

THE QUEST
(working title)

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FADE IN:

TITLE SEQUENCE

SUPERIMPOSE: REPUBLIC OF ZAMUDA

EXT. THE ROYAL PALACE - DAWN

A reddish African sun peers over the roof tops of the majestic royal palace. It is an amazing place, a vision so perfect it might have come from a fairy tale. This vast dwelling is surrounded by lavish grounds which seem to stretch forever.

ATOP THE POSH ROYAL BARN

The King's ROOSTER looks down on the kingdom, a regal haughty bird. He CROWS.

INSIDE THE ROYAL HENHOUSE

A plump HEN sits on a mink-lined nest in an ornately gilded cage. She lays an egg. It rolls down a gleaming brass chute onto a velvet pillow. A SERVANT wearing white gloves picks up the egg.

ANGLE TO REVEAL

Row upon row of identically splendid cages, each hen living in a fabulous condo of her own. If Liberace had kept chickens, this is how they would have lived.

INSIDE THE ROYAL KITCHEN

CLOSE ON AN EGG as a CHEF cracks it into a large mixing bowl. He whips the eggs with a platinum whisk studded with rubies. As we PULL BACK we see a dozen MORE CHEFS preparing a breakfast fit for a king.

IN THE ROYAL GARDENS

Dozens of crisply-uniformed SERVANTS pick big beautiful oranges from the royal trees.

A SERVANT GIRL picks luscious strawberries, snipping their stems with a pair of sterling scissors.

Another SERVANT examines blueberries under a magnifying glass tossing out the ones that aren't absolutely perfect.

IN THE ROYAL BAKERY

The BAKER removes a golden loaf of bread from the oven. Even the oven door is encrusted with jewels.

INSIDE THE ROYAL BARN

A SERVANT milks the royal DAIRY COW in an incredibly fancy stall decorated in a Laura Ashley country motif with dainty flowered wallpaper. In this kingdom, the barnyard animals live better than Candy Spelling.

BACK IN THE KITCHEN

CHEFS are chopping, dicing, slicing, conjuring up dozens of omelettes, pancakes and souffles.

IN THE ROYAL PIG PEN

A fat pink PIG wearing a ruffled bib sucks contentedly on a bottle of milk. He hasn't a care in the world. The door opens and a BUTCHER appears with a long shiny knife. The pig SQUEALS.

SMASH CUT TO:

THE KITCHEN

Fresh pork sausage SIZZLING on the royal grill.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - SAME TIME

A dozen tuxedoed MUSICIANS tiptoe silently down the hallway carrying oboes, violins and flutes. They wear special cushioned slippers so as not to make the slightest sound.

The CONDUCTOR opens a massive door and the musicians follow him into ...

THE PRINCE'S SLEEPING CHAMBER

It's about the size of the lobby of the Plaza Hotel, only more ornate. In the center of the room is a bed so enormous you could land a 747 on it. The glittering bed posts seem to have been carved out of a mountain of gold.

CLOSE ON PRINCE AKEEM (EDDIE)

He is sleeping peacefully in the middle of the immense bed, every hair in place, wearing luxurious silk pajamas.

THE CONDUCTOR

glances at a HUGE CLOCK as it ticks silently toward eight. Right on cue, he raises his baton and the musicians begin to PLAY a soothing, lilting MELODY.

PRINCE AKEEM

His eyelids flutter as he awakens for another day in paradise. He gets out of bed, but before he touches the floor, a SERVANT places silken slippers on his feet. Akeem stands up. As he stretches, ANOTHER SERVANT slips a brocaded silk robe over his royal shoulders.

MORE SERVANTS enter the room, including the head servant OJA.

SERVANTS

(in unison)

Good morning, Your Highness.

OJA

Happy birthday, Your Highness.

Akeem nods half-heartedly. He strolls across the room. As he goes, ROSE BEARERS move ahead of him, tossing petals in his path.

THE ROYAL VANITY

Akeem stares into the mirror. He opens his mouth. A servant brushes his teeth with a jeweled toothbrush. Akeem bends down, out of FRAME, to spit. He reappears. Another servant pats his lips dry with a little towel. Still another servant places a crystal cup to Akeem's lips. He sips some mouthwash and tilts his head back, opening his mouth. A servant gently jiggles Akeem's adam's apple. This is a man who doesn't even have to gargle for himself.

THE PRINCE'S BATHROOM

about the size of the Lincoln Memorial, but with more marble. Akeem soaks in the royal tub as two nubile MAIDENS wash him. A third Maiden pops her head up from under the water wearing a snorkel.

MAIDEN

The royal penis is clean, Your
Highness.

Akeem takes this in stride, because for him this is a daily ritual.

THE PRINCE'S DRESSING CHAMBER

Akeem sits on a throne, the center of a flurry of activity. Servants trim his moustache, do his nails, and carefully brush his princely uniform. A ROYAL HAIRDRESSER combs Akeem's "prince's lock", a long braid of hair which hangs from one side of his head.

Akeem wrinkles his nose as if he's about to sneeze. Instantly, a dozen silk handkerchief are thrust in front of him. But it's only a false alarm. Akeem waves them away, gets up and heads towards the bathroom. Half a dozen servants follow.

AKEEM

Just once, do you think I could
use the bathroom by myself?

The Servants LAUGH at the absurdity of the idea.

OJA

(respectfully)
Very amusing, sir.
(CLAPPING his hands)
Wipers!

Four Servants follow the Prince into the bathroom.

TITLES END

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Akeem strolls down the stately hallway preceded by Rose Bearers.

OJA

His majesty must be very excited.

AKEEM

Why is that, Oja?

OJA

Today is your twenty-first birthday.
Which means you meet your wife
today for the first time. This
does not excite you?

AKEEM

I'm curious. How can a man be excited about a woman he's never seen?

INT. IMPERIAL DINING ROOM

Massive. The table alone is the length of a tennis court. Seated at one end are Akeem's parents, KING Jaffe Joffer and QUEEN Aoleon. Their servants are doing everything for them, feeding them, wiping their mouths.

Seated at the middle of the table is GRANDFATHER, the former king who is at least 110 years old. He's pretty much catatonic, sustained by an elaborate life-support system of tubes stuck in his mouth and nose. Every so often two DOCTORS zap the old man with an electronic defibrillator, jolting him back into consciousness.

Akeem sits at the other end of the table, barely nibbling at his food.

KING

(whispering to the Queen)
He certainly is quiet this morning.

QUEEN

He looks sad.

The King presses an intercom button and talks into it. (this is a real long table)

KING

(into the intercom)
Is something troubling you, my son?

AKEEM

(into the intercom)
No, father.

KING

(into the intercom)
Son, please. I am more than the exalted ruler of this land and the master of all I survey. I am also a concerned dad. Now tell me your problem or I shall have you hung.

Akeem smiles at his father's joke.

AKEEM
 (into the intercom)
 Well, father ...
 (gets up)
 Just a minute.

Akeem starts walking to the other end of the table. Everyone is shocked.

QUEEN
 What's he doing?

KING
 It looks like he's coming down here to talk to me.
 (stopping him in his tracks)
 Wait right there, Akeem!
 (in a booming voice)
 Rose Bearers!

As Akeem walks, rose petals are thrown in his path. He passes by his grandfather who is momentarily revitalized. Akeem reaches his father.

KING (CONT'D)
 Now what is it, son?

AKEEM
 Well first of all it is things like that.

KING
 Like what?

AKEEM
 The rose petals.

QUEEN
 What's wrong, dear? You are the son of the King. Why should you not walk on the petals of roses?

AKEEM
 If there were no roses I'd still be son of the King.

KING
 Then it is solved.
 (blustering)
 From this day forth, anyone who throws roses at my son's feet will be hung!

The Rose Bearers quickly begin picking up the petals.

AKEEM

It's just not the roses, Father,
it's everything ... the pampering
... the dressing ... the feeding
... the bathing ...
(catching himself)
Actually, I rather like the bathing.

KING

So?

AKEEM

I'm 21 years old and I've never
so much as raised a fork to my
mouth. Just once I'd like to cook
for myself, clean for myself, wipe
my own backside. And why can't
I pick a wife for myself?

KING

Ahhh, so that's it. We have gone
to a great deal of trouble to pick
you out a very fine wife. Since
the day she was born she has been
taught to walk, and speak and think
like a queen.

AKEEM

(sitting down next to
his father)
But what if I don't love her?

KING

It's normal to feel anxiety about
meeting your queen.

QUEEN

I was terrified when I first met
your father.

KING

I must admit I was frightened too.

QUEEN

I was so nervous I became nauseous.
But over the years I have grown
to love your father very much.

KING

You see, son, there is a very fine
line between love and nausea.

AKEEM

I don't want her to love me because
of who I am. I want her to love
me because of what I am.

KING
And what are you?

AKEEM
A man who has never even tied his shoes.

KING
Wrong. You are a prince who has never tied his shoes. Believe me. I tied my own shoes once. It is an over-rated experience.

From out of nowhere, WHOOSH, a fencing sword lands with a THUD in the back of Akeem's chair, inches from his ear. Akeem springs up, pulling the sword from the chair, striking a defensive pose. He smiles at his attacker ...

SEMMI

the son of a general in the King's army. Semmi's role in life is to serve as the Prince's closest friend and constant companion.

SEMMI
(cheerfully)
Good morning!

KING
(mildly annoyed)
Semmi, how many times do I have to tell you. If you want to throw swords, throw them in the game room.

SEMMI
Sorry, Your Majesty.

Semmi approaches the Queen. Something about him reminds us of Eddie Haskell, especially the way he sucks up to the royal family.

SEMMI (CONT'D)
You look especially radiant today, Your Grace.

QUEEN
(onto his game)
Is that so, Semmi?

SEMMI
I was just remarking to my mom the other day, "what lovely skin the queen has!"

QUEEN

Isn't there somewhere you should be going?

SEMMI

Yes, I was just about to take young Akeem here for a fencing lesson. Have a nice day, Your Majesties.

As Semmi and Akeem pass the comatose Grandfather, Semmi shouts in the old man's ear.

SEMMI (CONT'D)

Boo!

Grandfather twitches, startled for an instant, then he floats back into the ozone layer.

INT. FENCING ROOM

Akeem and Semmi stand in the middle of the enormous room wearing fencing garb. They taunt each other, feinting with their swords.

SEMMI

Now, let's see if you can defend yourself. You sweat from a baboon's balls.

AKEEM

Your words cannot hurt me. You brown ring around a jackal's ass!

They SCREAM a WAR CRY and go at each other tooth and nail. Their fight is underscored by ORCHESTRA MUSIC.

Semmi thrusts in with an extremely menacing attack.

SEMMI

So you're saying that you can have a woman who will obey your every command, and you'd rather have one who has an opinion?

AKEEM

(blocking the attack masterfully)

Only dogs are to obey. A wife's opinion should be valued if you truly love each other.

Semmi swipes at Akeem's head three times. Akeem ducks.

SEMMI

Hippopotamus shit. You are heir
to a 20-billion-dollar throne.
Your wife need only have a beautiful
face, nice breasts and a firm
backside.

Akeem goes on the offensive, backing Semmi across the room.
They pass by an huge PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA which is
underscoring the fight with exhilarating MUSIC.

AKEEM

So you would share your bed and
fortune with a beautiful fool.

Semmi parries and returns with a thrust of his own.

SEMMI

That's the way it's always been
with men of power. It's tradition.

In three swift moves, Akeem deflects the attack, knocks the
sword out of Semmi's hand, and executes a spinning sweep-kick
which sends Semmi crashing butt-first to the floor.

AKEEM

(pointing his sword at
Semmi)

It's also tradition that times
must ... and always do change.

EXT. ROYAL POLO GROUNDS - DAY

CLOSE ON a small round ball. We HEAR the THUNDER of hooves.
WHACK.

Akeem, dressed in the royal polo uniform, sends the ball
flying. He and Semmi are taking on an entire team. Their
opponents make no effort to block the shot. Akeem scores.

ANGLE - SCOREBOARD

which reads "Prince 68, Servants 0".

The regal CROWD applauds politely.

SERVANT

Nice shot, Your Highness.

AKEEM

You let me score.
(to Semmi)

No one even tried to block me.
(more)

AKEEM (Cont'd)
(riding over to his father)
Everything in life is handed to me. Love. Victory. Of what value is a thing if it is not earned?

KING
Then it is solved.
(shouting)
The next man who lets my son score shall be dragged behind his horse.

Play resumes. The action is ferocious. Dust flies as the servants try madly to stop Akeem from scoring. Akeem gallantly fights his way through, hitting a shot which bounces off a servant's helmet and into the goal! The servant, who was knocked to the ground by the blow, gets up cringing in fear. Two GUARDS seize him.

AKEEM
Wait! No.

Akeem smiles at the servant, patting him on the back.

AKEEM (CONT'D)
Good hustle.

EXT. ROYAL LAKE - DUSK

The Prince and Semmi are fishing, rowed by SERVANTS in a splendid boat across a beautiful sun-dappled lake. ANOTHER SERVANT holds Akeem's fishing rod for him.

AKEEM
I desire a woman whose love I must earn. I want a wife, not another servant.

IN THE WATER BENEATH THE BOAT

Two SERVANTS hold their breath as they put a big beautiful rainbow trout onto the prince's hook.

BACK IN THE BOAT

SERVANT
I believe you've caught one, Your Highness.

The Servant reels in the fish.

EXT. ROYAL PALACE - NIGHT

Fireworks explode in the air as limos pull up in front of the palace. Klieg lights fill the sky. It's one helluva party. Everyone who is anyone in Zamuda is there. HAWKERS sell souvenirs to the Royal Event.

HAWKER
(holding up a t-shirt
with Akeem's face)
Heeeey! Get your Royal Engagement
T-Shirt!

INT. PRINCE'S CHAMBER - SAME TIME

An officious TUTOR is going over the steps of the traditional dance of courtship.

TUTOR
(acting it out)
Make sure you press the ball of
her hand with your thumb and
forefinger. It is a sign of
dominance and control.

SEMMI
He knows. He knows. He's practiced
this dance for the past fifteen
years.

TUTOR
Semmi, this is the most important
day in the Prince's life. In a
few moments he will meet his future
bride. He must be perfect for
his Princess.

AKEEM
Why? What difference does it
make?

INT. ROYAL BALLROOM - NIGHT

The ball of balls is in full swing. The King and Queen are seated on their thrones. Akeem stands next to them, looking extremely dapper in his courtship attire. Standing behind him is his best man, Semmi. A long procession of DIGNITARIES present engagement gifts (gold, diamond-studded Cusinarts, toaster ovens covered with jewels).

We HEAR three tremendous GONGS. All the guests return to their seats. A MAN wearing military attire bows before the royal family.

MILITARY MAN

Your Majesty, I am Colonel Izzi.
Today with your blessing, I offer
my daughter to your son.

KING

My blessing is granted. Let the
courtship commence!

TRUMPETERS sound a majestic FANFARE.

Akeem's eyes are fixed on the massive double doors in nervous anticipation. They open. Akeem swallows as a WOMAN carrying a nosegay of flowers walks into the room. In a word, she's a beast, at least 300 pounds. She approaches the royal family.

AKEEM

(under his breath in
agony)

Oh, my god.

Colonel Izzi beams with pride.

FAT WOMAN

(lifting her veil to
reveal a most
unattractive toothy
smile)

Greetings, great prince.

Akeem looks ill. TRUMPET FANFARE.

FAT WOMAN (CONT'D)

Presenting
(DRUM ROLL)
... Miss Imani Izzi!

The Princess-to-be enters. Akeem is captivated by her beauty. She has long black hair, her skin the color of caramel. Throughout the crowd we hear "oohs and ahhs". Imani's eyes are seductive and as black as coal. She smiles and it seems as if the room brightens.

She curtsies to the Prince. Akeem bows. They begin to dance, a dance they have rehearsed since childhood, a ceremonial dance that all the kings have performed as far back as Akeem's history teaches. It is a waltz. They are a study of perfection as Akeem sweeps her around the ballroom.

Throughout the hall the guests are enchanted by the beauty and physical chemistry they exude. The Tutor wipes a tear from his eye. The King looks on approvingly. The Fat Woman who made the announcement stares at Semmi, breathing heavily.

The TEMPO of the MUSIC picks up, segueing into a Cole Porterish beat. Akeem and Imani glide in perfect unison across the floor, performing intricate dance steps. Just like Fred and Ginger. She spins out of Akeem's arms. Akeem steps lightly onto the backs of chairs, riding them gracefully to the floor.

The TEMPO quickens. Imani springs to the top of a white grand piano. Akeem joins her. They leap fluidly from the top of one piano to another, to another, to another. They bound back onto the dance floor.

The MUSIC shifts into a rhythmical DRUM solo. Imani spins her long black hair like Cyd Charisse. Akeem joins her, whirling his prince's lock.

Imani breaks away and does an amazing pirouette, spinning faster and faster, her hair flying, until she becomes a blur.

Akeem dances right up the wall and onto the ceiling, defying gravity a la' Fred Astaire in Royal Wedding. Beneath him, Imani has reached warp speed.

Akeem dances back down the wall and onto the floor. Imani finally stops spinning. Her shoes are smoking.

She and Akeem rush into one another's arms, performing a sensual Apache dance. It comes to a dramatic end with Akeem on his knees, holding her hand in his. The moment has come for him to pop the question. There is a long pause.

AKEEM

(to Imani)

Can I uh ... talk to you alone
for a moment?

(to the crowd)

Excuse us.

The Crowd buzzes in nervous disbelief.

INT. ANTEROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Akeem and Imani are alone.

IMANI

Am I not all you dreamed I would
be?

AKEEM

You're fine ... beautiful ... I
just wanted to speak to you. After
all, we are to be married. So
... tell me about yourself.

IMANI

Ever since I was born I've been trained to serve you

AKEEM

No, I know that. I want to know about you. What do you like to do?

IMANI

Whatever you like to do.

AKEEM

What kind of music do you like?

IMANI

Whatever kind of music you like.

AKEEM

(losing it)

I know what I like. I want to know what you like.

(calming down)

Listen, I have a command. From now on I want you to stop trying to please me. Do not obey me. Understand?

(she nods)

Now tell me, what is your favorite food?

Imani doesn't answer.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

Why won't you answer me?

(still no response)

Answer me!

IMANI

You told me not to obey you, so I could not answer.

AKEEM

(exasperated)

Are you telling me you'll do anything I say?!

IMANI

Yes, your highness.

AKEEM

Bark like a dog.

IMANI

Arf! Arf! Arf!

AKEEM

A big dog.

IMANI

Woof! Woof!

AKEEM

Hop on one leg.

(she hops)

Now make a sound like an orangutan!

IMANI

(still hopping)

I don't know what they sound like.

AKEEM

Improvise.

Imani starts flapping her lips, making CHIMP SOUNDS, hopping on one foot. The King enters.

KING

Ah! I see the two of you are getting along.

AKEEM

Will you excuse us, Imani?

Imani hops out of the room.

KING

Fine girl, isn't she? I told you there was nothing to be worried about.

AKEEM

Father, about this wedding ...

The Tutor pokes his head into the room.

TUTOR

The guests are waiting, Your Majesty.

KING

I don't care. Let them stand on their heads. I am talking to my son.

(to Akeem)

Come, let's go for a stroll.

EXT. PALACE GARDEN - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Akeem and his father as they move through the lush gardens.

KING (CONT'D)

Time does seem to fly fast, my son. It seems like only yesterday I ordered your first diaper changed.

We PULL BACK to reveal that Akeem and his father are sitting in velvet chairs atop a fancy litter, carried on the shoulders of four SERVANTS.

KING (CONT'D)

And now you are a man who is about to be married. She is very beautiful. She will give you much pleasure, don't you think?

AKEEM

But I'm not sure if I am ready ...

KING

(putting it together)

Oh ... I see. Son, I know we never had a talk about this. I always assumed you had sex with your bathers. I know I do.

AKEEM

It's not that. It's just that I am 21 and I've never been outside the confines of this estate. I have yet to experience what the outside world has to offer.

KING

Ah, so you want to sow your royal oats!

AKEEM

That's not ...

KING

You are right, my son. Get out. See the world. Enjoy yourself. Fulfill every erotic desire. And in forty days you will come back and marry Imani.

AKEEM

But, father ...

KING

It is settled.

CUT TO:

ANTE CHAMBER OF THE ROYAL BALLROOM

Akeem and the King stride into ...

THE HUGE BALLROOM

KING

May I have your attention, please!

ANGLE TO REVEAL --

Everyone is standing on their heads, just as the King ordered.

KING (CONT'D)

The wedding will proceed in forty days! You may go home now! Goodnight!

As the King walks out the door, we hear the O.S. SOUND of ONE HUNDRED BODIES CRASHING TO THE FLOOR. He walks into ...

THE HALLWAY

KING (CONT'D)

(to a Servant)

Prepare the royal baggage! My son is going on a trip!

SERVANT

Prepare the royal baggage!

QUICK PACKING MONTAGE:

Servants are packing Akeem's belongings into a huge set of matched royal luggage.

One fills a trunk with fine robes.

Another fills a suitcase with socks.

Others pack the prince's underwear.

The last servant fills a huge suitcase with condoms, box after box, at least two-thousand royal rubbers.

HALLWAY OF THE PALACE

Akeem and Semmi are walking hurriedly down the hallway.

SEMMI

This trip is an excellent idea.
Forty days of fornication!

Akeem stops and looks around to make sure no one is listening.

AKEEM

Semmi, I have something else in
mind. Tell no one of this. I
intend to find a bride.

SEMMI

What is wrong with the one you
have now? When you saw her, tell
me you did not want to rip her
clothes off right then and there.

AKEEM

But I want a woman who will arouse
my intellect as well as my loins.

SEMMI

Where are you going to find such
a woman?

AKEEM

In America.

SEMMI

(clapping his hands
excitedly)

Yes!

They enter the library and open a map of the United States.

SEMMI (CONT'D)

The land is so big. The choices
so infinite. Where shall we go?
Los Angeles or New York?

AKEEM

Let fate decide.
(taking out a coin)
Heads, New York. Tails, Los
Angeles.

Akeem flips the coin. It's heads. (Akeem's own princely
image is on the face of the coin.)

AKEEM (CONT'D)

Heads. We go to New York.

SEMMI

But where in New York can one find a woman of grace, elegance, taste and culture? A woman suitable for a King.

They look at a map of the five boroughs of New York. Akeem and Semmi smile. They have found the answer.

AKEEM

Queens!

EXT. SKY OVER NEW YORK - NIGHT

A 747 makes its approach toward JFK. Below, the Manhattan skyline is aglow with lights. It looks monumental, magical.

INT. JET - NIGHT

Akeem and Semmi are sitting in first class, Akeem is staring out the window at the city below. Semmi tries to look over his shoulder.

AKEEM

It's very big.

SEMMI

How big? Let me see.

Akeem lets him look.

SEMMI (CONT'D)

(awestruck)

Shit.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - NIGHT

Akeem and Semmi walk through the luggage area. As they go, TRAVELERS seem to step out of their way, amazed by their fine robes and regal bearing.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

Remember Semmi, no one here can know we are royalty. We must appear no different than the average man.

Trailing behind them is a procession of SKYCAPS pushing a row of luggage carts piled high with royal baggage.

Akeem and Semmi step ...

OUTSIDE THE TERMINAL

Akeem walks directly into the path of an oncoming taxi, raising his hand in a princely manner.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

Halt!

The taxi SCREECHES to a stop.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

(to the CABBIE)

Take us to Queens at once.

(taking out a huge wad
of money)

We will make it worth your while.

CABBIE

Okay. But I gotta charge you
extra for the bags.

AKEEM

Of course.

CABBIE

(pointing to the money)

Just gimme four or five of those.

Akeem gives him several hundred-dollar bills.

EXT. VAN WYCK EXPRESSWAY - NIGHT

The cab groans out of the airport, a moving mountain of luggage. Bags are hanging out the windows, bulging out of the trunk, lashed to the fenders, stacked in an eight-foot heap on the roof.

CABBIE (CONT'D)

You know who I had in the cab with
me the other day? Mary Wilson.
You know, the Supreme that got
the shaft. I took her from East
72nd to La Guardia. She told me
stories about Diana Ross that would
turn your stomach.

(beat)

You sure you want to go to Queens?
A coupla rich guys like you should
be in Manhattan, staying at the
Plaza or the Palace.

SEMMI

The Palace. That sounds good.
Take us there.

AKEEM

No, I want Queens. And we are not rich. We are ordinary African students.

CABBIE

(not buying it)

Whatever you say, pal. What part of Queens you want?

AKEEM

(proudly)

The most common part.

CABBIE

That's good. Cause if there's one thing Queens has got, it's common.

EXT. JACKSON HEIGHTS - NIGHT

A graffiti-covered train ROARS overhead on elevated tracks. We CRANE DOWN to reveal the cab, parked in front of a row of dilapidated buildings. The cabbie has stacked all the luggage on the sidewalk in front of a run-down tenement built over a barbershop. A sign says "Room For Rent. Daily. Weekly. Monthly".

CABBIE

This shitty enough for you?

AKEEM

Perfect.

The Cabbie checks the meter. It reads, "\$30".

CABBIE (CONT'D)

That'll be three hundred dollars.

AKEEM

But your meter says thirty.

CABBIE

It's after eight. There's a surcharge. You multiply by ten.

Akeem gives him the money. The cab pulls away. Akeem surveys his surroundings. Every kind of blight known to urban life is within walking distance. Akeem is filled with wonder.

AKEEM

Fascinating!

He sees a broken bottle lying in a gutter.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

Look, Semmi!

Akeem picks up a piece of glass, staring in amazement.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

(reverentially)

America is great indeed. Imagine
a country so free one can throw
glass on the street.

Akeem walks towards ...

THE TENEMENT

He rings the buzzer marked "landlord". The LANDLORD comes to the door, a balding black man who looks as every bit as nasty as the tenement. He scowls at them through a thick glass security door.

LANDLORD

What the fuck you want?

AKEEM

We desire a room.

LANDLORD

You better not be wastin' my time.
You got money?

Akeem shows him the wad of bills. The Landlord instantly changes his attitude.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)

(cheerfully)

Come on in, gentlemen.

Akeem and Semmi enter, leaving the stack of luggage behind them.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)

S'cuse me if I was brusque.
Sometimes we get boo-boos in here
without a dollar to their name.
But obviously you gentlemen came
in on another boat.

AKEEM

We seek meager accommodations.

LANDLORD

S'cuse me?

AKEEM

We require a room which is very poor.

LANDLORD

You saying you want a place that's fucked up?

AKEEM

In a manner of speaking.

LANDLORD

Well, you come to the right place. You can look all you want, but I guarantee you, you will never find a place more fucked up than this.

The landlord is telling the truth. The walls are covered with graffiti, the floors littered with refuse.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)

(bragging)

The whole fifth floor is nothing but junkies and whores. Come on, I'll show you.

As Akeem and Semmi walk up the stairs, we see that the sidewalk behind them is bare. The entire mountain of luggage is gone.

IN THE STAIRWELL

A DRUNK falls down the stairs past Akeem and Semmi.

LANDLORD

Hey, Stu! You know your rent is due, muthafucka. Don't be pullin' that fallin' down the stairs shit on me! You're conscious.

THE FIFTH FLOOR

It looks like the fifth floor of hell.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)

(proudly)

Here we are!

(pointing to a door)

Now, there's only one bathroom on this floor. You gotta share it.

The Landlord opens the bathroom door. It's filthy, flies everywhere.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)
We got a little bit of a fly problem. But you from Africa, you probably used to it.

He shuts the bathroom door.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)
Another thing, don't take the elevator. It's a deathtrap.

The Landlord walks to a door which is crisscrossed with yellow police tape. He rips it off.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)
Now this is the place I was telling you about. It's real fucked up. Got just one window facing a brick wall. Used to rent it to a blind man.

They enter ...

THE APARTMENT

Dark, desolate. The paint on the walls is peeling. The only window looks out at a brick wall which is bare except for the word "Pussy!" painted in big white letters.

On the floor is the chalked outline of a blind man with his seeing-eye dog lying beside him.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)
Damn shame what they did to that dog.

AKEEM
(enthused by the squalor)
We will take the room!

Semmi looks sick.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

A big RAT. He is in ...

THE APARTMENT

just inches from Semmi who is asleep on the floor. It is morning. Semmi opens his eyes. The rat is staring at him right in the eyes. Semmi leaps to his feet.

SEMMI
Akeem! Akeem!

Akeem is not in the room. Semmi bolts into ...

THE HALLWAY

banging on the bathroom door.

SEMMI (CONT'D)
Akeem! We must leave this place immediately.

Akeem opens the door, a towel around his waist, excited.

AKEEM
Out of the question. Never have I felt so liberated. Semmi, I just washed my penis for the first time. It was a most tactile experience.

SEMMI
But Akeem this place is so foul
...

AKEEM
I know! Isn't it wonderful?!

Akeem strides down the hall, opens a window and steps onto ...

THE FIRE ESCAPE

He gazes at the tenements across the alley.

AKEEM
Behold, Semmi ... life. Real life.
A thing we've been denied too long.

Through the windows of the tenement Akeem looks out upon a cacophonous cross section of urban decay. COUPLES fighting. MOTHERS yelling. KIDS shouting. Glass BREAKING. Loud LATIN MUSIC.

Akeem joyously shouts to the world, his arms outstretched.

AKEEM (CONT'D)
Good morning, neighbors!

OFF-SCREEN NEIGHBOR
Fuck you!

AKEEM
(deliriously happy)
Fuck you, too!

IN THE STAIRWELL - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Stu the drunk lies on the landing, wearing a royal African fez. Akeem and Semmi step over him and exit onto ...

THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The streets are full of PEOPLE of all races. This is a multi-ethnic neighborhood. A little BOY zips by on a skateboard wearing a silk robe. An ELDERLY WOMAN sports a \$2,000 dashiki. In fact, almost everyone seems to be wearing an article of extravagant African clothing.

SEMMI
I am beginning to suspect that these are the people who have taken our luggage.

A STREET HUSTLER (Eddie) approaches them.

HUSTLER
Want to buy some toothbrushes?

He opens his coat, displaying a collection of jeweled toothbrushes.

HUSTLER (CONT'D)
This is real fly personal hygiene equipment. Got a helluva hair dryer here, too. Check it out.

He pulls out a hair dryer studded with diamonds and rubies.

SEMMI
(angrily)
Thief!

AKEEM
Semmi, please.
(to the Hustler)
Excuse us, sir.

The Hustler leaves.

SEMMI

Those things belong to us.

AKEEM

We are well rid of these material things. Let others wear our princely robes. We are in New York. We must dress as New Yorkers.

EXT. DISCOUNT CLOTHING STORE - DAY

PEOPLE gawk at Akeem and Semmi as they stroll grandly out of the store dressed like the ultimate tourists. Akeem wears a N.Y. Met's shirts, a Yankee jacket and a big button that says "I Love NY". Semmi has on an Ed Koch "How am I doin?" t-shirt and a jacket plastered with big red apples.

SEMMI

I feel they are staring at us.

They stop and look at their reflections in a store window.

AKEEM

(pointing to his hair)
Perhaps it is my prince's lock.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

An old-style neighborhood barbershop where a group of old regular CUSTOMERS come to read newspapers, place bets and antagonize each other.

The head barber, a contentious old man named CLARENCE (Eddie), is cutting a YOUNG MAN'S hair while at the same time arguing with SWEETS, an old black man who is getting a trim in the next chair.

In the third chair is MORRIS, a sullen barber with a thin little Cab Calloway moustache. He is eating lunch, sopping corn bread in a plate of collard greens.

CLARENCE

You must be outta your damn mind!
Joe Louis is the baddest fighter
that ever lived ...

Akeem and Semmi enter.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

Be with you boys in a minute.
(more)

CLARENCE (Cont'd)

(back to Sweets)

He's badder than Cassius Clay.
He's badder than Sugar Ray. He's
badder than Mike Tyson. He's badder
than all of them. He whip all
their asses.

OLD JEWISH CUSTOMER (EDDIE)

What about Rocky Marciano?

CLARENCE

There we go. Every time we talk
about boxing some white man bring
up Rocky Marciano. Rocky Marciano
ain't shit.

OLD JEWISH CUSTOMER (EDDIE)

He beat Joe Louis' ass.

CLARENCE

Joe Louis was 75 years old! He
come out of retirement to get into
the ring with Rocky Marciano.
He was 75, 76 years old.

OLD JEWISH CUSTOMER (EDDIE)

You're crazy.

CLARENCE

Joe always lied about his age.
Frank Sinatra come inside this
shop, sat right here in this chair,
and I said, "Frank, you take care
of Joe. How old is he?" Frank
said "Between me and you, Joe is
137."

SWEETS

Oh, nigger, you don't know no Frank
Sinatra.

CLARENCE

Oh, muthafucka, come on then ...
(finishing the Young
Man's hair)
That'll be twenty-two dollars.

YOUNG MAN (EDDIE)

(fumbling for his wallet)

Oh ... wait\$22 ... wow ...oh
shit ... wow ... I left my wallet
... look, I'm gonna run and get
my wallet and get you your money.

CLARENCE

I tell you what. Before you go.
Here.

He cuts a big clump of the Young Man's hair and holds it up.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

When you bring your money your
hair be here.

The Young Man leaves. Clarence dusts off his chair with a whisk.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

Who's next?

Akeem gets into the chair.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

(examining the Prince's
lock)

Goddamn boy, is that a weave or
something? What you got there?

AKEEM

It is my natural hair. I have
been growing it since birth.

CLARENCE

What you put in there? What kind
of chemicals?

AKEEM

Nothing but juices and berries.

CLARENCE

Aw shit, nigger. That ain't nothin
but Ultra Perm. How you want it
cut?

AKEEM

Just make it nice and neat.

With one whack of the scissors, Clarence lops off the lock.

CLARENCE

That'll be \$22.

Akeem pays him. He studies himself in the mirror.

AKEEM

Semmi, tell me the truth. How
do I look?

SEMMI

I think it's time to find your queen.

CUT TO:

A SERIES OF QUICK SHOTS:

Akeem and Semmi out with several women on different nights in different bars.

CUT TO:

A STUCK-UP GIRL

(to Akeem)

I'm looking for a man with a BMW.

CUT TO:

A PRETENTIOUS GIRL

(to Semmi)

Right now I'm a receptionist, but I also design things ... like clothes ... cars ... airports.

CUT TO:

A BIG STANK WOMAN

(complaining loudly to Akeem)

That's the problem. I can't find a man that can satisfy me. Some guys'll go an hour, hour-and-a-half, and that's it! A man gotta put in overtime for me to get off!

CUT TO:

Two aggressive MUSCULAR GIRLS sitting at a table with Akeem and Semmi. Big gold medallions around their necks spell out their names, "FRESH PEACHES" and "SUGAR CUBE".

FRESH PEACHES

(smiling to show her gold teeth)

You know, a lot of men are put off by women that are into rap.

CUT TO:

A KINKY GIRL
 (to Akeem and Semmi)
 I'm into the group thing.

CUT TO:

A DITZY WOMAN with a hand puppet, cornering Akeem.

DITZY WOMAN
 (in a high-pitched "puppet
 voice")
 Oooo. I'd like to get in on with
 you, big guy.
 (scolding the puppet)
 Penelope, are you bothering this
 nice man?

She smiles sweetly at Akeem who grins feebly.

CUT TO:

Fresh Peaches and Sugar Cube going into their rap, twitching
 their arms, contorting their faces. Akeem and Semmi look
 trapped.

FRESH PEACHES & SUGAR CUBE:
 (rapping)
 Whoo, unh unh, hoo. Unh unh hoo,
 unh unh hoo!

CUT TO:

A pair of IDENTICAL TWINS wearing the same outfits. The
 twins seem to be leaning towards one another.

IDENTICAL TWIN
 (to Akeem and Semmi)
 This is the first date Theresa
 and I have gone on since the doctors
 separated us.

CUT TO:

A SEXY WOMAN
 (to Akeem)
 I've got a little secret.
 (whispering in his ear)
 I worship the devil.

CUT BACK TO:

Fresh Peaches up on the table, swinging her arms and hips while Sugar Cube does a huffing, puffing rhythm.

FRESH PEACHES

(rapping)

My name is Peaches And I'm the
best! All the D.J.'s Want to suck
my breasts!

SUGAR CUBE

Hoo, hah hah, hoo! Hoo, hah hah,
hoo!

Sugar Cube starts spinning on her head on top of the table. Akeem and Semmi sink into their chairs.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE TENEMENT - NIGHT

Akeem and Semmi walk back toward their apartment, dejected.

AKEEM

Is it my imagination or does every
woman in New York have a severe
emotional problem?

SEMMI

I don't think we will ever find
your queen.

They pass by the barber shop where Clarence (Eddie) is locking up for the night.

CLARENCE

Hey, what's up?

AKEEM

Where can one go to find a nice
woman?

CLARENCE

They ain't gonna fall in your lap.
You got to go out and look.

SEMMI

We've been to every bar in Queens.

CLARENCE

Well, that's where you screwed
up. If you wanta find something
nice you gotta go to a church ...
or the library. Or this thing
I'm going to tonight ...

(more)

CLARENCE (Cont'd)
 (pointing to a poster
 in the shop window)
 The Black Awareness Rally. That's
 where the real fine women are gonna
 be.

INT. YMCA, JACKSON HEIGHTS - NIGHT

A big banner stretched across the stage reads "WBLY ... 106.2
 FM. BLACK AWARENESS WEEK." A well-dressed CROWD representing
 a cross section of the community has gathered for the
 celebration.

On the stage a LOCAL DISC JOCKEY is surrounded by seven
 ATTRACTIVE GIRLS in swim suits.

DISC JOCKEY
 And remember, one of these lovely
 ladies will represent Jackson
 Heights in the Miss Black Awareness
 Competition. And now a very special
 treat. You all know him from his
 appearance as Joe the Policeman
 on the "What's Going Down" episode
 of That's My Momma. Please put
 your hands together for Jackson
 Height's own ... Mister Randy
 Watson.

RANDY WATSON (Eddie) enters. A bad entertainer in his late
 30's, bearded, with a paunch protruding from his robin's
 egg blue tuxedo. Randy looks like he never had a career
 and never will.

RANDY (EDDIE)
 Thank you, Bobby.
 (shifting into a low
 serious voice)
 When I told my little six-year-old
 girl that I was appearing at Black
 Awareness Week, she said, "Why?
 Black people know they're black."
 I said, "Honey, it's not enough
 to be black, we must also be ...
 aware.

The BAND starts to play. Randy goes into a wretched, off-key,
 over-dramatic version of "The Greatest Love of All".

RANDY
 (singing)
I believe the children are our
 future.
 (more)

RANDY (Cont'd)
Teach them well and let them be...

Akeem and Semmi are in the crowd studying the beauty contestants.

SEMMI
 Apparently these are the best women
 Queens has to offer. Pick one
 and let's go home.

AKEEM
 (teasing)
 I take it you do not enjoy your
 life in America.

SEMMI
 (sarcastically)
 You are mistaken. Who does not
 enjoy stepping in dog excrement?

AKEEM
 Have patience.

SEMMI
 I was not born to be patient.
 I was born to live a life of luxury.

AKEEM
 I am the one who was born of royal
 blood. Your role in life is to
 do my bidding. I order you to
 cease ...

SEMMI
 Wait. You came to America to be
 a common man, correct?

AKEEM
 That I did.

SEMMI
 So, a common man cannot give me
 orders.

AKEEM
 You are right. However, as one
 common man to another, I can tell
 you this: "Kiss my black ass.
 We are staying."

ON STAGE

Randy Watson is finishing the song, down on his knees, racked
 with false emotion, his tux shirt open.

RANDY (EDDIE)
 (pounding the floor of
 the stage)
No matter what they take from me.
They can't take away ...
(rising to his knees)
My dig-ni-ty!
Because the greatest love of all is
happening tooooo ... meeeee!

The Crowd APPLAUDS politely. Randy bows deeply, as though it is a standing ovation.

DISC JOCKEY
 Mister Randy Watson! Thank you.
 You know, generosity runs in this
 next young lady's family. Her
 father, Mr. Cleo McDowell donated
 the fine food and beverages we
 are consuming here tonight.

CUT TO:

MR. MCDOWELL, a self-made, middle-aged businessman. He waves to the crowd from behind the counter where he is handing out cold hamburgers and warm soft drinks.

DISC JOCKEY (CONT'D)
 Cleo, I know you must be proud
 of your lovely daughter.
 (Mr. McDowell smiles)
 We all are. Please welcome one
 of the organizers of today's
 festivities, Miss Lisa McDowell.

LISA MCDOWELL starts toward the stage.

MR. MCDOWELL
 Try to work in a plug for the new
 salad bar.

LISA
 Daddy, I'm not mentioning the
 restaurant.

MR. MCDOWELL
 At least give 'em the address.

BACK TO SEMMI AND AKEEM

SEMMI
 Let's go.

AKEEM

No, wait.

ON STAGE

Lisa steps up to the microphone. She is a very pretty young woman. But it's more than her beauty that attracts us. Perhaps it's her self-confidence. Maybe it's her smile.

LISA

Thank you. You know, Black Awareness Week is an opportunity for self-expression. Just a moment ago, Randy attempted to express himself through song ...

(searching for something nice to say)

... in his own unique way. But the song makes a good point ... the children are our future. That's why it's up to all of us to provide a place where our children can express themselves.

The Crowd APPLAUDS. Akeem is mesmerized by her.

AKEEM

She's perfect.

SEMMI

Akeem ...

AKEEM

Sssshhh!

BACK ON STAGE

LISA

We need to rebuild Lincoln Park. Ushers are passing through with donation boxes. Please give all you can.

(she smiles)

We're happy to get the kind of money that jingles ... but we'd rather get the kind that folds. Thank you.

She smiles. The D.J. comes over.

DISC JOCKEY

You heard the lady. Now give it up!

(more)

DISC JOCKEY (Cont'd)
 And remember, this Friday night,
 at the community center, a big
 dinner dance and the crowning of
 Miss Black Awareness ... sponsored
 by Afro-Glo Products ... creators
 of the home weave.

IN THE CROWD

People make small donations as the collection box is passed around.

Akeem is smitten, totally in love. Someone passes the box to him. Without taking his eyes off Lisa, he reaches into his pocket, pulls out a huge wad of money, and drops it into the box.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT (MINUTES LATER)

Akeem and Semmi head toward a newsstand.

SEMMI

If you are convinced she is the one, why did you not speak to her?

AKEEM

Because I must be perfect when we meet. The first impression is everything. We must change our approach.

They pass by a newsstand. Akeem picks up a copy of Cosmopolitan.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

American women are so demanding.
 We need to know what they want
 ... what they desire in a man.

Akeem picks up a copy of Essence. On the cover is a photo of Michael Jackson and Prince with the headline "The Men that Drive Women Wild".

INT. AKEEM AND SEMMI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

MUSIC: A SENSUAL HARD-DRIVING ROCK BEAT

Akeem and Semmi get dressed to go out.

A SERIES OF RAPID CLOSE-UPS:

Akeem's WRISTS -- He shoots the cuffs of a fancy ruffled shirt.

Semmi's EYES -- as he draws on eyeliner.

Akeem's LEG -- slipping into a black fishnet stocking.

Akeem's LIPS -- as he smears on lipstick.

Akeem's FOOT -- sliding into a high-heeled boot.

Semmi's HAND -- putting on a sequined glove.

Akeem's BUTT -- wiggling into a pair of tight "Prince" pants.

The MUSIC continues as we CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - NIGHT

The Black Awareness dinner-dance is in full swing. The dance floor is filled with COUPLES having a great time. OTHERS sit at tables talking, laughing, drinking -- including Lisa McDowell who is chatting with some GIRLFRIENDS.

The MUSIC shifts into a THROBBING, PULSATING BEAT.

Suddenly, the big double doors swing open. Semmi enters, dressed as Michael Jackson, moon walking backwards into the room. The couples stop dancing and stare at him, astonished.

Semmi does a Michael Jackson spin and strikes a pose, pointing towards the door.

The MUSIC becomes SENSUAL.

Akeem slides into the room on his knees in full Prince attire: open ruffled shirt, fishnet stockings, stacked heels, make-up, a curl of hair dangling in his eyes.

Everyone in the room gazes at him in open-mouthed amazement.

Akeem gets up and shimmies across the floor, licking his fingers, rubbing his hands all over his body.

Lisa looks at him like he's crazy.

Akeem drops to the floor and slithers toward her on his belly, moving in time with the sensual music, humping the floor like a reptile in heat.

He wriggles up to her, lying at her feet, flicking his tongue.

Lisa stares at him, astounded, repulsed.

LISA
What is your problem?

Akeem speaks in a low, breathy Prince-like moan.

AKEEM
I want to explode inside you, Lisa.

LISA
(calmly)
I don't think so.

He tires to lick her knee.

LISA (CONT'D)
(evenly)
Don't. Don't even think about
it.

He wriggles half-heartedly.

LISA (CONT'D)
(coolly)
Go away.

All the bravado drains from Akeem's face. He slithers back out of the room as inconspicuously as possible.

EXT. ALLEY OUTSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER - MOMENTS LATER

Akeem and Semmi, still in their ridiculous outfits, walk down a deserted alley, dejected.

SEMMI
(trying to cheer him
up)
Maybe she was only being coy.

AKEEM
No. She was totally repulsed by
me.
(slipping on his heel)
It is probably for the better.
I did not want to go through the
rest of my life dressed like a
tart.

SEMMI
Perhaps you should give up.

AKEEM
No. I must see her again. But
we cannot afford to make another
mistake.

INT. MCDOWELL'S FAST FOOD RESTAURANT, QUEENS - DAY

Akeem and Semmi are dressed in plain, simple clothes, applying for a job. Lisa's father, Mr. McDowell, is interviewing them in a tiny, crowded employee area in the back of the restaurant. He looks at them skeptically.

MR. MCDOWELL

Either of you ever have any fast food experience before?

SEMMI

(disdainfully)

Certainly not.

AKEEM

(with a warning glance at Semmi)

This will be our first job in the United States.

MR. MCDOWELL

Well ... I guess you gotta start somewhere.

(handing them each a paper McDowell's hat)

Pay you minimum wage. Come on. I'll show you around.

Mr. McDowell leads them on a tour. They pass by a small business office in the back. Lisa steps out, carrying a clipboard.

LISA

Excuse me. Dad, they're delivering the potatoes now. I need you to sign this check.

MR. MCDOWELL

(signing it)

You got us a good price. Good goin'.

LISA

Thanks.

Lisa walks back to her office. Akeem can't keep his eyes off her.

EXT. MCDOWELL'S - CONTINUOUS

Mr. McDowell, Akeem and Semmi stand outside McDowell's which looks suspiciously similar to a McDonald's.

MR. MCDOWELL

Your first job every mornin' is to sweep this walkway. Then wash all the windows real good ... and don't leave no streaks.

Mr. McDowell notices A YOUNG MAN in a business suit taking a picture of the facade of the restaurant.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

(shouting at the Young Man)

Hey! What you doin'? Get the hell outta here before I bust that camera.

The Young Man retreats. Mr. McDowell fumes.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

(to Akeem and Semmi)

Look here. If anybody ever comes by here in a suit ... especially a lawyer or something' ... I ain't here. Understand? See ... me and the McDonalds people have a simple misunderstandin'.

Mr. McDowell points to the red and yellow McDowell's sign which is topped by big golden arches.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

See ... they're Mack-Donald's. Mine is Mick-Dowell's .. They got the golden arches ... I got the golden arcs.

They walk into ...

THE DINING AREA

Several CUSTOMERS are eating burgers at little tables. It looks remarkably like McDonald's only more cheaply furnished.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

See they got the "Big Mac" ... I got the "Big Mick." They both got two all-beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, and onions on a sesame-seed bun but McDonald's uses an egg bun ... I use wheat.

THE COOKING AREA

Several EMPLOYEES are hard at work, grilling burgers, making fries. The place is bustling. The workers speed up even more when Mr. McDowell enters.

MR. MCDOWELL

You got to mop the food-prep area twice a day. Know how to mop?

AKEEM

Of course.

Mr. McDowell rolls out a mop bucket, a commercial model with a roller attachment. Akeem tries to pick up the mop. It's stuck in the roller. Akeem has no idea how to operate it. Mr. McDowell sighs and releases the mop, shaking his head, wondering if he's made the right decision in hiring these Africans.

MR. MCDOWELL

(like he's talking to a child)

Don't try to use the bucket. It'll just confuse you. When you through here, take out the trash.

(to Semmi)

I got an easy job for you.

INT. THE FOOD PREPARATION AREA - LATER THAT DAY

Semmi is cleaning the grease trap of the grill, scraping vile muck into a bucket with great distaste. Working alongside him is MAURICE, an overly-eager young man.

MAURICE

McDowell's offers a lotta possibilities for advancement. I started out doing clean-up just like you, but now ... see ... I'm washin' lettuce. Pretty soon I'm on fries ... then after a year or two on the grill ... I get into the trainee program ... make assistant manager .. and that's four dollars an hour!

Akeem passes by mopping in a stiff, formal manner ... like a prince.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

You mop funny. Where you from?

AKEEM

Africa.

MAURICE

I guess they don't mop very much down there, huh? You too stiff, man. You got to loosen up. Look here, let me show you.

Maurice demonstrates, making exaggerated fluid movements. Akeem tries to copy this. Akeem walks away, mopping, trying to move his body like Maurice ... kind of rolling his shoulders and sliding his feet along. Real loose.

THE OFFICE AREA - CONT.

Lisa is inside, working at her desk. Akeem passes by still mopping.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

Hi.

LISA
(looking up from her
work)

Hello.

AKEEM

I am Akeem.

LISA

Nice to meet you, Akeem.

She goes back to working on some papers.

AKEEM

I have recently been placed in charge of garbage. Do you have any that requires disposal?

LISA

No.
(pointing to waste paper
basket)
Totally empty.

AKEEM

I see ... well ... if you ever do, just call me and I will take care of it immediately.

LISA

I'll remember that.

AKEEM

Just say my name and I will be
here ...
(snapping his fingers)
... like that.

LISA

That's good to know.

AKEEM

(getting carried away)
When you think of trash, think
of Akeem.

(instantly embarrassed
by what he's said)
Well ... I must go now and finish
the rest of my sanitation duties.
(trying to recover)
Perhaps we shall have more
opportunities to speak on a
professional level. Goodbye, Lisa.

LISA

Goodbye, Akeem.

Akeem mops away. Lisa grins, shaking her head. This guy
is really strange.

OUT IN THE RESTAURANT

A handsome well-dressed young man breezes in. He is DARRYL,
Lisa's boyfriend, the very well-to-do heir to his family
business -- Afro Glo Products. His hair is dripping wet
with Gerry Curl Activator. Mr. McDowell greets Darryl like
a son.

MR. MCDOWELL

Hey, Darryl! Lookin' sharp. Here
... have a Mick-Shake ...

DARRYL

All right.

MR. MCDOWELL

Let's see ... I believe strawberry's
your favorite.
(handing it to him)
Here you go. Lisa's in the back
waitin' for you.

They walk into ...

THE OFFICE AREA

Akeem is mopping nearby.

MR. MCDOWELL

How's everything over at Afro-Glo?

DARRYL

Fine. Our new home-weave products are really taking off. By the way, no one is using the company tickets for the Knicks game next Tuesday.

(taking tickets out of his pocket)

I thought you might enjoy them.

MR. MCDOWELL

(taking them)

Thank you very much, Darryl. That's very considerate of you.

(poking his head into Lisa's door)

Lisa, look who's here.

Lisa looks up from her desk, happy to see Darryl.

LISA

Hi.

MR. MCDOWELL

You two kids have a good time.

Mr. McDowell leaves. Akeem mops just outside the door, trying to overhear their conversation.

DARRYL (CONT'D)

Ready to go?

LISA

Sure. Just let me finish up.

Darryl looks at her admiringly, sipping on his milk shake. She puts away some papers and crosses to him.

LISA

I want to know something. The other day at the rally somebody stuffed a large amount of cash into one of the collection boxes. You wouldn't happen to know who it was, would you?

DARRYL

(cooly)

Well ...

LISA
(smiling)
I thought it was you.

DARRYL
(false modesty)
Anything for the kids.

Lisa kisses Darryl on the cheek. They walk out the back door. Akeem picks up a bag of garbage and follows them outside into ...

THE ALLEY BEHIND MCDOWELL'S

Darryl and Lisa get into his black Trans-Am.

DARRYL (CONT'D)
Oh, before I forget. I got us
the Luther Vandross tickets.

LISA
Great.

DARRYL
(to Akeem)
Take care of this, will you?

Darryl casually tosses his milkshake cup. Akeem tries to catch it, but the top pops off and milkshake splatters all over his shirt.

Lisa and Darryl drive away.

INT. BARBER SHOP - EVENING

An ELDERLY CUSTOMER pays Clarence (Eddie) for his haircut. Morris, the other barber, sits in his chair sopping up his dinner.

MORRIS
(stuffing a pork chop
in his mouth)
Who's next?

CLARENCE
(mocking him)
Motherfucker, you been sayin' "Who's
next?" all day. All you do is
sit there and eat. That's the
third goddamn plate you've had
today, and you ain't cut one head.
They're ain't even no hair under
your chair!

Akeem enters.

AKEEM

Excuse me ...

CLARENCE

Hey, Kunta Kinte. What's up?

AKEEM

Is it possible to make my hair look like that?

Akeem points to a photograph on the wall: A stylish young black man with a wet, greasy gerry curls.

CLARENCE

Aw, man. Why you want a big ol' floppy mess of hair on your head? Have some pride. Wear it natural. You never saw Martin Luther King walkin' around with no greasy gerry curl.

(to Sweets, a customer
in another chair)

You know, I met Dr. King once.

SWEETS

You ain't never met no Martin Luther King.

CLARENCE

Did too. Nineteen Sixty-Three. Tennessee. I was walkin' around a corner and this nigger came up to me and BAM ... punches me right in the chest. I said, "Hey, Dr. King!" He says, "Oops, I thought you was somebody else."

SWEETS

Nigger, you lie ...

CLARENCE

Knocked the wind out of me. Tried to lay me out. Yes he did.

(to Akeem)

Why you so worried about how you look anyway?

AKEEM

I am trying to gain the interest of a certain young lady.

CLARENCE

Well, I'm a barber ... so you didn't hear me say this ... but I ain't never seen a lady ball a guy because his hair look good. This an American chick?

AKEEM

Yes.

CLARENCE

Let me tell you something about women in this country. Every one of 'em want the same thing ... a man just like their daddy. You want to snuggle up to this girl ... git to know her daddy.

EXT. MCDOWELL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

It's morning as Mr. McDowell goes to work. He opens the back door and enters ...

THE OFFICE AREA

It's spotless. Immaculately clean. The walls and floors are gleaming. All the clutter has been put away. There is even a potted plant in the corner.

MR. MCDOWELL

(suspiciously)

Who did this?

AKEEM

(still mopping the floor)

I did, Mr. McDowell. I believe a clean and pleasant environment makes the workers more productive.

MR. MCDOWELL

(trying to figure him out)

You ain't from the union, are you?

AKEEM

No.

MR. MCDOWELL

Because if you are, you can get out right now.

Mr. McDowell walks into...

HIS OFFICE

and sits down at his desk. After a few moments, Akeem shows up at the door with his mop.

AKEEM

Mr. McDowell ...

MR. MCDOWELL

What is it?

AKEEM

I was wondering if you happened to see the professional basketball contest last evening.

MR. MCDOWELL

No, I didn't.

AKEEM

(proudly)

It was most exhilarating. The Knickerbockers of New York challenged the Warriors of Golden State. In the end, the Knickerbockers triumphed by tossing the ball into the basket more often than their opponents. It was a ripping victory!

MR. MCDOWELL

(calmly)

Son, I'm only going to tell you this once. If you want to work here, stay off the drugs.

The smile slowly drains from Akeem's face. He turns and mops across the floor, out of the room into ...

THE DINING AREA

Maurice is putting straws into a dispenser a few at a time. Akeem continues mopping.

MAURICE

Akeem, come here for a second. I got to talk to ya. You startin to annoy some people here.

AKEEM

Why? What have I done?

MAURICE

You're workin too hard. It makes the rest of us look bad.

AKEEM

I am only trying to perform my job to the best of my ability.

MAURICE

No, no, no. That's very unAmerican. Right now, you doing the work of three men. The way I see it, that's puttin two guys out of work. You don't want to do that, do you?

AKEEM

No.

MAURICE

Then chill out. Take it easy. Don't be afraid to fuck off. That's what made this country great.

ANGLE - THRU THE FRONT WINDOW

Darryl is dropping Lisa off at work in his Trans Am.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

(pointing to Darryl)

You think the Prince of Afro-Glo works hard? No way. He just living off his father's invention. He got it made. That's why I never even bother asking Lisa out. That man can buy her anything he wants. How you gonna compete with that?

Akeem thinks about what Maurice has said.

EXT. THE MCDOWELL HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

MUSIC: SOMETHING LIKE JANET JACKSON'S "NASTY"

A Tiffany's van pulls up in the circular driveway of the modest colonial house in an upper-middle class neighborhood of Queens. A DELIVERY MAN gets out.

INSIDE THE HOUSE - SAME TIME

We see the source of the MUSIC. Lisa is in the den trying to read a magazine while her younger sister PATRICE is practicing sexy dance moves, admiring herself in the mirror. There is something wild and lascivious about Patrice.

The DOORBELL RINGS

PATRICE (CONT'D)
I'll get it.

Patrice answers the front door. A DELIVERY MAN is waiting with a small gift-wrapped package.

DELIVERY MAN
Delivery for Miss Lisa McDowell.

PATRICE
I'll take it. I'm her sister.

Patrice signs the clipboard. He hands her a small gift wrapped package.

PATRICE (CONT'D)
Thank you.

Patrice starts to rip open the package. Lisa enters.

LISA
What is it?

PATRICE
Something for you.

LISA
Do you mind if I open it?

She tosses it to Lisa who opens the package.

CLOSE ON THE GIFT

An exquisite pair of ruby earrings.

PATRICE
Whoa! You think they're real?

LISA
They couldn't be.

Lisa opens the card. She is puzzled but pleased.

CLOSE ON THE CARD

It reads: "FROM AN ADMIRER. (NOT DARRYL)"

PATRICE
(reading it)
"From an admirer ... not Darryl."
(teasing)
Somebody's messin' around.

LISA

I am not.

PATRICE

I don't care how much a man admires you, he's not gonna send you earrings like that unless you're giving him a little booty.

LISA

Patrice, not everyone thinks like you.

PATRICE

Yes they do. They just don't admit it.

INT. MCDOWELL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Akeem and Semmi are cleaning the front windows. They look out and see Lisa and Patrice walking towards the restaurant.

SEMMI

Talk to her.

AKEEM

I am waiting for a proper opportunity for conversation.

SEMMI

Start by explaining that you sent her a half-million-dollar pair of earrings. That should get her attention.

AKEEM

I can't do that.

SEMMI

Well, I cannot endure this menial labor much longer. I am badly in need of a proper manicure. And I would very much like to return home in time for the Rolls Royce Races. Speak to her.

AKEEM

Do not order me about.

SEMMI

Do it!

Lisa and Patrice enter.

AKEEM
(tentatively)
Lisa ...

LISA
Oh, hi, Akeem.

AKEEM
(quickly)
Fine. And you? I trust you are
well.

LISA
Yes, I am. Thank you.

AKEEM
Good.

Patrice stares at Akeem. She likes what she sees.

PATRICE
Hi.

LISA
Akeem, this is my sister Patrice.
You know, Akeem's from Africa.

PATRICE
What you doing in New York?

AKEEM
I'm a student.

LISA
Really? What school are you going
to?

AKEEM
(realizing he's trapped)
The uh ... university.

LISA
Which one?

AKEEM
The University of United States.

PATRICE
I never heard of that ...

AKEEM
(sweating)
It is ... very small ...

PATRICE
Ever been to a football game?

AKEEM

No.

PATRICE

It's a lot of fun. Want to go to the Jets game with me tomorrow? We got an extra ticket.

AKEEM

Well ... I don't know ...

LISA

Come on. You can double date with me and Darryl.

EXT. GIANTS STADIUM - DAY

ON THE FIELD

Marc Gastineau, of the N.Y. Jets makes a sack. He gets up and taunts the fallen quarterback.

IN THE STANDS

The CROWD is going wild, but no one more than Darryl who's on his feet SCREAMING HOARSELY.

DARRYL

Yes! Yes! Stick him! Stick him! That's my man!!

He sits back down with Lisa, Akeem and Patrice.

PATRICE

You look cold, Akeem. Come get under the blanket.

Patrice wraps her blanket around him.

LISA

Are you able to follow the game, Akeem?

AKEEM

I think so.

DARRYL

You got football in Africa?

Hidden under the blanket, Patrice is inching her hand up Akeem's leg. He tries to ignore it.

AKEEM

Yes. But I believe you call it soccer.

DARRYL

Oh yeah. That's some game. Those little shorts ya'll wear look real cute.

Under the blanket, Patrice goes for the gold. Akeem leaps up, pretending to cheer the action on the field.

AKEEM

(shouting excitedly)

Yes! Yes!

Out on the field, nothing is happening.

DARRYL

It's just a time out.

AKEEM

I know. It's my favorite part. Would you excuse me for a moment?

Akeem walks down the aisle and up the steps.

AREA OUTSIDE THE STADIUM MEN'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Akeem is waiting in a long line. A VENDOR passes by carrying a tray of sodas. Suddenly the man stops dead in his tracks.

VENDOR

Oh, my goodness! Oh, my goodness!

(pointing at Akeem)

It's you! I can't believe it!

(bending down on his knees; still holding his tray)

Greetings, Your Highness!

Akeem tries to calm the man down. Other people are noticing.

AKEEM

(embarrassed)

Please ... stop bowing.

VENDOR

I am a loyal citizen of Zamuda.

AKEEM

Come on .. get up ... you're spilling your Pepsis.

VENDOR
 (continuing to gush)
 This is the greatest day of my
 life!

Everyone in the line looks at Akeem.

AKEEM
 It was nice meeting you, too.
 Excuse me.

Akeem hurries away.

IN THE STANDS - MINUTES LATER

Akeem returns to his seat. The Vendor is still following him, now accompanied by a FRIEND who carries a small flash camera.

VENDOR (CONT'D)
 (to Akeem)
 Please ... may I just have my
 picture taken with you?

Lisa, Darryl and Patrice watch, bewildered, as the Vendor puts his arm around Akeem. The friend SNAPS a picture.

VENDOR
 I will treasure this experience
 the rest of my life!

The Vendor leaves.

LISA
 Who was that?

AKEEM
 Just some man I met in the restroom.

INT. MCDOWELL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Some CUSTOMERS are eating as Akeem passes by with his mop. Semmi is working nearby.

AKEEM
 (smiling cheerfully)
 Ah, I see you've selected the
 Mick-Nuggets. An excellent choice.

The customers look at Akeem like he's from outer space. Lisa sits at a table alone, having lunch. Akeem manages to mop in her direction. She notices him.

LISA
Oh, hi, Akeem.

AKEEM
Hi, Lisa.

LISA
Did you have a good time at the game?

AKEEM
Yes, I did. Thank you.

LISA
I hope Darryl didn't offend you. Sometimes he can be pretty obnoxious.

AKEEM
Well, I'm sure he can't help it.

LISA
Want to join me?

Akeem stands there, still twirling his mop.

AKEEM
Perhaps I shouldn't neglect my duties.

LISA
It's okay. Sit down. Take a break for a minute.

Akeem sits. Lisa is growing increasingly interested in Akeem. There is something about him she finds fascinating.

LISA (CONT'D)
You know, you're a very unusual guy. I've never seen anybody take so much pride in mopping a floor.

AKEEM
"He who would learn to fly one day must first learn to stand and walk. One cannot fly into flying."

LISA
See, that's what I mean. Most of the guys who work here don't go around quoting Nietzsche.

AKEEM
Most of the women I know don't know Nietzsche from a handbasket.

Suddenly their conversation is disrupted as a HOLD-UP MAN bursts into the restaurant, brandishing a sawed-off shotgun. He points the weapon at the frightened COUNTER WORKERS.

HOLD-UP MAN

All right, everybody shut up and do what I say! Take the money out. All of it. Now!

The counter workers quickly empty their registers.

HOLD-UP MAN (CONT'D)

Put it in a sack ... move!

An EMPLOYEE rakes the money into a McDowell's bag.

HOLD-UP MAN (CONT'D)

Put some french fries in there too. And a hot apple pie. I'm hungry.

Another EMPLOYEE nervously stuffs some french fries into a sack.

HOLD-UP MAN (CONT'D)

(going nuts)

Not those! I see what you're doin'!! You're tryin' to give me cold french fries ... I want 'em hot!!! Make a fresh batch. Move it, move it, move it!

Keeping a close eye on the gunman, Akeem craftily unscrews the heavy handle of his mop.

HOLD-UP MAN (CONT'D)

If I don't get my fries right now ... I'm gonna blow your ass away! Understand?!!

Akeem calmly rises to his feet. He approaches the hold-up man, holding the mop handle like a truncheon.

AKEEM

(calmly)

I think it wise to put down that weapon.

The gunman turns around, staring at Akeem astonished.

HOLD-UP MAN

What's this shit?

AKEEM

Please refrain from any further obscenity in the presence of this young lady.

HOLD-UP MAN

Are you outta your goddamn mind?

AKEEM

I warned you. Please desist.
I shall be forced to thrash you.

HOLD-UP MAN

Fuck you, boo-boo!

Akeem has had enough. As quick as lightning, he flails out with the mop handle, deflecting the shotgun. With another thrust, he breaks the weapon from the gunman's grasp. It goes flying.

Akeem spins and slams the broom handle into the gunman's stomach, doubling him over. He brings the mop handle down again, knocking the assailant to the floor.

The hold-up man reaches for a pistol in his belt. He freezes as he sees ...

Semmi calmly aiming the shotgun at him.

SEMMI

Freeze ... you runny discharge
from a diseased rhinoceros's pizzle.

Everyone slowly steps out from hiding to see what has happened. Lisa looks at Akeem, amazed. Mr. McDowell comes out of the back to see what all the commotion is about.

MR. MCDOWELL

(shaking his head in
wonder)

Good God Almighty.

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND MCDOWELL'S - THAT NIGHT

Akeem is dumping garbage while Semmi tromps it into an overstuffed bin. Mr. McDowell joins them.

MR. MCDOWELL

I'm proud of what you boys did out there today. That's the fifth time we've been hit by that joker. But I don't think he'll be comin' back ... thanks to my African Connection.

For the first time, Mr. McDowell smiles. Akeem heart soars, he has won him over.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
Listen ... keep Sunday afternoon open. There's gonna be a little get-together at my house.

EXT. MCDOWELL HOUSE - EVENING

Akeem and Semmi stand in front of the house wearing red bus boy jackets. Mr. McDowell is explaining things to Semmi.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
Just give 'em a ticket ... take their keys ... park the cars down the street. Then come inside and help in the kitchen.
(to Akeem)
You come on with me. I want to show you McDowell's little castle.

Semmi shoots Akeem a dark look. Akeem pretends not to notice, as he and Mr. McDowell walk ...

INSIDE THE HOUSE

The foyer, like the rest of the house, is over-decorated. Mr. McDowell places his finger on a dimmer switch. The lights dim.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
See ... this works off the body heat in my finger. Amazing, isn't it?

AKEEM
(pretending to be impressed)
Remarkable.

Akeem follows Mr. McDowell into the ostentatious living room.

MR. MCDOWELL
This is my showcase here. I think this speaks for itself.

They enter ...

THE DEN

A typical wood paneled room.

MR. MCDOWELL

You know, when I was growin' up, nine of us lived in a shack no bigger than this room. And look what I have today. I only wish Mrs. McDowell coulda lived to see it.

AKEEM

You have a fine house, sir.

MR. MCDOWELL

Well, keep up the hard work and who knows? In twenty or thirty years maybe you could have a place like this yourself.

(crossing to the wet bar)

Now this is where you're gonna be workin' today.

(taking a bottle of Korbel out of the refrigerator)

Know how to open a champagne bottle?

AKEEM

I have seen it done.

MR. MCDOWELL

Good. Just keep all the glasses full.

(looking at his watch)

I better get dressed for the party.

Look around. Make yourself at home till the guests arrive.

Mr. McDowell leaves. Akeem gets up and looks around the room. He walks down ...

THE HALL

past the bathroom. He looks inside. The solid brass fixtures on the lavatory are shaped like fish. He continues down the hall, passing by an open door. It is ...

LISA'S BEDROOM

Akeem steps inside, curious. It is a very feminine room. Lisa's bed is topped by a frilly canopy that matches the bedspread. Akeem is drawn to some photographs on the dresser. He studies them --

CLOSE ON THE PHOTOGRAPHS

They are typical family portraits and snapshots: Lisa as a child, playing with her parents. Lisa as a teenager.

Akeem stops when he comes to a big blow-up of Lisa on her sixteenth birthday. She is smiling, a big fancy cake in front of her, surrounded by friends. A younger Mr. McDowell has his arm around Lisa. On the wall behind them is a big hand-made sign spelling out in glitter: "Happy Birthday, Princess."

Akeem is startled by a voice from behind him. Patrice is standing there wearing a low cut dress.

PATRICE

What are you doin' in here?

AKEEM

Nothing.

PATRICE

You're looking for something in my sister's room, aren't you?
I bet you're trying to steal.

AKEEM

You are mistaken.

Patrice advances toward Akeem.

PATRICE

(seductively)

I don't think so. I heard what you did to that guy with the gun. I think you're bad. And you know what? Bad boys make me hot.

Patrice throws her arms around Akeem, kissing him hungrily. He tries to resist. They hear the family dog BARKING. Someone is coming.

OUT IN THE HALLWAY

It's Lisa and Darryl. The McDowell's German Shepherd is BARKING and GROWLING at Darryl.

DARRYL

Get away, Spike. That damn dog never liked me.

(following her toward her bedroom)

Come on, baby, we've got to talk about this.

LISA
Not now, Darryl.

BACK IN THE BEDROOM

Akeem panics. Patrice drags him into Lisa's closet, still kissing him. She closes the sliding glass door behind them just as Lisa and Darryl enter.

LISA (CONT'D)
I've got to get dressed.

DARRYL
(slipping his arms around her)
Go ahead. I like to watch you dress.
(kissing her neck)
Let's settle this thing.

Lisa pulls away, goes to the closet and opens the sliding door. Luckily, Akeem and Patrice have moved to the other side of the closet. Lisa takes out a dress and closes the closet again.

INSIDE THE CLOSET

Patrice is still amorous, kissing Akeem's neck, running her tongue into his ear. Akeem tries to fight her off.

JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR

Lisa takes out a dress and holds it up, trying to decide.

LISA
I've already told you I'll marry you.

Lisa puts the dress back and opens the door on the other side.

INSIDE THE CLOSET

Patrice is smothering Akeem with wet sloppy kisses. Akeem drags her to the other side of the closet to keep them from being discovered. Lisa reaches for another dress on a hanger just inches from where Akeem is hiding, holding his hand over Patrice's mouth.

DARRYL
You've been saying that for two years.

LISA
I know. I know I'm not being fair
to you.

DARRYL

puts his arms around Lisa.

DARRYL
Just promise you'll marry me.

LISA
(exasperated)
Alright, I promise.

DARRYL
That's all Darryl wanted to hear.
(kissing her)
Now you go put on your make-up
and make yourself pretty for the
people down there.

Darryl leaves. Lisa enters her bathroom to put on her
make-up. Akeem slips out of the closet, sees the coast is
clear, and sneaks out of the room. Patrice follows.

INT. THE DEN - AN HOUR LATER

The party is underway. The mostly upper-middle-class GUESTS
are chatting with one another, sipping drinks, eating hors
d'oeuvres.

Mr. McDowell is trying his hardest to ingratiate himself
with Darryl's parents, MR. AND MRS. JENKS who are sitting
on a couch with Darryl's GRANDMOTHER. Like Darryl, they
are loyal users of Afro Glo Products. MR. JENKS has a soggy
mop of graying gerry curls. MOM sports a massive glistening
weave. Even GRANDMA JENKS has big processed curls dripping
down to her shoulders.

MR. MCDOWELL
You know, Darryl, your mother gets
more lovely every time I see her.

Semmi passes by carrying a tray of hors d'oeuvres. Mr. Jenks
takes a cocktail sausage.

MR. JENKS
(to Semmi)
Do you have any Dijon mustard?

SEMMI
I don't know.

MR. JENKS

Well, look for it.

Mr. Jenks waves him away. Semmi could kill. He passes by Akeem who is opening a fresh bottle of Korbel.

SEMMI

Who do they think they are? I refuse to grovel for these peasants.

AKEEM

Semmi, please. Chill out.

Semmi leaves. Mr. McDowell approaches, smiling, his arm around Darryl.

MR. MCDOWELL

Akeem, make sure everyone's glass is full. We're about to make a special announcement.

Mr. McDowell walks to the center of the room. He taps his glass.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

Can I have everyone's attention! Would Mr. and Mrs. Jenks please join me? Mother Jenks, you come up here, too.

The Jenkses get up and join Mr. McDowell, leaving three big wet greasy spots on the back of the couch.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

I just heard some news that has made me a very happy man. As you all know, Darryl and Lisa have been going together for some time.

Mr. McDowell beams a knowing smile at Lisa who looks confused. She has no idea what is going on.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

I'm happy to announce that just a few moments ago, Darryl popped the big question ... he asked me for my daughter's hand in marriage ... and I happily accepted!

Lisa is stunned.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

So as it turns out ... this has become an engagement party.
(holding up his glass)
To the bride and groom.

Mr. McDowell and the guests drink up. All are in a happy, celebratory mood except for Lisa who stands alone, humiliated. A well-meaning GUEST comes up to her.

GUEST
When's the big day, Lisa?

LISA
(still dazed)
Would you excuse me, please?

Lisa crosses to Darryl, trying to muster a polite smile for the well-wishers.

LISA (CONT'D)
(grabbing Darryl's arm)
I want to talk to you now.

They walk into ...

THE KITCHEN

LISA (CONT'D)
(steaming)
Would you please tell me what that was all about?!

DARRYL
(lying through his capped teeth)
I had no idea your father was going to do that.

LISA
Well next time the two of you get together to plan my life, I wish you'd let me in on it!

DARRYL
It's not like that ...

He tries to put his arms around her. Lisa recoils.

LISA
Don't touch me.

DARRYL
I don't know why you're so upset. You said we were getting married.

LISA
Leave me alone, Darryl.

DARRYL
 (smiling)
 But baby, it's our engagement party!

Lisa stares at him in disbelief. She storms out of the kitchen towards the backyard.

EXT. THE BACKYARD - MINUTES LATER

Lisa sits in a swing set left over from her childhood, still smarting over what has happened. Akeem appears behind her, carrying a bottle of champagne and a glass.

AKEEM
 Lisa ... ? Would you like some champagne?

LISA
 No, thanks. I don't really feel like celebrating.
 (Akeem starts to go)
 Wait ... on second thought.
 (holding out her empty glass)
 Fill it up.
 (Akeem fills the glass)
 You have some too.

Akeem fills the other glass and settles into a child's swing next to Lisa. Even in the swing, Akeem cannot conceal his regal bearing. He might as well be sitting on a golden throne.

LISA (CONT'D)
 Akeem, if you want to hang out with me, you gotta loosen up.

AKEEM
 I can be loose.
 (he slouches)
 See?

LISA
 Much better.

Lisa takes another sip of champagne, sighs, staring ahead.

AKEEM
 You seem very unhappy.

LISA
 I'm not just unhappy. I'm totally confused. I feel like I'm being pressured into this marriage ... by Darryl ... my father.

AKEEM

I know how you feel. In my country, many marriages are arranged. One should not be forced to marry out of obligation.

LISA

Tell that to them. I mean what good is a relationship if it's based on deceit?

AKEEM

You're right.

LISA

Darryl practically forced me into this engagement. I mean ... how can I marry a guy like that?

AKEEM

I was wondering the same thing.

LISA

He just made me so furious back there. You don't think I over-reacted, do you?

AKEEM

No. First reactions are usually correct.

LISA

I don't know. I shouldn't be laying all my problems on you, Akeem.

AKEEM

I don't mind.

LISA

You know, you're very easy to talk to. I feel like I can tell you anything.

Patrice and some GIRLFRIENDS enter the yard, GIGGLING.

PATRICE

Hey, Akeem! We need some more champagne over here.

Akeem gets up. Both he and Lisa seemed saddened by the interruption.

AKEEM

(ironically)

I almost forgot that I am here in a domestic capacity.

LISA
Thanks for listening to me, Akeem.
I really appreciate it.

AKEEM
Anytime, Lisa McDowell.

Akeem walks back into the house, smiling, a spring in his step.

INT. AKEEM'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Akeem enters from the bathroom, dressed for work, extremely upbeat. Semmi lies in bed, depressed by the shabby surroundings.

AKEEM
Why aren't you up? You'll be late
for work.

SEMMI
I am not going to work today.

AKEEM
We cannot afford to anger Mr.
McDowell, especially now that things
are going well.

SEMMI
(scoffing)
Going well? You have no chance
with this girl. She is getting
married to the one with the dripping
hair.

AKEEM
You are wrong.

SEMMI
Why don't you just marry her sister?
She has it hot for you.

AKEEM
Because it is Lisa I love. I am
making excellent progress. Lisa
may not know it yet, but she loves
me.

SEMMI
Oh, sure she loves you. Let's
see ... so far she has paid you
the minimum wage and allowed you
to pour champagne at her engagement
party. I'd say she is clearly
within your grasp!

AKEEM

I refuse to argue with you. Get up.

SEMMI

No.

AKEEM

Get up!

SEMMI

I am sick.

AKEEM

Liar!

SEMMI

I am sick of living like a peasant!
The man who does my toenails lives
better than this! Look at this
filth!

AKEEM

If you don't like it, then clean
it up! I am a prince, and look
...

(picking up some fast
food wrappers)

I am not afraid of garbage!
(kicking the wrappers
at Semmi)

You want to live better? Fine!
Fix this place up!!

Akeem SLAMS the door behind him as he stomps into ...

THE HALLWAY

AKEEM

(under his breath)

Dribble from the foreskin of a
pig.

SEMMI O.S.

(through the door)

Eater of hyena squat!

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE MCDOWELL'S - DUSK

Akeem and Lisa are leaving work. He is patiently listening
to her problems.

LISA

... maybe I've stayed with him
just because everyone expected
me to ... Do you know what I mean?

(Akeem nods)

You must be tired of hearing about
my problems with Darryl.

AKEEM

No, not at all.

LISA

I feel like I owe you a favor.
Let me take you to dinner sometime.

AKEEM

Maybe we could go to an African
restaurant.

LISA

I don't know of any around here.
As a matter of fact, I don't think
I've ever had African food.

AKEEM

What a shame. It is delicious.

LISA

Maybe you could cook some for me
one night?

AKEEM

It would be my pleasure.

LISA

How about tonight?

AKEEM

(trapped)

Well ...

LISA

Come on. Let's do it. It sounds
like fun.

AKEEM

It's difficult to find the right
ingredients.

LISA

Oh, we'll make do. Come on. I'll
pay for the groceries and we'll
cook over at your place.

AKEEM

My apartment is very poor.

LISA

I don't care about that. I'd love to see where you live.

INT. STAIRWAY OF AKEEM'S TENEMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Akeem and Lisa walk up the stairs, carrying sacks of groceries. Stu the drunk lies passed out on the stairs.

AKEEM

You can step over this man. He is harmless.

They step over him and onto ...

THE FIFTH FLOOR

Despite her good attitude, Lisa is not prepared for the disgusting sight of the hallway.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

Once again, I must apologize for the squalor of these surroundings. I hope you won't think less of me.

LISA

I know who you are, Akeem. I don't judge people by how much money they have.

AKEEM

(pleased)

That's an excellent attitude!

(grabbing her by the shoulders)

I can't tell you how happy I am to hear you say that.

(walking to his door)

Well, here we are.

(opening the door)

Welcome to my humble abode ...

Akeem looks inside, shocked by what he sees ...

AKEEM'S POV- THE APARTMENT

It has been totally redone. In one day, Semmi has transformed it into a high-tech bachelor pad. The walls are crammed with every kind of audio and video equipment imaginable. Expensive track lighting runs across the ceiling. In the center of the room is a king-size waterbed. Semmi sits in a jacuzzi, contentedly smoking a cigar.

Akeem quickly SLAMS the door. Lisa is startled.

LISA
What's wrong?

AKEEM
Nothing ... I ... excuse me for
a moment.

Akeem steps inside, locking the door behind him, leaving
Lisa outside, bewildered.

INSIDE THE APARTMENT

AKEEM
What have you done?

SEMMI
You told me to fix up the place.

AKEEM
I should kill you!

SEMMI
Why?

AKEEM
I am supposed to be a poor man!

OUT IN THE HALL

Lisa KNOCKS on the door.

LISA
Akeem ... Akeem.

Akeem opens the door with the chain locked. He speaks to
her through the crack.

LISA (CONT'D)
Is everything all right?

AKEEM
Fine. Just let me tidy up.

He SLAMS the door in her face.

BACK IN THE APARTMENT

Akeem searches through Semmi's clothes.

SEMMI
 (alarmed)
 What are you doing?

Akeem finds what he's looking for. He pulls out big handfuls of hundred dollar bills.

SEMMI (CONT'D)
 Please, for God's sake. Don't take my pocket money.

AKEEM
 If you have no more money, you can cause no more mischief.

Akeem stuffs the money into his pockets..

SEMMI
 You are being unreasonable.

AKEEM
 If you have ruined my chances with Lisa I shall never forgive you.

Akeem exits hurriedly into ...

THE HALLWAY

He smiles apologetically.

AKEEM
 I've very sorry.

LISA
 Can we go in now?

Lisa tries to enter the apartment. Akeem blocks her path.

AKEEM
 No. I'm sorry. We can't.

LISA
 Why not?

AKEEM
 A rat. A big rat is inside.

LISA
 You know what I think? I think there is no rat. I think you're just so ashamed of your apartment you can't let me see it.

AKEEM
(humbly)
Once again you have judged
correctly.

LISA
Well, if it bothers you that much,
we can go out.

AKEEM
(relieved)
That would be better.

LISA
There's a place we can go to around
the corner.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD TAVERN - NIGHT

It is late at night. The place has pretty much emptied out. The BARTENDER is wiping down the bar as two MIDDLE-AGED CUSTOMERS finish their last round. A lone WAITRESS brings two after-dinner drinks to a booth where Akeem and Lisa have just finished a very pleasurable dinner. Over the jukebox we hear Sam Cooke's version of You Send Me.

AKEEM
(holding up his glass)
To America.

They clink glasses.

LISA
Why'd you come here?

AKEEM
To find something special.

LISA
It's an awfully long way to travel.

AKEEM
No journey is too great when one
finds what he seeks.

LISA
Does everyone in Africa talk like
you?

AKEEM
Why? Do you not like it?

LISA

No, I love it. It's nice to be with a man who knows how to express himself.

(she takes a sip)

I bet where you're from, the women practically throw themselves at your feet.

AKEEM

(nervously)

What makes you say that?

LISA

Because you've got a kind of inner glow. Like you're above anything petty. It's almost aristocratic.

Akeem laughs nervously.

LISA (CONT'D)

What did you do back home?

AKEEM

I was in uh ... my family business.

LISA

What's that?

AKEEM

Goat herding.

LISA

Really?

AKEEM

Does this surprise you?

LISA

No, it's just that you seem so educated.

AKEEM

Well, the life of a goat herder is not all that demanding. The goats pretty much take care of themselves. It leaves one with a great deal of time to read.

The waitress brings the check. Akeem reaches for it. Lisa puts her hand on his.

LISA

Please ... let me.

AKEEM

I should pay.

LISA

It's my treat.

AKEEM

But it's not right ...

LISA

Akeem, I wish you'd stop worrying about being poor. If I wanted a wealthy guy I'd be with Darryl ... not you.

There is beat of silence as Akeem and Lisa look at one another, their hands still touching. In the background, we can hear Sam Cooke singing.

SAM COOKE

Darling, you send me. Honest you do ...

AKEEM

Would you like to dance?

LISA

Yes.

They get up from the table. Akeem takes Lisa in his arms and they begin to dance, slowly, gracefully. Lisa places her head on his shoulder. He clutches her closer to him, and now they are barely moving, just holding each other tight. Lisa looks into Akeem's eyes.

LISA (CONT'D)

What about Patrice?

AKEEM

I'm not interested in Patrice.

LISA

What about Darryl?

AKEEM

I not interested in him either.

They kiss. As the song ends, they remain in an embrace, lost in their own world.

INT. BUS STATION - NIGHT

A sour, pudgy WESTERN UNION EMPLOYEE sits behind the counter reading the telegram Semmi has just handed him.

SOUR EMPLOYEE
You actually want to send this?

SEMMI
Why? What is wrong? Read it to me.

SOUR EMPLOYEE
(laying on the sarcasm
with a heavy Queens
accent)
Sire ... Akeem and I have depleted
our funds. Kindly send two hundred
thousand dollars immediately as
we are in dire straits. Thanks,
Semmi.

SEMMI
Should I make it four hundred
thousand?

SOUR EMPLOYEE
(sarcastically)
Are ya' sure that's gonna be enough?

SEMMI
You're right. Make it five hundred.

SOUR EMPLOYEE
(humoring him)
As long as we're askin', why don't
we go for a cool million?

SEMMI
(thinking about it)
You don't think that's too much?

SOUR EMPLOYEE
Naaaah!

INT. MCDOWELL'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Lisa is at her desk working. Mr. McDowell enters, carrying
a large floral arrangement, trying hard to be cheerful.

MR. MCDOWELL
Lookey here.
(sniffing the flowers)
Boy, these smell nice. What are
these ... gladiolus?
(Lisa ignores him)
Darryl must be spending a fortune
on flowers. At least read the
card.

LISA
 (coolly)
 No, thank you.

MR. MCDOWELL
 Well, if you ain't gonna read it,
 I am.
 (opening the card)
 "Precious, please forgive me.
 If loving you too much is a crime,
 than I plead guilty ... Love,
 Darryl."
 (appearing to wipe away
 a tear)
 I swear, I don't think Lionel
 Ritchie coulda said it any better.

LISA
 Dad, stay out of this.

Lisa gets up from the chair and puts on her jacket.

MR. MCDOWELL
 Where you going?

LISA
 To a museum with Akeem.

MR. MCDOWELL
 I don't like that one bit.

LISA
 What's wrong with Akeem?

MR. MCDOWELL
 You told me yourself he was a goat
 herder.
 (pleading)
 Why won't you marry Darryl? He's
 nice to ya ... dresses good ...

LISA
 You only like Darryl because he's
 rich.

MR. MCDOWELL
 At least I'm not prejudiced like
 you!

LISA
 I'm not prejudiced!

MR. MCDOWELL
 Yes, you are. Reverse prejudice.
 The worst kind.
 (more)

MR. MCDOWELL (Cont'd)
All my life, people was down on
me because I was poor. I finally
make a little money, and now people
are prejudiced against the rich.
It turns my stomach.

She walks out of the office.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
Baby, please. I just don't want
to see you struggle like your mother
and me did.

LISA
I know.

MR. MCDOWELL
Look at what you're throwin away.
It's not just Darryl ... it's Afro
Glo ... the number three line of
black beauty care products in the
country. Do you know what that
means?

LISA
I'll see you later, Dad.

She leaves. Maurice enters.

MAURICE
Mr. McDowell ... you better go
out front. A customer's real upset.

Mr. McDowell heads for the front, followed by Maurice.

MR. MCDOWELL
(annoyed)
What's the problem?

MAURICE
He says his fish filet was cold
in the middle.

They enter ...

THE COUNTER AREA

a YOUNG MAN in a suit is waiting, impatiently.

MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
(overly solicitous)
Sorry you had a problem, Sir.
Please take another fish filet
with my compliments.

Mr. McDowell offers the man a fish sandwich.

MAN IN SUIT
Are you the owner?

MCDOWELL
(smiling warmly)
I'm Mr. McDowell himself.

MAN IN SUIT
Good.

The Man hands Mr. McDowell a legal-size envelope.

MR. MCDOWELL
What's this?

MAN IN SUIT
I represent McDonald's. You've
just been served with a notice
to cease and desist.

The Man in the Suit beats a hasty retreat.

MR. MCDOWELL
Cease and desist this you
sonuvabitch!

Mr. McDowell hurls the fish sandwich at the man, but it misses, splattering tartar sauce on the glass front door.

INT. AKEEM AND SEMMI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Akeem is dressed to go out in a sports jacket. Semmi is stuffing his own clothes into a duffel bag, getting ready to move.

SEMMI
This is the final insult to my
dignity.

AKEEM
Shut up. This is all your fault.

There is a LOUD KNOCK at the door. Akeem answers it. It's the Landlord.

LANDLORD
You boys wanted to see me?

AKEEM
Yes.

The Landlord walks in and looks around at the high-tech splendor of the room. His mouth drops open.

LANDLORD

Goddamn! What the hell have you done in here?!

AKEEM

I'm afraid my friend Semmi has altered the apartment. Perhaps you would be willing to exchange it for another.

LANDLORD

(suspicious)

Why? This stuff ain't hot, is it?

AKEEM

No, no. I want to bring a young lady here and I cannot let her see me living like this.

LANDLORD

Tell you what. I'm gonna let you stay in my apartment and I'll move up here.

AKEEM

Does your apartment look poor?

LANDLORD

Yeah. It's a real shit hole. You'll love it. Here's the key ... 1-A ... first floor.

AKEEM

You are too kind.

EXT. THE TENEMENT BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

Akeem walks out and heads down the street on his way to the date with Lisa. He goes up the stairs to the elevated train. As Akeem disappears from view, we CRANE DOWN to the street below ...

The ROYAL MOTORCADE is approaching. The lead car, a black Mercedes with Zamudan flags flying from the fenders, SCREECHES to a halt in front of Akeem's building. Several GUARDS leap out at once. Right behind them are two limousines -- a long one and an even longer one. A host of SERVANTS and ROSE BEARERS jump out, hastily taking their positions.

The KING'S OWN LIMOUSINE wheels up to the curb. It is the longest of them all, a gleaming gold, custom Mercedes 600 stretch. A SERVANT opens the door. The rose bearers toss petals on the sidewalk as King Joffe Joffer gets out, followed by Queen Aolean. They look at the squalid neighborhood.

QUEEN

Oh, my God.

KING

The place called Manhattan was dreadful enough ... this is unspeakable. Wait here. I shall return shortly with our son.

The King, preceded by rose bearers and surrounded by servants, marches grandly towards the

BARBER SHOP

Clarence, Sweets and the other old men are sitting around as usual.

CLARENCE (EDDIE)

Joe Louis would mop the floor with his ass. Compared to Joe, Mike Tyson hits like a girl.

SWEETS

Bullshit.

(spying the King's
Procession)

Who the hell is this?

CLARENCE

Looks like the Wise Men.

The doors to the barber shop burst open as the guards enter, followed by the rose bearers. The King strides into the room.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

What's up, brother? You too late for the Christmas pageant.

KING

I am King Joffe Joffer, ruler of Zamuda.

CLARENCE

Well, take a seat. Number two chair be free in a minute.

KING

I do not require your services. I am here to rescue my son Akeem.

CLARENCE

Who?

SWEETS

You must be talkin' about the African man.

CLARENCE

Oh, yeah. He's around somewhere. Lives upstairs ... I think it's the fifth floor.

Without a word, the King spins around and marches out. Clarence shouts at the rose bearers as they depart.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)

Hey! Who's gonna clean up these flowers?

CUT TO:

THE STAIRWAY LEADING TO AKEEM'S APARTMENT

We are CLOSE on Stu the drunk who is sprawled across the landing. He is sprinkled with rose petals as the rose bearers step over him, followed by the King and the host of servants.

CUT TO:

INT. AKEEM AND SEMMI'S REDONE APARTMENT - SAME TIME

The Landlord is living it up, soaking in the jacuzzi, listening to his new stereo which is tuned to Nat King Cole singing Unforgettable. There is a loud RAP at the door.

LANDLORD

(grandly)

You may enter!

The door bursts open and the royal procession enters. The Landlord's jaw drops as he sees the King. For all he knows, this could be an apparition.

LANDLORD (CONT'D)

Holy shit.

KING

Where is my son? What have you done with him?

LANDLORD

Who you talking about?

The King sees a photograph of Akeem hanging on the wall. It's an "Employee of the Month" certificate from McDowell's.

The King is outraged at the sight of his son wearing a paper McDowell's hat.

KING

Akeem! What is this from?

LANDLORD

McDowell's ... place over on Northern Boulevard. I think that's where he works.

KING

(enraged)

My son works! We shall soon see about this. Where is he now?

LANDLORD

I don't know. He moved downstairs ... apartment 1-A.

The King turns and exits, preceded by his huge entourage.

CUT TO:

THE STAIRWELL

Once again the members of the procession step over Stu the drunk who is now almost completely covered in rose petals.

CUT TO:

APARTMENT 1-A

A royal guard BANGS on the door. Semmi comes out, surprised to see the King.

SEMMI

Your Majesty! What are you doing here?

KING

I received your telegram. Where is Akeem?

SEMMI

He went out.

(trying to butter him up)

So how was your flight? Comfortable, I trust.

KING
 (grabbing Semmi by the collar)
 Listen, you little pissant. Your only job was to look after Akeem. How could you let him come to such a pass?

SEMMI
 I'm sorry, Your Majesty. Akeem won't listen to me. He's gone quite mad.

KING
 Have no fear. I will fetch him and we shall return to Zamuda immediately.

SEMMI
 Thank you, Your Highness. Perhaps I can help you find ...

KING
 No, I shall find him myself.
 (letting go of Semmi)
 As for you, Semmi, you have disgraced yourself and you must be punished. Confine yourself to our royal suite at the Waldorf-Astoria.

SEMMI
 Yes, Your Majesty.

KING
 (to a Servant)
 See that he puts on some decent attire.
 (to two Beautiful Maidens)
 And I want you to bathe him thoroughly.

SEMMI
 (deliriously happy,
 kissing the King's ring)
 Oh, bless you, Sire.

INT. THE CENTER FOR AFRICAN ART IN MANHATTAN - NIGHT

Akeem and Lisa are among the CROWD who have gathered for the opening of an African Art Exhibit. Lisa looks especially pretty. She is wearing a nice dress -- and the ruby earrings Akeem sent her.

They walk along, examining the exotic masks, carved wooden figures and pieces of sculpture.

LISA
I love African art.

They stop to examine a piece of sculpture which depicts two lovers entwined in an embrace.

AKEEM
Are you familiar with Buale sculpture?

LISA
No.

AKEEM
The Buale believe that couples on earth were lovers before in the spiritual world.

LISA
Really? That's nice.

AKEEM
It is said that those who touch the sculpture will be blessed by the Gods of Fertility.

Lisa closes her eyes and places her hand on the sculpture. Akeem places his hand on hers.

They continue through the exhibit. One room of the center is displaying the art of Zamuda.

LISA
Oh, look. Zamuda. That's where you're from isn't it?

AKEEM
Yes.

LISA
What's it like?

~~LISA~~ AKEEM
Oh, it's very beautiful. You would love it. The people are so friendly. Believe me -- they would treat you like a queen.

Lisa smiles. She examines some works of art. Akeem looks at the far wall and is instantly alarmed at what he sees
--

A PORTRAIT OF THE ROYAL FAMILY

Akeem in his prince's attire, posing with his parents.

AKEEM

instantly grabs Lisa and kisses her passionately to keep her from seeing the painting. Lisa is surprised but at the same time pleased by his sudden passion.

LISA

Akeem ... people will see us.

AKEEM

Let them see.

He kisses her again, turning her away from the painting.

LISA

I've never seen you like this.

AKEEM

It's the gods of fertility. Let's go, Lisa.

LISA

Now?

AKEEM

Yes, right now.

He tries to rush her out of the room. Lisa stops him. The painting of Akeem is right behind her, but miraculously she has not seen it.

LISA

I don't want to rush into anything ... unless it's serious.

Akeem kisses her again. A middle-aged MUSEUM GUARD is standing nearby, pretending not to notice.

LISA (CONT'D)

Where do you want to go?

AKEEM

My apartment.

LISA

Are you sure?

AKEEM

I'm very sure.

They hurry out, arm in arm. The Museum Guard shakes his head. He looks around to see if anyone's watching. He rubs the fertility sculpture.

CUT TO:

INT. MCDOWELL'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Maurice and the other employees gawk at the sight of the king and his entourage in their magnificent clothes, striding toward the counter.

MAURICE
(awestruck)
Jesus.

CUT TO:

THE OFFICE IN BACK - SAME TIME

Mr. McDowell is on the phone.

MR. MCDOWELL
Listen, Darryl. Come on over to the house tonight about nine. Lisa should be home by then.
(pause)
Yeah, don't worry, buddy. We gonna work something out. Okay.

Maurice hurries in, all excited.

MAURICE
Mister McDowell ... somebody here to see you.

MR. MCDOWELL
Are they from McDonald's?

MAURICE
I don't think so!

Mr. McDowell hurries out to ...

THE RESTAURANT

The King and his minions are waiting impatiently.

MR. MCDOWELL
What can I do for you?

KING
I am King Joffe Joffer, ruler of
Zamuda. I am searching for my
son Akeem.

MR. MCDOWELL
Your son?

KING
Yes. My son the Prince.

MR. MCDOWELL
(amazed)
A prince?! Are you sure?

KING
(angrily)
I should be! He is my son.

MR. MCDOWELL
I knew there was something special
about that boy!

KING
Where is he?

MR. MCDOWELL
He's out with my lovely daughter
Lisa. You know it's a beautiful
thing when two children can get
together ...

KING
Of all the things he could do to
disgrace me. I am staying at the
Waldorf. When you see him, call
me.

MR. MCDOWELL
I'll tell him you're here.

KING
No. Do not alert him to my
presence. I shall deal with him
myself.
(handing him some money)
For your trouble.

MR. MCDOWELL
Thank you, your royalness.

The King and company exit as quickly as they came. Mr.
McDowell watches them take off in the magnificent limousines.
He can't believe it! He looks at the bill in his hand --

CLOSE ON THE CURRENCY

It is a hundred-pound note from Zamuda, imprinted with a royal portrait of Akeem.

MR. MCDOWELL

stares at the bill, swallowing hard.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)

Damn!

CUT TO:

EXT. AKEEM'S TENEMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

A taxi pulls up. Akeem gets out, holding the door for Lisa. Suddenly Akeem sees something on the sidewalk that makes his heart freeze -- a path of rose petals. He knows his father has arrived.

AKEEM
Wait!

LISA
What?

AKEEM
We can't go in.

LISA
Why not?

AKEEM
I'll be right back. Stay in the car.

Akeem rushes ...

INSIDE THE BUILDING

Stuck on the front door of Apt. 1-A is a note which reads "I have gone to Royal Suite at Waldorf-Astoria ... Semmi". Akeem tears down the note, stuffing it into his pocket. He dashes ...

OUTSIDE THE BUILDING

AKEEM
We must leave.

LISA
I don't care about the apartment
...

AKEEM
It's not that. This is wrong,
Lisa. I feel I am rushing you.

LISA
No you're not.

AKEEM
It is better we take our time.

LISA
But I want to.

AKEEM
No, it's better I take you home.

LISA
(disappointed)
Oh.

They get back into the cab and drive away.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MCDOWELL HOUSE - NIGHT

Akeem and Lisa enter. Mr. McDowell greets them enthusiastically, throwing his arms around Akeem, pounding him on the back.

MR. MCDOWELL
Akeem! It's good to see you!

AKEEM
(puzzled)
It's good to see you, too.

MR. MCDOWELL
Come inside and have a little drink.

AKEEM
Perhaps another time. I really
can't stay.

MR. MCDOWELL
Oh, come on. We don't spend enough
time talking, you and me.

They walk into ...

THE LIVING ROOM

Mr. McDowell POPS open a bottle of champagne, pouring a glass for Akeem, Lisa and himself.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
 Drink up, children. Enjoy!
 (bowing)
 I'll be back in a minute.

We FOLLOW Mr. McDowell as he rushes into ...

THE KITCHEN

He takes a piece of paper out of his pocket, picks up the phone and dials quickly.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
 (into the phone)
 King Joffe Joffer's room.
 (beat)
 Hello, King.

KING OS
 (muffled over phone)
 Yes.

MR. MCDOWELL
 Cleo McDowell. The kids are here.

KING OS
 Where?

MR. MCDOWELL
 It's 2432 Derby Avenue in Jamaica
 Estates. Looking forward to ...

We hear the CLICK of the phone, then a LOUD DIAL TONE.
 Mr. McDowell hangs up the phone and walks back into ...

THE LIVING ROOM

AKEEM
 (to Mr. McDowell)
 I really must be going.

MR. MCDOWELL
 Oh, you can stay a little longer.
 Have a seat.
 (pointing to a Barca
 lounge)
 Sit in my chair.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
Excuse me for a second.

Mr. McDowell goes to ...

THE FRONT DOOR

He opens the door. It's Darryl, carrying a bouquet of flowers, wearing his Sunday best smile. Mr. McDowell SLAMS the door in his face. He walks back into ...

THE LIVING ROOM

LISA
Who was that?

MR. MCDOWELL
Just one of those Jehovah Witnesses.

The DOORBELL RINGS again.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
'Scuse me.

Mr. McDowell leaves the room and opens ...

THE FRONT DOOR

Darryl is standing there, perplexed.

MR. MCDOWELL
(to Darryl)
The girl doesn't like you anymore!
Can't you get it through your head?

DARRYL
But you told me to come ov...

BAM! Mr. McDowell slams the door in his face. He walks back into ...

THE LIVING ROOM

The DOORBELL RINGS again and again. Mr. McDowell turns on his heels and goes back to ...

THE FRONT DOOR

This time he doesn't even bother to answer. He takes a small ladder out of the closet, climbs up, and RIPS the doorbell box off the wall.

He tosses the bell into the closet with the ladder and then saunters back into ...

THE LIVING ROOM

MR. MCDOWELL
Now where were we ...

We hear a LOUD KNOCKING at the door.

OUTSIDE

Darryl is BANGING persistently. The door opens.

MR. MCDOWELL
I warned you! Git him, Spike!

The McDowell's German Shepherd charges out of the door, snarling, chasing Darryl around the corner of the house.

BACK IN THE LIVING ROOM

Mr. McDowell returns, all smiles.

AKEEM
(getting out of the chair)
I appreciate your hospitality,
Mr. McDowell but ...

MR. MCDOWELL
Oh, you can stay a little longer.
I got some delicious hors d'oeuvres
in the oven. I'll see if they're
ready.

Mr. McDowell exits to the kitchen.

AKEEM
Lisa, I must leave.

LISA
Is something wrong, Akeem?

AKEEM
I'll tell you later. Say goodbye
to your father for me.

Akeem leaves.

Mr. McDowell enters carrying a tray of cocktail wieners.

MR. MCDOWELL
Where's Akeem?

LISA
He had to leave.

MR. MCDOWELL
He can't leave!

LISA
Daddy, why are you being so nice
to Akeem?

MR. MCDOWELL
I like the boy.

LISA
You didn't even want me to go out
with him.

MR. MCDOWELL
I was wrong.

LISA
(suspicious)
Are you up to something?

MR. MCDOWELL
No. Why? A man has a right to
change his mind, don't he?

LISA
(on to him)
Daddy ...

MR. MCDOWELL
The two of you make a beautiful
couple.

LISA
Daddy ...

MR. MCDOWELL
He's a fine young man.

LISA
Daddy ...!

MR. MCDOWELL
(not able to contain
himself any longer
Okay! He's rich! He's rich! Look!
The nigger's got his own money.
(taking out the hundred
pound note)
When he says he's got money ...
he's got his own money!

Lisa looks at the bill, shocked.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
 He's a prince! You've hit the
 jackpot! Your little goat herder
 makes Darryl look like a welfare
 case!

EXT. PARK AVENUE - NIGHT

It is now raining. There is an immense traffic jam.

INSIDE A CAB

Akeem is restless. He sees the hotel a block ahead.

AKEEM
 (to Cabbie)
 Let me out here.

Akeem pays him, jumps out of the cab, and runs down the rain-soaked street to the Waldorf-Astoria.

INT. ROYAL SUITE - MOMENTS LATER

Semmi is having his nails done by two Maidens. Akeem runs in, wet from the rain.

AKEEM
 Semmi!

SEMMI
 (innocently)
 Good news, Akeem, we've been
 rescued.

AKEEM
 Where are my parents?!

SEMMI
 They've gone to find you.

Akeem's servant Oja enters, excited to see the Prince.

OJA
 Your Highness, thank God you're
 safe! The King and Queen are
 worried sick about you.

AKEEM
 Where are they?

OJA
 They're looking for you ... at
 the home of a man named McDowell.

Akeem starts to leave.

OJA (CONT'D)
(frustrated)
Where are you going now?

AKEEM
Back to Queens.

OJA
But you're soaking wet! Change
your clothes.

AKEEM
I have no time.

OJA
At least put on a robe.

Oja hands Akeem a splendid robe. Akeem hurries out.

EXT. WALDORF-ASTORIA - MOMENTS LATER

Akeem jumps into a royal limo carrying his robe. The car speeds away.

INT. MCDOWELL HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. McDowell is pacing, worried.

MR. MCDOWELL
Where could he have gone?

LISA
I don't know and I don't care.

There is a loud KNOCK at the door.

MR. MCDOWELL
That's probably his folks. Promise
me you'll be polite.

LISA
I don't want to talk to anybody.

Lisa stalks off to her room. Mr. McDowell answers the door. The King and Queen are waiting impatiently.

MR. MCDOWELL
Oh, look who's here! Come in,
come in. Welcome to Casa de
McDowell. Sorry the doorbell's
broke.

The King and Queen enter the house.

KING
Where is Akeem?

MR. MCDOWELL
Oh, he uh ... just stepped out.
Probably went for pizza. You know
how these youngsters are.
(to the Queen)
This must be your lovely wife.
How are you today?

QUEEN
Fine, thank you.

MR. MCDOWELL
Gee, I don't know whether to kiss
your hand or shake it or bow or
what. Come on in ... take a load
off. Your son oughta be back any
minute.

Mr. McDowell leads them into ...

THE DEN

The King looks at the room, aghast at the middle-class decor.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
Sit down, sit down.
(to the Queen)
Try the recliner. It's real
comfortable.

The Queen sits tentatively in the Barca Lounger.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
Here ... put your feet up.

Mr. McDowell pulls the lever on the chair. The Queen rocks
back and her feet shoot up. She is taken by surprise.

QUEEN
Oh.
(trying gamely to be
polite)
Very nice.

Mr. McDowell offers the King a tray of hors d'oeuvres.

MR. MCDOWELL
 Here you go. Try some of these
 little pigs-in-a-blanket. They're
 the frozen kind, but you'd never
 know it.

KING
 (mortified)
 No, thank you.

MR. MCDOWELL
 I'd offer you some champagne, but
 I just finished the last bottle.
 How 'bout a beer?
 (rummaging through the
 refrigerator in the
 bar)
 Let's see ... I got Old Milwaukee
 ... Colt 45 ...

KING
 We do not drink beer.

The PHONE RINGS in another room. Mr. McDowell goes to answer
 it.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
 Excuse me a second.

Mr. McDowell enters ...

THE KITCHEN

He picks up the phone.

MR. MCDOWELL (CONT'D)
 Hello.

CUT TO:

EXT. MCDOWELL'S RESTAURANT - SAME TIME

Maurice is calling from a pay phone across the street.
 Several FEDERAL MARSHALS are milling around, setting up a
 barricade, padlocking the door of the restaurant.

MAURICE
 Mr. McDowell ... Maurice ... they
 closed us down!

MR. MCDOWELL
 Who did?

KING

Leave us.

Mr. McDowell exits.

KING (CONT'D)

I understand you are seeing my son.

LISA

I was seeing him.

KING

Then I'm sure he told you about his wife in Zamuda?

LISA

(unbelieving)
He's married?

KING

No, but he will be soon. So, you see, he is not at all serious about you. Akeem came to America to sow his wild oats. You were just a momentary diversion.

· Lisa tries to maintain her aplomb.

LISA

Please leave me alone.

KING

I am a fair man. I realize you have been inconvenienced and I am prepared to compensate you for your time.

(The King takes out his royal checkbook)

Shall we say one million American dollars?

LISA

(trying to contain herself)

Please get out of my room.

KING

Two million, then, but not a penny more.

CUT TO:

THE DEN

Mr. McDowell is trying to entertain the Queen.

MR. MCDOWELL

Are you comfortable, Mrs. uh ...
I'm not sure what to call you.
My name's Cleo.

QUEEN

(shaking his hand)
Nice to meet you, Cleo. My name
is Aolean.

Lisa rushes past them, very upset.

MR. MCDOWELL

Lisa, honey, where you goin'?
I want you to meet the Queen.

The Queen looks at Lisa, concerned.

QUEEN

Are you all right, my dear?

LISA

I'm sorry ... I have to get out
of here.

Lisa runs out.

MR. MCDOWELL

(calling after her)
What's the matter, baby?

The King returns. The Queen turns on him.

QUEEN

What did you say to that young
lady?

KING

I told her the truth. That Akeem
was not interested in her.

QUEEN

How can you be so sure?

KING

Oh, come now. Our son cannot
consort with such a girl. Look
how she lives.

MR. MCDOWELL

Now, wait a minute ...

QUEEN

Joffe, you are being very rude!

KING

Nonsense! Look around you. This place is a hovel.

QUEEN

Apologize to Mr. McDowell.

KING

I will do no such thing. The man is beneath me and so is his daughter.

Mr. McDowell has had enough.

MR. MCDOWELL

All right! Now you gone too far! I don't give a rat's ass who you are. This is America, bub.

(taking off his jacket)

Say one more word about me or my family and I'll drop you like a bad habit!

Akeem comes running in.

AKEEM

(noticing his parents)
Mother ... Father.

QUEEN

Are you alright, son?

AKEEM

Yes. Where's Lisa?

MR. MCDOWELL

Your daddy just ran her off.

AKEEM

(to the King)
What did you tell her?

KING

It is of no consequence. Come. We are going back to Zamuda.

AKEEM

Not without Lisa.

QUEEN

Then you are serious about her?

AKEEM

Of course. I love her!

Akeem dashes back out the door.

MR. MCDOWELL

(rubbing it in)

Look like you got some egg on your face, Mister Hooty-Hoo.

KING

Even if he does love her, they cannot marry. She's a commoner.

QUEEN

So what if she is?

KING

It is against our tradition.

QUEEN

Well, it's a stupid tradition!

KING

Who am I to change it?

QUEEN

I thought you were a king.

EXT. QUEENS BLVD. - NIGHT

It's raining hard. Lisa is walking determinedly down the street, wearing no coat, only the dress she wore to the museum.

THE ROYAL LIMOUSINE

glides down the rain-slicked street. Akeem looks out the window, searching for Lisa. He spots her.

AKEEM

Lisa!

Lisa sees Akeem and starts walking faster, heading for a subway station just ahead.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

Lisa, wait!

The car stops. Akeem hops out into the pouring rain, holding his princely robe over his head as he runs after her.

The ROYAL GUARDS pile out of the limousine after him.

AKEEM (CONT'D)
 (to the Guards)
 Go back. Leave me alone.

He runs after Lisa who disappears into the subway station.

CUT TO:

INT. THE SUBWAY STATION

Lisa, who is now soaking wet, boards a waiting train. Akeem leaps over the turnstyle and runs to the train, wedging his leg in the door just as it's about to close.

ON THE TRAIN

Lisa walks quickly through the car. Akeem follows her, pushing past the crowd of PASSENGERS.

AKEEM
 Lisa ... please listen to me.

LISA
 Why? Your father told me all I wanted to know.

She opens the door and walks into ...

THE NEXT CAR

Akeem is right behind her.

AKEEM
 My father doesn't speak for me.

LISA
 You people think just because you have some money, you can buy or sell whatever you want.

AKEEM
 That's not true.

LISA
 At least now I know who sent me these earrings.
 (she takes off the ruby earrings)
 Well, I don't want them.
 (dropping them into a cup of a BLIND BEGGAR)
 And I don't want you.

Lisa stalks off into ...

THE NEXT CAR

This is the last car of the train. She can go no farther. Akeem enters. The few PASSENGERS who are riding this car stare curiously at the sight of this beautiful wet girl and a man in a long flowing robe.

AKEEM

Please ... I love you, Lisa.

LISA

What about the woman you're supposed to marry?

Several of the passengers put down their newspapers. This is getting interesting.

AKEEM

I don't love her. Why do you think I came to America?

LISA

Your father told me. To screw around.

AKEEM

No, I came to Queens to find a bride. I came here to find you.

LISA

Then why did you lie to me? Why didn't you tell me you were a Prince?

AKEEM

I wanted you to love me for who I am.

LISA

(beginning to wear down)
I'm not sure who you are.

AKEEM

I am the man you fell in love with. Should it make any difference that I am rich?

LISA

No ... but you lied to me.

AKEEM

All you have to do is tell me you
did not love me when I was poor,
and I will never bother you again.

Lisa begins to soften.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

What do I have to do to prove
myself? Do you want me to renounce
my throne?

(throwing his robe onto
the floor)

Fine! There! I renounce my throne.
(loudly to the other
passengers)

I renounce my throne!

The Passengers look at him like he's nuts.

AKEEM (CONT'D)

I don't care about the crown.
I only care about you. Marry me,
Lisa McDowell.

Lisa wavers. A MIDDLE-AGED LADY PASSENGER is carried away
by the moment.

MIDDLE-AGED LADY

(in a thick Queens accent)
Aw, go on, honey. Take a chance.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ROYAL CHAPEL, ZAMUDA - DAY

Joyful BELLS ring in the tower. We CRANE DOWN to reveal
the scene of a royal wedding so splendiferous that it makes
Princess Di's ceremony look like a backyard affair. Masses
of WELL WISHERS are gathered. Doves of uniformed SOLDIERS
are assembled wearing plumed hats. Elegant horse-drawn
carriages await the wedding party.

The doors of the chapel open. Akeem and Lisa emerge. She
wears a wedding gown that would put Cinderella to shame.
The newlyweds smile and wave to the crowd. A huge CHEER
goes up.

The King and Queen walk out of the chapel, accompanied by
Mr. McDowell who looks very dapper in his grey cut-a-way
morning coat. Mr. McDowell waves to the cheering fans, having
the time of his life. The CROWD ROARS again as Mr. McDowell
raises the King's arm in a gesture of triumph.

The King looks as though he would like to protest, but he is stifled by a sharp look from the Queen.

Two DOCTORS roll out the ancient Grandfather in a wheelchair. They ZAP him with a defibrillator. He waves to the crowd.

Semmi, dressed as the best man, is standing on the steps beside Imani Izzi, the young woman Akeem was to have married.

SEMMI

(flirting with her)

I suppose this means you will be able to date.

IMANI

(cooly)

Perhaps.

SEMMI

(firmly)

Then you will go with me to the ball.

IMANI

Ask me nicely. I do not have to take orders from you.

Semmi's courage falters, but his smile remains.

Akeem and Lisa get into a magnificent carriage drawn by a team of white horses. They wave to the CHEERING throng.

LISA

Would you really have given all this up for me?

AKEEM

Sure. Of course.

(teasing)

If you want, I'll give it up right now.

LISA

(smiling)

Nahhh.

They kiss.

THE ROYAL PROCESSION

moves through the gates of the palace and onto the street, passing by a vacant lot where a sign is erected. It says, "COMING SOON ... ANOTHER FINE MCDOWELL'S RESTAURANT."

SUPERIMPOSE CLOSING CREDITS

as the royal procession wends its way through the cheering crowd.

FADE OUT

THE END