrastructure capable of hosting library functions with just a few low-cost modifications to the over-sized corridors.

wyatt

damn, your grant-speak is on point!

tiana

i told you i won this bitch, didn't i?

the existing lockers are converted into bookshelves and built-in computer stations.

dead-end corridors become reading nooks.

my proposal had an employment center, job training, a community skill share

wyatt

amazing

tiana

plus, i looked and found funding. a new market tax credit program that offsets renovation costs for community oriented, public-private partnerships.

wyatt

holy shit!

so this is really coming together. they're actually going to do this!

tiana

no no, it was just a proposal for the competition.

wyatt

wait so they're not gonna build it?

tiana

nah. that's not how this works. so--

wyatt

but i thought you *won*.

tiana

i did. but it's a concept. i'm not actually being hired to renovate this building.

wyatt



nooooooo, that fucking sucks!

tiana

the organization that runs the competition has nothing to do with this building in baltimore. i found this place and built my concept *around* it.

wyatt

i think you should send them the plans!  
you worked so hard on this, you should really send it.

tiana

but they're not *actively* trying to renovate the place

wyatt

the tax credit thingy, you said

tiana

that was just supplemental for the proposal. i can't just randomly send these unsolicited plans for their business

wyatt

they need to see this! i can help if you--

tiana

that's not how it works.

wyatt

well i dunno, maybe it should be.  
sophie's always saying we need businesses and architects who create things cities actually *need*.

tiana

i know--

wyatt

partnerships that actually *serve our communities*

tiana

umm i know. *that's* the proposal.

wyatt

i mean *you get it*  
obviously  
*you* are the future here  
which is why  
i mean, if i were you, i'd be hella miffed about all this!

tiana

wyatt. what are you--  
this is a competition.  
for students.  
that i won.

wyatt

yeah but they're not even

tiana

and now i'm working at SOM for the summer. like--

wyatt

of course and  
which is so amazing  
and deserved  
but, i'm just so sick and tired of reading about these buildings that are supposed to be  
faux public slash communal spaces, but are *actually* just fucking commercial--

tiana

i know--

wyatt

fucking private, corporate blood-sucking

tiana

that's exactly what i'm--

wyatt

and they get all this money! they get all this cash from the city to build some open space  
art installation in their lobby that in reality serves *no one*

tiana

okay but hold up--

wyatt

like you go, and it sucks! there's literally *one* bench and like a million security guards

tiana

wyatt stop--!

wyatt

like so many security guards that even *i'm* uncomfortable - and i'm white!  
now imagine you're a person of color and these fucking contractors and architects are making bank acting like they know what your communities need when / they just--

tiana

wyatt, shut UPPPPPP!

...

wyatt

fuck. whoops

tiana

are you kidding me?

wyatt

shit, heh  
think i blacked out for a second there

tiana

no shit. like, i have thoughts on this too if you'd let me--

wyatt

speak.  
no you're right

tiana

jesus

wyatt

that was my bad.

i spend all day in a classroom with a bunch of eighth graders  
hard to switch it off sometimes

tiana

um, clearly

wyatt

like, what am i talking about?

i got the expert right here.

i got the expert in my apartment.

tiana

i mean god damn. if *anyone* else just said that shit to me...

wyatt

i know, i'm sorry. i was only

tiana

look, what you're saying is

yes, it's a problem. in certain places.

i mean if you're talking about some shitty high rise in the financial district

you would be correct in that that space is not shared.

that space is *never* gonna be shared - even if they get some grant to act like it is.

but listen, that's where *i* come in, okay?

that's where you're gonna see *me* change the game

wyatt

now we're talking!

you're the *future*, tiana. like i was saying

tiana

i'm gonna start out with projects like this 'we work' building, but expand those  
principles to a massive scale.

wyatt

yes, love this

tiana

i'm gonna specialize in projects that create communal spaces that actually *work*.  
because architecture can change the world.

wyatt

damn. you know i never

tiana

we can build farms on the roofs of urban grocery stores

wyatt

that sounds

tiana

build public transit systems that can safeguard against the next pandemic

wyatt

amazing, yes

tiana

and like, at some point we're gonna need to rebuild our cities to withstand the fucked up  
weather caused by global warming  
architecture can do that, if we actually commit and create a vision for it.

wyatt

completely

tiana

so...

that's why i get fired up when someone tries to call bullshit on my shit

wyatt

yes. and i wasn't--

yeah.

sorry. again.

tiana

i know you are.

wyatt looks down at his empty drink.

wyatt

how about another round  
you ready for another one?

tiana

yeah.

she hands him her glass. he takes it into the kitchen and does his thing.

wyatt

the bourbon's alright?

tiana

yeah it's good

wyatt

good

tiana

you didn't have some?

wyatt

i just opened it.

tiana

you should.

wyatt

nah i can't drink bourbon actually.

tiana

why not.

wyatt  
had a bad experience in college. ruined it for life.  
pretty sure someone gave me this as a gift.

tiana stands and leans against the breakfast bar.

tiana  
try it.

wyatt  
nah.

tiana  
it's good.

wyatt  
i'm sure. but i can't hardly even smell the stuff without--

tiana  
(turning away, playing with him)  
mm here i thought you were a man.

wyatt  
yeah yeah, not taking that bait. nice try though.

tiana  
what bait?

wyatt  
i don't go in for that gendered stuff. 'not a *man*, blah blah blah'  
i just don't drink bourbon, that's fine.

tiana  
of course it's fine, i was just saying.  
it's interesting...

...

wyatt  
(can't help himself)  
so i'm not man because i don't like bourbon?

tiana  
you didn't say you don't *like* it

wyatt  
i'm basically allergic. doesn't mean i'm not a man.

tiana  
yeah but you can't even take one little sip?

wyatt  
look...

tiana  
wyatt.

wyatt  
what.

tiana  
*drink the bourbon.*

tiana stares at him. a challenge.

wyatt considers...

...

he slowly moves to the sink and dumps his ice.

he rinses his glass. puts in a fresh ice cube and brings his glass back to the counter.

tiana takes the bottle of bourbon and pours wyatt a drink.

she slides the glass toward him.



he looks down at it. picks it up.

wyatt

one sip...

tiana

...

wyatt brings the glass to his mouth, takes a sip...

wyatt doubles over coughing violently.

wyatt

OOGH OOGH OOGH

tiana busts out laughing. wyatt rushes to the sink and dry heaves.

tiana

oh my goddddd

wyatt spits and tries not to puke in his own sink.

tiana

oh my god you were so serious!

wyatt

ughhhh! jesus christ.

tiana

's good though, right?

wyatt

i hate you. i hate you so much

tiana

ahhh haha! oh wow, i am *mean!*

wyatt

uggggghhhhhh

tiana

drink some water, honey

wyatt drinks from the faucet. tiana takes her drink and sips.

wyatt

hope you're happy.

tiana

oh i'm very happy. that just made my night.

wyatt stands from the sink and faces her.

wyatt

how do i look?

he looks like complete shit. water all over his shirt, hair a mess, eyes bloodshot.

tiana takes one look and starts cracking up.

wyatt

what, that bad? can i get a kiss?

wyatt chases tiana like he's gonna kiss her.

tiana runs away, laughing.

tiana

you better not! oh my god!

wyatt

what! can't be that bad, right?

tiana

one more step and imma throw hands! you saw my moves!

tiana puts up her fists, playfully - wyatt backs away.

come get it!  
tiana

i stand down, i stand down!  
wyatt

wyatt turns and faces a mirror on the wall, getting a look at himself.

tiana sits on the couch, looks through her phone.

holy shit, i look like ass.  
wyatt

hah! it's true tho.  
tiana

i guess i asked for it. mansplaining architecture--  
wyatt

to a damn *architect*.  
tiana

gonna switch my shirt real quick!  
wyatt

wyatt retreats to his bedroom.

you deserve worse!  
tiana

permission granted to just... slap me or something if i pop off like that again!  
wyatt  
(off-stage)

oh happily  
tiana

wyatt

it really *is* hard to turn off if you're a teacher!  
i'm serious

tiana

(skeptical)

mmm

wyatt

usually i'm pretty good at taking a step back  
creating space, especially for people of color  
we have to make the conscious choice to commit to it

tiana

you might want to work a little harder

wyatt

yeah well  
our debates get me going, i guess!

wyatt enters again wearing a "de la soul" t-shirt. he dries his face with  
a small hand towel.

wyatt

it's a process i'm trying to pass on  
this past christmas i was buying copies of *white fragility* by the box  
and like  
gifting them to everybody

tiana

what?

wyatt

and how to be an anti-racist  
super intense, but people  
*white* people need to read this stuff  
we gotta do the work

...



it's a really good book! informative.

tiana

i'm not talking about the book, i'm talking about putting it on the gram  
it's like, what's the point of white people buying white fragility if they can't brag about  
buying white fragility?

wyatt

noo

tiana

y'all need to be *seen*  
i bet you post pictures of your jordan peele ticket stubs too

wyatt thinks, walks to his bookshelf and pulls out a small ticket stub

he holds it up.

tiana

stopppp

wyatt

i really like his movies!

tiana gets up and takes the ticket stub, examines it

tiana

you  
you *saved* it?

wyatt

i mean...yeah! not like for a *reason*. i just  
i mean did you see 'us'?

tiana

oh my god. this was like four years ago!!

wyatt

it was really good!  
and the new trailer for nope looks  
i mean, another masterpiece for sure

tiana

i need to text zhaire.

wyatt

nahhh give it here

tiana

nope! you brought it out, now this is happening.

wyatt

ugh, tiana--

tiana

you're the one who kept the thing like it was a damn trophy!

wyatt

i just like his moviesss!

she holds up the ticket next to wyatt's face and gets ready to snap a pic.

tiana

come on wyatt. you gotta own this

wyatt

fiiiiine

he makes a goofy face and does the thumbs up or something

tiana

oh no, what is that?

wyatt

what, it's me owning it

tiana

pshhh you gotta do better  
i need some real accountability here!

he changes his expression somehow, more remorseful somehow?

tiana

oh my godd  
no wait lemme get a video. say a line from the movie

wyatt

uhh, i actually don't know any from 'us'  
i only know the 'get out' lines

tiana

so do a 'get out' line.

wyatt

(slight voice)

i'm t-s-motherfuckin' a. we handle shit--

tiana

no no no, stop  
you gotta do one of the white guy lines

wyatt

nahh

tiana

yes! say you would've voted for obama's third term

wyatt

come onn

tiana

say it! action

wyatt stiffens, then:



wyatt

i would'a voted for obama for a third term if i could.  
best president in my lifetime, hands down.

tiana

ah-ha!

she watches it on her phone, we can softly hear the recording.

tiana

oh my god, zhaire is gonna die. this is too much

wyatt

just don't post it anywhere, alright?  
i got an online reputation to uphold

tiana

of courrrse not

wyatt comes over and watches the clip

wyatt

that's pretty good.

she sends it.

he looks down at his ticket and crumples it in his hand.

tiana smiles, takes a healthy gulp of her drink and flops on the couch, a  
little drunk.

tiana's phone goes off. PING, PING.

wyatt

ugh, here we go. what'd he say...

she glances at her phone.

tiana

it's not zhaire.

wyatt

oh.

her phone continues to receive texts. PING, PING.

wyatt

your mom?

tiana

it's not my mom.

it's a boy.

wyatt

oh...

ricky?

tiana

it's this guy i met at SOM, actually. during my interview.

wyatt

whoa. um.

he's texting you right now?

tiana

we've sorta *been* texting. for the last few weeks.

wyatt

holy shit.

tiana

(smiling)

yeah.

wyatt

that's sorta

tiana

i know.

wyatt

that's sort of intense.  
you two haven't, like, met up or anything, right?

tiana

not since my last interview.  
we're just... talking  
i'm just having fun. i'm just doing my thing.

wyatt

right. right.  
i mean you should be careful with--

tiana

it's fine. he's one of the coordinators for the internship program.  
SOM has an education department that does community outreach and programming  
and stuff. they also run the internship program so chris was one of the people in my  
interview.

wyatt

chris.

tiana

i found him on instagram and we've sorta been

wyatt

so you reached out to *him*.

tiana

this is a good thing wyatt! i'm having fun.  
we just hit it off, and now we're talking. don't be all worried.

wyatt

i'm not! i'm just

tiana

he's really great. it's nice.

wyatt

that's... great.

tiana

annnnnd it sounds like he might come out tonight too.

wyatt

to the

tiana

to meet me and liz.

wyatt

wow. wow.

tiana

see this is why i wasn't gonna tell you!

wyatt

no, no!

i mean i'd probably keep things on the DL between you two  
the coordinator of the internship program, i mean

tiana

we are two adults, wyatt

wyatt

he could get in some serious trouble--

tiana

i know what i'm doing. i know exactly what i'm doing.

wyatt

no

i know you do.

and yeah

you should have fun while you're here.

tiana

exactly. that's exactly what i'm--

wyatt

what's he look like?

tiana

ahh

wyatt

like what's his deal?

tiana

he's tall, he's got

i dunno, he's like a tall, big nerdy boy. i love it.

we geek out about architecture and zombie movies.

wyatt

you got a pic?

tiana

*you wanna see a picture of him?*

wyatt shrugs.

wyatt

just to like

tiana

as long as you're not about to get all jealous!

wyatt

whaaat? nah. come on, pull him up.

tiana shuffles through her phone, pulls up a photo and shows it to wyatt.

wyatt

oh.

tiana

cute, right?

wyatt

yeah. yeah. super cute.

...

sorta looks like me!

tiana

pfff! he does not

wyatt

it's me in glasses!

tiana

ew stop.

always gotta insert yourself into the center of every

wyatt

i'm kidding, i'm kidding

tiana

yeahyeah

wyatt

chris...

that's great.

sorry if i

i was just surprised. tiana's all grown up!

tiana

you better believe it. done with these college boys.

tiana puts her phone away.

tiana

so you switched schools.

wyatt

i did. i did.

tiana

where's the new one.

wyatt

park slope.

tiana

so all that shit you were saying about getting a pass to move here because of the kids

wyatt

i didn't say it was a *pass*

tiana

but you left 'em.

wyatt

yeah. i did.

and i feel really horrible about it to be honest.

i can jump to a different school. that's a privilege. but these kids are stuck where they're at. and i wish i could have stayed, but i just couldn't afford it.

tiana

it's that bad?

wyatt

it really is. i was working a second job at the co-op just so i could teach. this new place isn't perfect, but it's a better fit.

tiana

charter school.

wyatt

yeah. so i get paid more. it's well ranked. smaller classes, better resources, blah blah blah

tiana

did this new school see your video that blew up?

wyatt

t, it did not blow up.

tiana

yes it did! 'what now' or  
what's it called?

wyatt

they're called 'now this'

tiana

now this! blew the fuck up

wyatt

it was stupid

tiana

well i saw it! actually, zhaire sent it to me

wyatt

zhaire saw it?

tiana

yes!

wyatt

hm. that's cool.

tiana

so tell me about 'now this'  
i wanna hear the story

wyatt

bahh

fine. 'now this' is like some random progressive media group that like they post these short videos of like campaign rallies and protests and stuff all over facebook and twitter. they're like constantly going viral with these videos.



tiana

come through, 'now this'!

wyatt

and they filmed us at this rally for this school we were protesting.  
stuyvesant high school. this like *elite* school that--  
the new york times just did a study where they like uncovered that out of 900 slots,  
these like coveted coveted spots for student admissions  
that only seven went to black students

...

seven! it's fucked up on so many levels

tiana

mmm

wyatt

and their excuses are always the same  
the way white people are always able to disguise their racism and dress it up as some  
other shit.

tiana

yes

wyatt

it's not about black and brown kids coming to the school, *of course not*.  
it's about the, the

tiana

the commute being too long for the kids

wyatt

yes!

i mean, seven kids! you can't deny that that's racism.

it's just a slap in the face.

so we held a rally just to be like, come on, this is complete bullshit  
there *needs* to be a way to help more students gain access to this school.  
and for whatever reason, i don't even know how they found out about it  
but 'now this' shows up and films it

tiana  
and you're the star

wyatt  
yeah, they interviewed me  
basically just like going off on the whole system

tiana  
i saw!  
i mean the video's like *just you*  
an interview with viral teacher man

wyatt  
yeah but it's also stupid. the cause is what matters. the protest.  
not this video. they're just looking for content.

tiana  
nahh, you get to flex though! raise awareness for this thing  
spread the word. you made some really good points

wyatt  
(bashful)  
yeeeah, thanks

tiana  
well i think it's great. plus now you're the star teacher of brooklyn

wyatt  
you making fun of me?

tiana  
what? no!  
the thing went crazy, didn't it?

wyatt  
they post a lot of videos

tiana

but this one got what

...

2.3 million views

wyatt

that's real.

tiana

yeah it's been weird honestly. like people have been recognizing me?

wyatt

see! i told you

tiana

a couple times. it's been kinda freaky. like, representing this whole thing.  
it feels like a whole mantle i was just not ready for.  
it's basically how i got my new job

wyatt

off the video?

tiana

fell into my lap at the *exact* perfect time.  
but even still  
i mean, this thing only blew up because i'm a white guy  
this like young, able-bodied attractive cis white man is interviewed so all the other white  
online activists are like, oh great here we go!  
retweet. i'm listening. i'm helping.

wyatt

you think you're attractive?

tiana

ah you know what i mean  
so after this thing started to blow up i took a step back and was like  
wait, why am i the one that got picked for this thing?

wyatt

why couldn't it be one of my black or brown friends who got to represent this movement?

and it's like oh yeah, internalized racism. fuck.

but here i am at the grocery store just trying to buy oat milk and some lady won't stop thanking me for being this like model white ally or whatever.

mm tiana

it's weird, right? wyatt

no, i just hate that term tiana

which wyatt

white ally tiana

oh interesting, how come wyatt

because they don't exist. tiana

...

you don't think white allies exist? wyatt

no tiana

like wyatt

at all?

tiana

like at all.

wyatt

interesting.  
to hear that.

...

wyatt

just so i understand  
you don't think being part of a protest trying to uplift marginalized students can be  
considered allyship?

tiana

um. no. i don't.

wyatt

okay. that's interesting.

wyatt walks toward the kitchen.

tiana

you making another drink?

wyatt

no i was gonna--  
i can! i mean i can  
i was just gonna grab the curtain thing to give you your uh  
space

tiana

alright.

...

wyatt

so i'll just go get it.  
cool... coolio.

wyatt exits.

tiana downs the rest of her drink, walks over to the kitchen and drops her glass in the sink.

she walks over to the couch and starts to unpack her clothes.

wyatt enters again with a tension rod and a long curtain.

he stops and stands in the kitchen.

wyatt

hey so  
that really was a darth vader thing  
earlier.

tiana

yeah

wyatt

i didn't mean for that to be weird.

tiana

darth vader is a black man

wyatt

oh. that's...*true*.  
i guess. i thought you hadn't seen it.

tiana

i know who james earl jones is, wyatt.

wyatt

yup. yes.

wyatt stands there for another moment and then walks into the

living room to set up the curtain.

tiana

you got room?

she slides over.

wyatt

all good! totally fine. don't even worry about it.  
you just do yo thing.

tiana continues to unpack her clothes.

wyatt stands on a chair and fumbles as he sets up the tension rod and curtain in silence.

this might take a full two minutes.

...

...

...

he cranks the tension rode tight, it creaks into place.

wyatt

think that's got it

wyatt gets off the chair and returns it to its spot.

he stands back and examines his work for a moment, hands on his hips.

...

wyatt

so i guess my understanding of a white ally is  
like, uh  
basically i'm just doing my best here, you know?

tiana

are you hearing how desperate you sound?

wyatt

no

i mean yes

i mean--i'm interested in what you're saying

it's important

and i'm not like offended

tiana

did i say something offensive?

wyatt

i just wanna play devil's advocate a bit

like, lightly *lightly* push back because i have friends

white friends who lead workshops

social justice, accomplice workshops

tiana

good for them

wyatt

i just know there are good white people out there who--

tiana

i'm not saying there aren't good white people

wyatt

nono! i know and

tiana

that's not what i'm saying.

i'm saying--

wyatt

also real quick! i just have to say that it's not your responsibility to explain this to me.

like, it's on me to do this work and it's just not your responsibility so



tiana

okay. thank you.

she goes back to unpacking.

wyatt

but  
if you could explain what you were saying about--

tiana

wyatt.

wyatt

i'm interested! only because i'm interested. i'm not trying to challenge you.  
this isn't one of our debates, i only wanna understand like  
where exactly your theory leaves me

tiana

um, nowhere. you're not involved.

wyatt

no but  
where it leaves me as in if i'm doing a good job or not.

tiana

you want me to tell you you're doing a good job?

wyatt

i just want to know what doing a good job *looks* like.

tiana

listen. i really don't wanna get into a whole  
what i mean is  
i don't owe you anything.  
at the end of the day i don't owe white people shit  
you might be a good guy and you might've watched some ava duvernay documentaries  
or have 'the root' bookmarked--

wyatt

hey, tiana. i've done more than--

tiana

*whatever* you've done  
if you want a thank you, you can go somewhere else.

wyatt

you think i want a thank you?

tiana

um yeah! actually i do  
you were just asking me to tell you what a good job you've

wyatt

i wanted to know what doing a good job *looks like*  
that's  
that's different.

tiana

different. cuz you're different, right?

wyatt

look i fully acknowledge i have blind spots  
everyone does, that's a reality. but on the whole i think i'm--

tiana

ughhhh! i'm so exhausted with white people trying to let me know they 'get it'  
with their hand out for an ally badge or some shit  
trying so damn hard to separate themselves from the *bad* white people  
i get it, you're a good white.  
now you want a fist bump and an invite to the cookout.  
you're so sure that your *role* in all this is necessary to me.  
and it's not. you're not even involved.  
so know that.

...

wyatt  
(visibly hurt)

heard.

tiana

listen, you asked

wyatt

no i know  
and  
it's good to like  
hear this  
it's interesting

tiana

good to hear you find it so interesting

wyatt

err,  
no. i mean  
challenging. like

...

tiana looks down at her phone, starts to text.

tiana  
(mostly to herself)

liz, where are you?

wyatt

but also  
i mean, to be fair  
you gotta admit  
or would you *agree* rather  
that historically, BIPOC progress has, like, been made with the  
(trying to choose his words carefully)  
assistance?

of white people

tiana

like which white people

wyatt

i mean i don't have like a *list* at the ready but a bunch of--  
just for the sake of this argument  
john brown. is one.

tiana

oooo you're gonna pull out john brown right now? gonna pull that card?

wyatt

well come on! that dude is an ally. you have to say that dude was an ally.

tiana

this is all i'm gonna say about it

wyatt

i mean, right? am i crazy here?

tiana

listen, the only *completely* hypothetical action white folks can take  
and this is hypothetical because it will never happen  
because white people will always uphold the idea of whiteness  
but the only way they can truly live up to the title of "ally"  
is for all white people  
*all* white people to unequivocally remove themselves from any and all places of power.

...

...

wyatt

are you mad at me??

tiana

what?

wyatt

i just feel like you're mad at me!

tiana

you asked and so i'm--!

wyatt

it felt like we were having fun but now it sorta feels like we're not having fun?

tiana

you were the one--!

wyatt

like some micro aggression slipped that really pissed you off

tiana

do i seem pissed off?

wyatt

i don't know! i can't even tell.

but all of sudden i'm this fucking asshole with all this power i won't give up and--

tiana

oh. my. god.

you asked! you brought up the white ally shit!

wyatt

i know! because i had honest questions and now you're like going off on me!

tiana

i am not--!

if i was going off on you, you'd know it.

you asked my fucking opinion because it was 'interesting' and so i fucking told it to you!

wyatt

well excuse me for *assuming* there was allyship that existed on an everyday, achievable level.

tiana

(overlapping, as she puts on her shoes)

i am not doing this.

wyatt

sacrifice that doesn't require me to, like, quit my job and be a hermit.

tiana grabs her back pack and starts texting on her phone.

tiana

you know what? i'm gonna meet up with my friend liz and--

wyatt

waitwait, did she text you back?

tiana

(heading for the door)

no, but you and your girlfriend--

wyatt

tiana, please do not leave if you don't even know where you're going--

tiana

y'all just enjoy your salmon and /

wyatt

(overlapping)

tiana!

tiana

i'll see you tomorrow.

tiana reaches for the door.

wyatt

look, are you pissed at me because i didn't kiss you earlier?

...

tiana

i'm sorry, *what?*

wyatt

earlier when we were dancing.

you like clearly wanted to kiss me and i shut you down and i guess maybe that's / why you're mad.

tiana

OH MY GOD!

wyatt

look, i'm just asking! i'm trying to figure this--

tiana

*YOU* are the one with the girlfriend!

wyatt

yeah which is why i didn't kiss you--

tiana

dancing with me in your living room

wyatt

because you *asked* me to! you were the one that wanted to slow dance!

tiana

oh shut the fuck up - playing the love and basketball soundtrack /

wyatt

(overlapping)

you told me you like that movie!

tiana

like you weren't trying to kiss me.

wyatt

sorry for trying to *cheer you up* after that subway creep--

tiana  
printing our prom photo - getting it fucking *framed!*

wyatt  
yeah, as a joke!

tiana turns back to the door, she fiddles with the locks trying to figure out how to open the door.

tiana  
you are insane right now  
i'm too tired to--

wyatt  
i'm honestly just trying to understand your theory here!

tiana  
deal with whatever problems you're trying to

wyatt  
because this is sorta surprising coming from you...

...

tiana turns and lets her backpack slide off her shoulder, she slings it onto the couch.

tiana  
coming from me.

wyatt  
(shrugging)  
sure

tiana  
and why's that.

wyatt



because you are one of the more privileged people i know.

tiana

i'm--!

(taken aback, regrouping)

okay, *pause*--

wyatt

and i don't think it's *that* outrageous of a statement.

tiana

not that outrageous of a--!

well you'll have to explain this shit to me because--

wyatt

look look!

obviously like

of course as a person of color you don't have access to privileges that i do.

tiana

wow

actually, i'm not about to have this / conversation with you right now--

wyatt

that's obvious. of course.

but also

i mean

you're *rich*.

tiana

in what world am i rich?

wyatt

well your mom is at least!

richer than my family was growing up

tiana

my mother raised two kids as a single parent in bum-fuck pa

wyatt

which is amazing and like so fucking difficult.  
like, i love her for that!  
buuuuut she also has a bomb-ass job and / makes bank

tiana

which what--

wyatt

she just made partner / you said!

tiana

--makes her a bad person??

wyatt

no! jesus christ, that is *not* what i'm saying here

tiana

then what *are* you / saying--??

wyatt

i'm saying that along with millions of other people, you *also* happen to be in a position where you're *benefiting* from--

tiana

you have not idea about "my position"  
i was / raised by a woman who--

wyatt

look, i'm just saying that you also enjoy certain privileges!  
i'm not saying you're a horrible person or whatever--

tiana

i worked my ass off for this, you have no idea--

wyatt

well i grew up with you so i think i have an *slight* idea--

tiana

let's say you have *no* fucking idea and leave it at that.  
 imagine for one second what it's like to be a young black woman in my field.  
 you know how many black kids there are at stuckeman?

wyatt

what's stuckeman

tiana

the architecture school at penn state. you wanna guess how many?

wyatt

okay, if i had to guess--

tiana

one! fucking one, wyatt! me!

wyatt

alright alright

tiana

you know how many of the other interns at SOM are black?

wyatt

i get it--

tiana

you don't get it wyatt! stop saying you get it! you don't get it!

wyatt

okay! jesus.

tiana

imagine going to college and studying what you love and never seeing any work by black architects.

none.

or architecture even *about* black people. *for* black people.

since the day i started i've been in an exclusively white space.

they think they're hiring me to design their buildings.

but i have a responsibility these other people don't have

i'm not just representing my community  
 i'm doing this to build *spaces* for my community  
 spaces that serve my community  
 i'm trying to change an entire body of knowledge, from the inside  
 can you understand that?

wyatt

yes, i hear you

tiana

well, it's more work than you could even realize.  
 i spend more energy every day proving myself and breaking down the ignorance  
 embedded in this work.  
 so don't tell me i have fucking privileges because my mom helped pay for school.

wyatt

okay, heard. but i think, in this current climate, there are some privileges that extend  
 beyond that.  
 like some new privileges

tiana

oh *new* privileges.

wyatt

like, privileges that are  
 ah  
 i mean everyone hates this word now, but *woke*  
 privileges in place to make things more equitable.

tiana

which is bad?

wyatt

no!! it's good!  
 it's a good thing  
 and you happen to be someone who is benefitting from that, which, like, *yes!*  
 i mean you get to be the face of your department now  
 when it comes time to pin a medal on a badass architecture student and send them off to  
 new york, *you* get to be that person!

...

it's clear to her now.

tiana

you think i won this internship because i'm black?

wyatt

i mean

it was probably a factor. sure.

but that's the reality now!

which, like, *good for you*.

tiana

(seething)

you know what?

tiana stands and walks to wyatt. she stands toe to toe with him.

wyatt looks a little uncomfortable, nervous.

suddenly tiana turns and races to the side table near wyatt's front door.

she picks up his keys and starts sifting through them.

tiana

gimme my key 'cause i'm done!

wyatt

hey, what the hell!

wyatt

would you put down my keys!

tiana

i'm gone. get me my copy because i am not staying here tonight.

wyatt

jesus. here.

wyatt takes the keys from her, looks through them.

tiana

i'll be back in five days after you're gone

wyatt

yeah, where are you gonna stay?

tiana

i got places! i can find a place!  
you think i need you and i don't!

wyatt

i don't know why you're so upset!!

tiana

i get passed over for an opportunity, it's because i'm not good enough

wyatt

this is just another debate, alright? it's nothing. we're talking.

wyatt moves to the kitchen. tiana trails him.

tiana

i *earn* something, you say it's affirmative action - reparations

wyatt

whoa i *never* said reparations, go easy

tiana

well i'm done talking!

tiana moves to the living room, she draws the curtain shut, shielding herself from wyatt.

tiana

get me my key so i can get the fuck out of here.

wyatt

(still searching)

yea? and where you gonna go??

tiana

...i'm spending the night with liz

wyatt

yeah well what if she never texts back?

tiana

just find my damn key!

wyatt

i just don't want you stuck out there! it's the middle of the night and this is the only roof you got.

tiana

the key, wyatt!

wyatt moves to a drawer in the kitchen and finds the extra key.

wyatt taps the key on the counter a few times.

wyatt

that's the key! that's the key! hear that?

tiana

yes i hear that.

wyatt

okay well that's your key. now we don't have to talk anymore.

he drops it on the counter.

tiana

good.

...

wyatt wanders into the kitchen.

tiana, overwhelmed, drops her things and slumps onto the couch.

she holds her head, tearing up.

wyatt takes the vegetables out of the oven and moves them around and puts them back in the oven.

he looks down at his bandaged hand. slowly, he pulls off the bandage and examines the damaged.

wyatt

...shit.

tiana, hearing wyatt and thinking this is reference to her, collects herself and gets off the couch. she continues to gather her things.

he wraps the hand back up with the bandage.

he looks up from his hand and spots tiana's bag sitting on the floor on his side of the curtain.

he thinks for a moment, then approaches the bag. he bends down and slowly unzips it, trying to remain as quiet as possible.

he opens the bag and reaches his hand in. begins to search.

tiana pulls on her jacket.

wyatt continues his search, deeper now, rooting through the bottom of her bag.

tiana stops and listens as wyatt searches.

softly, she gets up off the couch and approaches the curtain.

in one quick motion she pulls back the curtain, revealing wyatt knelt on the ground with half his arm inside her bag.

wyatt

tiana



whoa! hiii!

what in the HELL are you doing??!

wyatt

hey, sorry  
i didn't want to bother you

tiana

what are you--  
get your arm out of my bag!

she kicks at his hand, wyatt backs away.

she takes her bag off the floor, holds it away from him.

wyatt

i was looking for the, um  
the letter

tiana

what?

wyatt

the letter your wrote for me. for my school.

tiana

what the / fuck--

wyatt

no like i was just gonna grab it before you left. since you didn't wanna talk.

tiana

so you just go rooting around in my shit??

wyatt

i know you said you had it. i just wanted to

...

i didn't wanna bother you.

tiana reaches into a side pocket in her bag and slowly pulls out a white envelope.

wyatt's eyes light up.

wyatt

oh dope. there it is.

he puts his hand out.

tiana drops her bag on the floor. wyatt jumps.

tiana

what's this for again.

wyatt

i told you. it's for my school.

tiana

how 'bout you remind me.

wyatt

it's a profile on my character. a dumb yearbook thing

tiana

you're sneaking around in my bag for a yearbook thing?

wyatt

i didn't want to bother you--

tiana

what's it for.

(going to put it back in her bag)

or your can forget i wrote the thi--

wyatt

wait wait!

he sighs, exhausted.

wyatt

it's for the board. it's for a work thing i sorta  
screwed up.

tiana

(actually kind of intrigued now)

what happened.

wyatt holds his hand out again, takes a step.

wyatt

if you could just--

tiana

stay over there. tell me what you fucked up.

wyatt

it's stupid. it's incredibly stupid.

tiana

tell me.

wyatt puts his hand down, backs off

wyatt

i'm gonna say it and you're gonna laugh.

but

you can't tell anyone.

i said something kinda bad

by accident

so last week i was about to start our final unit for the year

in my pre-cal class, which is like my gifted class

it was a lesson on the calculation of angles of depression and elevation

(going to explain what that is)

which is like

(waving it off)

i mean whatever, not important--

tiana

i know what it is. i'm an architect.

wyatt

right. duh.

so i'm in the teacher's lounge before class

the teacher's lounge is just this small depressing room where we eat our lunch.

if we're not on lunch duty.

so i'm there eating and preparing for the lesson and i have this *idea*

for my class and for mr. friedland.

mr. friedland is this teacher that everyone is like obsessed with. all my kids are at least.

he's like this old hippy that everyone thinks is hilarious.

just a few years away from retirement so he's like fuck it! about everything.

he's always game, always being goofy in the kid's instagram stories or whatever.

so anyway, the other day he's in the lounge too. eating.

and we're sorta buddies, not like super close but we're fine

and so i get this idea to take a picture with him, like demonstrating the angles.

but sort of like as a meme thing with this crazy teacher

'mr. friedland calculates angles of depression too' or something

so i tell him the idea and he's like sure great, like he loves this shit.

and there are a few other teachers there that are like

what are you doing? i wanna be in it!

so, fine. now there's like four or five teachers

and i stick mr. friedland in the middle and tell 'em all to put their arms at angles

you know

demonstrating the depression and elevation

and it's kind of funny

wyatt demonstrates, he moves his arm up and down at an angle.

wyatt

and so i go to take the picture and friedland's arm is up like this

and i go

...

i go: okay everyone, say heil hitler.

...

*what.* tiana

it was a joke! i meant it as a joke  
it completely slipped and wyatt

wyatt tiana

i in no way meant for it to--  
it was a joke about / his arm! wyatt

wyatt, that's tiana

fucked up, i know wyatt

i was gonna say typical!  
you think you can get away with saying any damn shit! tiana

that's not what i was-- wyatt

telling jokes at the wrong time  
i told you! tiana

i know wyatt

always pushing  
i said this tiana

wyatt

i--

look if i could go back, i would!

tiana

and i know you thought they'd all laugh  
laugh at wyatt's fucked up joke

wyatt

i mean they did! *someone* laughed...

tiana

thought they'd let it slide because wyatt doesn't mean any harm  
wyatt's a good guy

wyatt

look! i think it was clear, at first, that it was a joke  
that i said something off the cuff.

an off color comment that

yeah

yeah i don't know really

but then i apologized

like immediately

over and over, i was so embarrassed

but uh

they

later

someone brought it to the ah

they brought the incident to the administration

and so they opened an investigation

into the incident

tiana

you mean *into you*

wyatt

well

yeah

which i'm fine with!

i agree with the, um, steps they're taking

one hundred percent  
 because like where we're at culturally right now  
 it's just really important to dot the i's and make sure everything is  
 whatever  
 so i'm fine with it really

tiana

wyatt this is like  
*what?*  
 i mean what did you think was gonna happen?

wyatt

i know, alright? i wasn't thinking  
 so  
 so anyway, with the investigation  
 i mean i'm still the new guy there  
 this has just been my first year at this new school  
 so if i lose this job under these circumstances  
 it's like  
 it would be really bad

tiana

uh no shit

wyatt

not just for this job, but for my future  
 so that's why i need your help

tiana

my help

wyatt

that's why i need your letter

tiana

oh fuck no  
 this has nothing to do with me

wyatt

tiana, please. would you just hear me out?

tiana

you can settle your own damn shit

wyatt

it's the least you can do, i mean i'm letting you stay in my home rent free for the entire summer--

tiana

because you *asked me* to house sit while you're--

wyatt

and look i'm happy to do it!

i offered because we're friends and we go way back

and, like, when a friend needs something, you go to bat for them  
don't you?

and so right now i'm just asking you to hear me out  
just listen, please

there's a board

this new school is a charter school, so these kinds of things are all up to the board  
this committee

so what i was hoping

was that you would be willing to go to bat for *me*

and reach out to them and give them this letter

that you got right there

in defense of my character...

tiana

did you ever think i might want to *know* what this fucking letter was for??

wyatt

i--

yes. of course.

look, i'm fucking embarrassed to be honest. and i really need your help right now.

...

tiana



then why'd you ask *me*

wyatt

because we're old friends.

tiana

you got other friends. go ask zhaire.

wyatt

i mean...

come on, he lives with his mom and works at the chili's in fucking pottstown

tiana

that's my brother, asshole!

wyatt

not like that's a bad thing! i just mean that the board would be like, what? who?

tiana

oh my god.

wyatt

no like--

look, honestly?

i don't want anyone else to know about this. and i know i can trust you.

right?

tiana

...

wyatt

also, you're a super impressive, major fucking badass who really *is* gonna be a famous architect one day - for real - who also happens to have known me for a really long time. you're like my coolest, oldest friend.

and

and you're someone who can tell them that i'm a standup guy

who is kind and deliberate and respectful

and that i don't

that i don't *hate* people

tiana turns to wyatt.

tiana

so. you want them to get a letter from your black friend.

wyatt

it's not like that,  
exactly

tiana

mmm it is though

wyatt

t, come on

tiana

you're gonna ask your black friend to write you a letter and not even tell her what it's for

wyatt

okay but i just told you!  
you're still holding the letter, it's still your choice.

tiana

oh i *know* it's my choice

wyatt

but you understand why i need you--

tiana

not really! this doesn't even make sense  
you say some anti-semitic shit and then get your black friend to cover for you?

wyatt

it wasn't anti-semitic--

tiana

you said heil hitler!

wyatt

IT WAS A JOKE! IT WAS A JOKE!

tiana, be reasonable! haven't i earned some fucking points here?

haven't i earned this friendship?

i can't believe you'd make me sacrifice /

tiana

(overlapping)

i'm not making you do anything!

wyatt

my entire career because of one little slip up!

tiana

how come you can't just say it was wrong? like, just say it was wrong wyatt.

wyatt

tiana, i'm not--!

(he breathes, takes a softer tone)

look, i'm not asking you to *lie*.

i'm asking you to hand me this stupid fucking letter that says what?

it says what you know about me.

that i'm a good guy!

i'm one of good ones!

tiana

and who told you that?

tiana sits back on the couch.

seeing that he's getting nowhere, wyatt moves to the window, exhausted.

with his back turned, tiana looks down and notices the camcorder from earlier, its red light still glowing -- on since wyatt hit record during their dancing earlier

she clocks this, and moves her knees slightly to the lens's view of the room is unobstructed

wyatt takes a deep breath, having come to some decision and turns to tiana

look. i can pay you.

wyatt

you're gonna pay for my letter.

tiana

if that's what it takes.

wyatt

for a piece of paper with my name on it.

tiana

any tool can be a weapon. it just depends on how you hold it.

wyatt

and this letter is your weapon.

tiana

against the board? sure.

wyatt

wow.

tiana

but not against you.  
think of the money as a grant. for your internship.

wyatt

tiana considers.

how much?

tiana

...how's fifteen hundred bucks sound?

wyatt

tiana

sounds cheap.

wyatt

tiana. do me a fucking favor here. i'm a charter school teacher, i'm not exactly flush with cash. and you already wrote the thing!

fifteen hundred on top of the two grand will get you through the summer. you'll be set.

tiana

you think thirty five hundred in new york makes me set?

wyatt

alright, fine. so what would it take.

...

tiana

ten thousand dollars.

...

wyatt

okay.

tiana

you're gonna pay me ten grand for this thing?

wyatt

sure. you can set out on your own. get out from under your mom. maybe if things go right at SOM, they offer you a job, you can stay. use this to get your own place. how dope would that be? this can be the start of something.

tiana

and what about me and you.

wyatt

uh, well...

you'd never have to see me again.

tiana  
that's it then.

wyatt  
i mean... yeah.

tiana  
this letter is more important to you than i am?

wyatt  
i wish it wasn't like this.  
but this is my livelihood we're talking about here, tiana.

tiana  
where's the money.

wyatt  
i can-- get it for you. if you just hand over the letter, i'll have sophie write a check as soon as she gets here.

...  
ten grand. *tonight*.

tiana stands, walks to wyatt.

he holds his hand out for the letter.

tiana rips the letter in half. mayhem ensues.

wyatt  
what the fuck??

tiana  
tell you what we're gonna do!

wyatt  
you tear up my letter because i'm cheap?!

tiana  
i tore it up because you're a piece of shit

this is what we're gonna do--

wyatt

tiana!

tiana

you're gonna fix all this shit without my letter.  
because you're gonna go in tomorrow and own this

wyatt

yeah, how?

tiana

you're gonna resign!

wyatt

uh, i'm sorry?

tiana

i said you're gonna go in tomorrow and quit.  
*that's* how you solve this shit and you know it

wyatt

look i know you think you're funny but--

tiana

oh i am *dead ass* right now. does it look like i'm joking?  
this is your chance.

wyatt

tiana i'm not--

tiana

you get to finally be an ally! step down. step aside.

wyatt

look, i *am* a fucking ally - which is why i need you to--

tiana

you get to give up all that power, wyatt.

wyatt

that was *your* definition for this shit--

tiana

be your boy john browne! like you always wanted

wyatt

i never--  
this is just more fucking bait!

tiana

bait?!

wyatt

yes, bait. for people like me.

tiana

oh and who the fuck are you?

wyatt

it's bait for good white people trying to do their best to--

tiana

this is your best, huh?

wyatt

i know what a white ally is because i *am one!*  
we exist and *i'm the proof!*

tiana

you talk a lot about wanting to create space--

wyatt

i *do* create space for black and-- for BIPOC individ--

tiana

you talk a lot about that nagging *guilt* you feel for getting all this credit.



didn't you say that?

wyatt

i--

tiana

didn't you??

wyatt

i--

yes.

tiana

well then this is it! create that fucking space wyatt!

wyatt

if you'd fucking listen to me! i'm not stepping aside because--

tiana

so after you resign, you go on camera

wyatt

i didn't do anything *wrong!* these are just words, they're not *action--*

tiana

you go on 'now this' again--

wyatt

i don't have to listen to this.

tiana

and you own up to what you did.

wyatt

stop--!

tiana

you tell everyone who this model white ally really is!

with a sudden fury:

wyatt

*fucking--NO!!*

...

wyatt collects himself, adjusts his collar.

wyatt

i'm sorry, *no*.

...

wyatt

i'm a good guy. alright?

tiana

hah.

...

wyatt

now look. i'm done playing around about this shit.  
if you don't write me that fucking letter i'm going to--

tiana

fine, let's stop playin then

tiana moves to the table and picks up the camcorder that's been sitting there the whole time. she points it at wyatt.

wyatt

what, are you gonna film me?

tiana

no no no

i've *been* filming you, wyatt.

don't you remember flipping this thing on while we were dancing?



tiana

ah shit!

the camera falls out of her hand.

wyatt dives onto the floor and grabs it.

wyatt

YAHH

he stands up, holding the camera, breathing heavily.

tiana backs away, keeping her distance.

wyatt starts hitting buttons, trying to erase the footage.

wyatt

alright, how's this fucking thing work--

instead of erasing the footage, wyatt accidentally plays back his words.

softly we can hear the recording of "i said something kinda bad. by accident."

wyatt

shit, shut up

it keeps playing.

wyatt

SHUT UP!

he can't figure it out.

he grabs hold of the flip-out screen and tries to rip it off.

it doesn't budge.

he grabs the viewfinder and tries that but it also won't move.

it's like the unbreakable camera.

wyatt

fuckin thing is like the unbreakable camera!

he smashes it on the coffee table. once. twice.

he examines the damage he's caused: basically none.

wyatt

what the fuck??

he smashes the camera down again and again.

the camera remains intact.

wyatt has an idea. he runs back into his bedroom and returns instantly wielding a wooden baseball bat.

tiana sees it and bolts to the far corner.

tiana

wyatt, jesus christ!

he lifts the baseball bat high about his head, above the camcorder sitting on the coffee table.

at this very moment, the front door to the apartment swings open and wyatt's girlfriend sophie enters, holding a bag of groceries.

sophie takes a few steps forward, looking at the scene in horror.

everyone stands still.

...

wyatt

honey! hi.  
this is--  
this isn't what it looks like...  
tiana?  
tell her

tiana looks at wyatt. then at sophie. takes in the scene. then she glances down at her bag.

she takes her suitcase in her hands

tiana  
(calmly)

sophie?  
i got a lesson for you.  
any tool can be a weapon, it just depends on how you hold it.

she strolls past wyatt.

as she gets to the coffee table she coolly nabs the camcorder sitting there.

tiana  
sorry to dip, but i got a date with 'now this'  
you heard of them sophie?

sophie

...

tiana  
someone told me they're always looking for content. peace.

with that, she slips out the front door of the apartment.

wyatt stands there frozen. sophie's mouth agape.

wyatt

i can explain.

sophie drops the groceries on the ground.

sophie

what. the fuck.

they stare at each other for a moment.

then wyatt starts to weep, the flood gates opening.

sophie

wyatt!

she rushes to him. wyatt collapses onto the couch. head in hands.

sophie sits next to him.

wyatt

i'm so confused. i'm so confused.

sophie

shhhhh wyatt, what happened? tell me what happened.

wyatt

i don't even know! i can't, i can't--

he weeps. sophie rubs his back.

sophie

what happened?

wyatt

she was just like filming me! in secret!  
trying to get me to say something or get dirt or--

sophie

oh my god!

wyatt

and i tried telling her about my thing  
i tried asking for help with the mr. friedland thing and she just freaked out on me!

sophie

what'd she say?

wyatt

oh you mean besides basically calling me a racist?

sophie

wyatt. she called you *racist*??

wyatt

she's like a different person. it was really scary, honestly.  
it felt unsafe.

sophie bolts up from the couch.

sophie

that's it. i'm gonna call my dad, right now.

wyatt

no no, wait. don't.

sophie

we need to talk to a lawyer, wyatt!

wyatt

just wait. can you just  
can you just sit with me for a minute?

sophie sits back on the couch.

wyatt

let's just sit here. and just sit.

sophie rubs his back.

sophie



you're okay. deep breath, babe.

wyatt

i'm just trying to help a friend, you know? i'm just trying to be a good person.

sophie takes his hands.

sophie

you are! you are.

look, sometimes people like that can't recognize that we're trying to help.  
it's like beyond them.

wyatt

i dunno. i just worry that like  
what if she's right about me?

sophie

wyatt, look at me.

he does.

sophie

you are a caring, gentle, amazing person.

wyatt pulls his hands away, unconvinced.

sophie

you think the guy protesting outside stuyvesant high could be racist?  
you think the guy who mobilized teachers for marginalized students and got 2.1 million  
views while doing it could be bigoted??

wyatt

2.3 million views...

sophie

all those people can't be wrong.  
you're a good person wyatt.

he looks at her, starts to tear up again.

wyatt  
i honestly just don't know if that's true.

sophie wipes his tears away.

sophie  
come on. let's watch it.

sophie gets up from the couch and turns off some of the lights.

wyatt  
watch what.

sophie  
your video! the interview.

wyatt  
oh. honey i'm not really in the head space to--

sophie  
come on. i wanna see it.  
i want *you* to see it. let's see the kind of societal change my man is fighting for. in action!

wyatt  
bahh, i guess.

sophie turns off one more light. the mood is set.

she plops down on the couch next to him and pulls out her phone.

sophie  
this is the proof. this is the evidence.

she goes to hit play.

wyatt  
hey.  
thank you.

they kiss.

she turns her phone to the side and holds it for the two of them. softly we hear the 'now this' viral video wyatt was in at the rally.

we can hear wyatt being interviewed about creating a space for underprivileged students at elite high schools in new york.

sophie watches with pride as wyatt softly nods along to his own ideas, and to the video he's probably watched 500 times.

slowly, smoke starts to billow out of the oven. the forgotten vegetables are now on fire.

but sophie and wyatt don't move a muscle, or seem to even notice.

they're totally focused on the video as their apartment fills with smoke.

wyatt nods at a statement he's just made in the video.

wyatt

exactly. exactly.

sophie turns and looks at him.

sophie

see?

suddenly the fire alarm goes off. it blares. but these two are in another world. she softly rests her head on his shoulder. they watch.

the smoke surrounds them.

lights.

end of play.