

"THE CREW" Series
Season #1, Episode #1

"MEET THE CREW"

by Trayce Gardner

Version: 5/29/17

Writers Guild East (2017)

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FADE IN

INT. BAR - NIGHT

SATURDAY, 11PM, 2016 - OCTOBER

THE CLOSED ENTRANCE DOOR.

IN THE BACKGROUND THE MUMBLE OF CUSTOMERS ON A QUIET NIGHT
BLENDS WITH THE FAINT HIP-HOP BEAT FROM A BACKROOM.

BAM!!! THE DOOR EXPLODES OPEN. In pile ANTHONY, 25, Black,
a charismatic leader even in his fatigue, dressed in hip-hop
casual and fused with his film crew of five, moving wearily
as a block of assorted jackets, caps, and races.

At the bar counter like synchronized dance, they splitter
off onto the individual stools --- Except for KAZIA the 30
yr old, woman Director of Photography (DP), and DANTE the 25
yr old Latino Gaffer.

Kazia is an intense Jewish woman firing on all
cylinders. Her hair knotted back, she wears loose fitting
pants with lots of utility pockets and big heavy boots, and
an "I'm With Her" button on her jacket. Dante, in flashy
hip-hop and a KNICKS cap, is happiest hanging in cruise
control, taking advantage of being Anthony's best friend
since childhood.

Kazia carries a big black equipment bag, as does
Dante. They both go to set down their bags and
bump. Glaring, already pumped from previous fighting, they
slam down their bags at opposite ends of the wall.

Trailing a step behind, APRIL enters with a
not-yet-part-of-the-gang uncertainty. She's 22, White, with
long hair wildly sticking out from her cap.

Kazia and Dante take the always-left-empty-for-them two
stools on either side of Anthony, the Director.

April is left taking a stool perpendicular to the line-up of
crew that starts with Kazia.

The BARTENDER, 30s, attractive but scruffy and unhappy
looking, is lining up shots in front of the crew. He starts
to put a shot glass in front of April who waves it away.

APRIL
No thank you. Sweet tea?

(CONTINUED)

BARTENDER
Long Island --

APRIL
No. RC -- uh cola, please.

The Bartender guns cola into a glass as April watches Anthony.

ANTHONY
(raising glass to Dante)
Hey Bro -- Happy Big One, 25! -- to
my man, who don't do cake -- here's
to you!

The rest of the crew indifferently raise their glasses. Anthony and Dante tap glasses and down the shots. Anthony turns his attention to the whole crew.

ANTHONY
Serious guys, you were all great!
I'm glad we can have this moment
together. Just go light -- we still
have the Funeral scene in the
morning.

Anthony now turns to his DP and Gaffer and speaks privately.

ANTHONY
(miserable)
Sorry for the problems....
(now pumped)
I swear tomorrow is tight! We'll
get every shot!

KAZIA
Anthony, it's too much! You need
a Producer. And besides --
(glaring toward Dante)
-- when some people don't pull his
own.

DANTE
Man, you go on and on. Get loose,
life happens. So, you didn't have
a 60mm lens. You still shot
close-ups, right?!

KAZIA
Life happens -- and you take
responsibility! Where was "sorry"?

(CONTINUED)

DANTE

(appealing to Anthony)

I was being driven crazy by that black snowflake Rodney playing his fucked-up music all day on the set -- *"to put you in the mood"*. Me wanting to demonstrate *my* perfect pitch -- and toss his box into a toilet. And then there's the "WAA-WAAH"! -- her nagging?!

KAZIA

If it had been me on Adorama pickup, I would have gone down the list checking your light package Dante, just like I did my camera gear.

DANTE

Hey, they're taking cost off! -- I been saying, Kazia, you too flash on our budget!

(appealing to Anthony)

All that cost is out of you! Our budgets were cheaper before *her*.

KAZIA

That's right, cheap!

(appealing to Anthony)

And so was the look. I like working with you Anthony, but you know I'm building my reel. So one day I *will* be in Cinematographers XX.

As Kazia talks, Dante takes out a fidget spinner toy.

DANTE

Go back to Docs where you belong!

Dante gives the spinner a thump to get it spinning and aims it past Anthony towards Kazia, who looks away disgusted. Dante grins.

Anthony raises both hands as if surrender, his elbows up in the faces of the DP and Gaffer. Suddenly Anthony slams his hands over his ears and vigorously shakes the frustration out of his head.

Kazia and Dante glare at each other one last time and then look away. Dante thumps the spinner again and looks around for the bartender.

(CONTINUED)

Next to Dante is AARON the Sound Engineer, (maybe) 20, taking a long sip through the straw in his tall soda. He has a slight build, dark hair -- looking Sicilian or Albanian -- and noticeably large ears. He's quiet, listening to all the sounds -- what people say being the least interesting. His big headphones hooked around his neck, sound pack on the stool beside him.

After pouring for Dante, the Bartender gloomily wipes a spill in front of Aaron.

AARON

I can hear your refrigerator under the counter.

(gestures)

Five feet over?

BARTENDER

Yeah?

(looks down and over)

So?!

The Bartender braces for a complaint, but Aaron is confiding as to a friend.

AARON

It's that you shouldn't just look. On location, you have to listen -- and listen at different times. Our location today, no one listened. Not until I was brought on today -- and we're shooting!

You know the vilest -- the worst -- you can say about a location?

(waits for bartender's shrug)

Central! Central heating! Central air! Can't shut it off. Who has enough blankets. And if it's old -- old has it's own sounds. Do you ever notice sound? (cont)

The Bartender looks uncomfortable, and starts fidgeting with straightening something under the counter, yet he continues to listen.

AARON (CONT)

I marked today's location down as a "Roar" -- not a Simba roar -- it was Mufasa every 8 minutes! Like the heat was dying, and needed the roar at its back to get running again.

(CONTINUED)

BARTENDER

Too bad.

(slightly bitter)

If your sound's not right, nothing
you can do.

AARON

(sighing)

Post. Time and cost.

Aaron takes a small box of gum chiclets out of his sound bag
and gifts it to the surprised Bartender.

AARON

I also give these out to people who
know how to listen -- not for the
message -- for the gum.

BARTENDER

(reading the box)

How About A Nice Big Pack of SHUT
THE HELL UP! (8) Pieces Cinnamon
Gum

The Bartender grins, for a moment awake. He shakes out gum
and pops it in his mouth.

AARON

(defeated again)

You have to have something that
makes you real. You know, to
yourself, that's what counts. For
me it's Sound. I should've been
there, the listener, from the
start.

Next to Aaron is ADIVA, 28, a stylish South
Asian, Make-Up/Hair/Wardrobe Artist.

Adiva has barely sipped her shot. She looks queasy, and
holds her stomach. She spots a bowl of peanuts further down
the counter and gestures hungrily to the Bartender who puts
the bowl in front of her. She grabs a big handful and
gobbles.

On the other side of her is TOKI, the Key Production
Assisant (PA), 30, broad-chested,
Japanese-mixed-with-something-else, his long black hair
pulled back in a samurai knot.

ADIVA

(to Toki)

I had to scramble today!

(CONTINUED)

(gesturing towards April)
She's got hair! I was expecting
Chivonn's shorty fro. I left my
hair kit at home. I mean, I'm glad
April was able to step in. She's
always so helpful, and learning
fast! Thank Goddess --as April
says-- for Mabel, or we'd have been
delayed longer.

AARON
(marveling to himself)
That car has so many sounds!

ADIVA
We had to buy the hair supplies
from CVS. Sorry to drain your
budget! But the dress, no spots and
tagged, so Anthony gets his money
back when he returns it.

TOKI
At least I was able to make
the cross. What was Anthony going
to do with a six foot cross if he
had bought it?

ADIVA
Total genius!
(scoffs more peanuts)
Cardboard and foil, lit, like for
real.

TOKI
Glue, cardboard, and scissors is
way more fun than 1s and 0s.

ADIVA
1s and 0s?

TOKI
I use to be a Code Monkey. I was a
top programmer for a tech company
focused on erasing humans from the
equation.

Toki watches with sympathy as Adiva chugs more nuts.

TOKI
Sorry about the Chinese food. When
Anthony's friend didn't deliver as
promised, it's what Anthony told me
to do. It was cheap and quick.

(CONTINUED)

(sympathetic)
Feeling pretty empty, huh?

ADIVA
(wrinkling nose)
Yeah...thanks for cleaning *that* up.

TOKI
Anytime.

ADIVA
(clutching her stomach in
alarm)
NO! I love Anthony, but he's got
to feed us better! I hope you keep
working with us. I can see you're
someone who makes things
better. April too.

TOKI
That means a lot. It wasn't as
organized as I like today. But I
feel comfortable with Anthony too,
and I'm learning a lot. If he lets
me, I could help make things easier
for him.

(tentative)
Will you forgive me for asking, but
among friends -- which I hope we're
becoming -- I ask my questions --
What did you say to yourself before
drinking the toast?

ADIVA
(amused)
And I said it so quietly! -- I
said, 'Hall Allah'.

TOKI
Praise Allah. You're Muslim. From
India? Pakistan?

ADIVA
I'm a Paki. No one in my family
drinks -- at least the older
generations. And me, never in
public back there. But then I came
here to school, and there was
drinking. It was such a big thing
for me! I felt so guilty!

(CONTINUED)

TOKI

I'm a Hapa, half Japanese, half Portuguese, from Hawaii. I know about Asian parents!

ADIVA

Actually it was in America that I first started to study Islam for myself. I guess I needed to reassure myself about *all the good* that is Islam. I've had so many confusions about lifestyle....

And the build-up of such horrible acts in the news, and then this election! It's all made me so sad -- and at the same time uncomfortable that people are now watching *me*!

Guess what?! *I* love what Islam promotes -- mutual love and care for each other. *If you read it right!*

TOKI

It's pretty consistent in all religions. The scriptures that teach love and affection for all humans -- the quickest forgotten and not repeated.

ADIVA

My cousin is at Stanford now. She chooses to wear the hijib. She gets so upset with the reactions! -- *A scarf on my head doesn't mean my brain has stopped! It says I am me.*

TOKI

You know, I kind of respect Rodney for being out there. You see him, and his music's not what you expect.

ADIVA

I grew up with my parents playing atonal music.

TOKI

My grandfather too.

(CONTINUED)

AARON
(listening in)
I think it's interesting how he
plays with sound.

DANTE
(leaning in)
I got a better chance of joining
the KKK then he has of making it
with that whacked music.

Behind the backs of the crew, MICHELLE, Anthony's EX, an attractive and efficient Black woman, 25, in business attire, heads for the door with two Black girlfriends. All three of them wear red and white Delta Sigma Theta scarves.

Michelle sees Anthony as he sees her. Anthony flashes from happy to confused to awkward. Michelle gestures good-bye to her girlfriends and turns to him.

ANTHONY
The Reds are here. How's the sweet
life?

MICHELLE
I'm still liking it.

Dante and Kazia spotting the Ex raise their eyebrows, on the same page for once. A reluctant Anthony gets off the stool and moves to the side with his Ex.

ANTHONY
Look good, like always.

Michelle stares at Anthony with both hunger and frustration. She looks towards the seated crew.

MICHELLE
(sighing)
Guess you finished a shoot.

Michelle forces herself to brighten. She reaches out and presses her hand over Anthony's chest in a soothing way, knowing exactly where he's tight.

Fighting it -- then not, Anthony relaxes, releasing the breath he didn't realize was held.

MICHELLE
(purring)
I thought of you yesterday. Sean,
a new friend, is a super film buff
- went to film school too! Great
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MICHELLE (cont'd)

guy and an Omega Psi Phi -- which means we look out for each other. Sean is manager at Home Depot in Bed-Stuy -- where you're always buying things for your shoots!

Sean has his bosses raving! They're grooming him to move up to the regional office. He needs to train an assistant manager to take over. He'd *really* like someone with personality. And I thought, Anthony has a business minor!

If you work there you get great discounts! Sean gave me his card. He wants to invite you for a drink.

Michelle takes out a business card and her cell at the same time. Her eyes shift from Anthony to the cell screen as she passes Anthony the card.

Alarm and frustration immediately register on Michelle's face as she reads the message. As Michelle is texting a reply -- Anthony angrily balls the card and hurls it.

MICHELLE

(sighing)

Just trying to support.

Anthony turns his back on Michelle and returns to his stool. He gestures to the Bartender.

Michelle sends off the text still disturbed by the urgent message. She hurries out on a mission.

LATER

In the background, with a quiet moment, the Bartender is studying the box of gum that Aaron gave him.

Kazia, Dante, and Aaron have left. Toki and Adiva wave good-bye, as Anthony downs a beer. Only April remains.

The two big bags left by the DP and Gaffer remain against the wall.

April inches closer to Anthony until she is on the stool next to him. Blurry-eyed, Anthony turns wearily towards her and smiles sadly.

BLACK SCREEN

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY (V.O.)

I showed Kazia, my cinematographer, this huge painting by a long-dead white guy. His people, definitely not us! But the light! *The light he got!* It was -- it was emotion!

INT. SURREAL STAGE - NIGHT - FANTASY

(This is a film within a film -- Anthony is describing what happened on his shoot that day.)

A breathtaking, film-noirish beam of light cuts a line through the otherwise black nothingness.

ANTHONY (V.O.) (CONTD)

Like if you tried to crossed through it -- ZAP!!!! As in a movie -- You'd be transformed into a baby on planet Z! I told Kazia, "In the opening interior shot I want *this light*."

Around the strong beam of light, softer lights pop on -- revealing a black backdrop painted with broad white lines, creating a picture that looks like furniture in a working-class living room. The floor is black, and in the special lighting the white lines representing the furniture almost seem 3D.

THE HERO, a distraught sensitive Black male in his 20s, runs into the painted-on room. He darts around the surreal painted room, frantically searching.

ANTHONY (V.O.) (CONTD)

I had storyboarded dope angles so setups could be snap! We didn't have a lot of time.

The Hero suddenly falls to his knees and reaches into black shadows and pulls out a real box -- the only real object on the set. Nervously The Hero opens the box. He takes out a gun, handling it uncertainly.

ANTHONY (V.O.) (CONTD)

It's a *step-up-be-the-man* situation for him. Family go down?! You've gotta do right!

Click-Clap! The sound of someone approaching!

Hand shaking, The Hero whips the gun towards the figure.

(CONTINUED)

Out-of-breath, April in vulnerable-ingénue mode stumbles out of the shadows and stops in horror. April stares at the gun The Hero points at her.

THE SHARP BEAM OF LIGHT SEPARATES THE TWO PEOPLE.

Surprised to see April, The Hero flinches and points the gun away, but doesn't lower it.

APRIL
(begging)
Lay down the gun! He'll kill you
too!

But The Hero *must be* The Hero. Squares his shoulders, crocks his gun, angles his jaw. He stomps through the beam of light and starts past April, who now seems almost swayed -- even turned on -- by The Hero's vigilante swagger.

THEN SUDDENLY SOMETHING HAPPENS IN THIS FILM-WITHIN-A-FILM THAT IS NOT SCRIPTED:

April starts shaking uncontrollably, as though doused with freezing water.

April-the-Actress is surprised by herself, April-the-Person. In this moment she is a *person* who has forgotten what her character is supposed to do. She starts to sob uncontrollably, spinning her back to The Hero to hide her real grief.

ANTHONY (V.O.) (CONTD)
--- When you turned your back!
Started to cry?! Wow! *Where did*
that come from?!! It was soooooo
BAM!!!---

The Hero becomes a *person*, genuinely surprised and falling out of his actor's role. He *almost* looks towards the camera. Then he decides to try to sink back into character. As The Hero, he allows himself to become transfixed by April's sobbing back.

Something clicks for him, and The Hero becomes resolute again. He turns from April and walks back to the box. He lays down the gun and closes the lid. The Hero heaves the box back into the shadows.

The Hero stands slowly and looks straight into the camera. First uncertain, then solid. The Hero delivers a determined penetrating stare.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY (V.O.)(CONTD)
-- And he responded by looking into
the camera with this kind of
manhood stare....mmmmmm....
(sexual sounds)

APRIL (V.O.)
(first laughing --
then
uncomfortable) Whooooooooaaa!!!
That's your manhood expression ---

EXT. ALLEY BEHIND APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Trapped under his arms, April bangs Anthony's back with the two big black equipment bags she carries, then pushes away.

April takes several steps back and unwraps herself from the bags and drops them. She shrugs her jacket and scarf into place and straightens indignant. *In this version of April you feel her strength first -- her vulnerability is well hidden.*

Anthony is slightly intoxicated, playing it up to be more. Comically, Anthony carries only a small backpack, which he drops atop the big bags April put down.

APRIL
I offered to drive you home because
I thought you were drunk....And I
wanted to make up for how I lost it
on the set today. But that's all.
I need to go now.

As April starts to walk away, Anthony dances in front, doing a bugged imitation of Mars Blackmon from SHE'S GOT TO HAVE IT.

ANTHONY
*"Baby, you're so fine, I'd drink a
tub of your bath water."*

APRIL
(laughing)
Disgusting!

As April tries to walk off, Anthony weaves in front. In and out they go.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

(suddenly the indignant one)
"Baby-Baby!" You don't recognize
the words of one of Our Masters!

APRIL

(sniffing as if fighting a
cold)
What? Ok...uhhhmmm...SSSSpike?! ---
I'm more interested in something
original. Something that's
got *Girl-On-Her-Own Power*.

ANTHONY

(sobering)
You right, April! You are
original. I loved what you did --
Wrong! -- It wasn't you doing. It
was you *being*.
(bitterly)
But it's that yo-yo Rodney's video!
He wants his hero to go from poor
ordinary guy to mass killer for the
good -- like he's Lucious Lyon
becoming the new Godfather -- but I
don't think the street story fits
his music.
(with certainty)
But you had me believing in the
moment! I'm keeping your
footage! When I do my feature,
you won't just be someone's sweet
sister in a music video ---

Anthony leans forward and plants a gentle kiss on April's
cheek. April forces a small smile as she starts to move
away.

ANTHONY (CONTD)

(grinning wickedly)
--When I do my feature, I'll cast
you as *this-seductive-hot-momma*
who's ---

Anthony lunges to kiss April. April pushes him off.

APRIL

(pissed)
Look, Anthony, I enjoyed being in
another one of your music videos.
(sniffing)
Got you home! Now I'm out.
(stepping away)

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY
April, Wait!

Just then DEREK, a burly neighbor Anthony's age, but obviously with more economics, wearing an expensive jacket over casual slacks and holding hangers with dry cleaning.

DEREK
(sarcastically)
Heeey Tony! You were off today! You know how much I like you serving me! You missed a good tip -- I know you need it! What's the budget for your next masterpiece? Being poor really gets in the way of living -- don't it!

Anthony backs up, facing the adult version of a school bully.

DEREK
(up in Anthony's face)
Tell me now, who's the smart one!
(to April)
Always been meek as a girl! And thinks he's some director god.

APRIL
(advancing defiantly)
That's what I love about him!

DEREK
Yeah, that's where Tony always wanted to hang, was with the girls. And it wasn't because he was being a man! Doesn't know how.

Derek leers at April and walks on.

April goes to Anthony, who looks lost and deflated.

APRIL
Screw him! What does he know?! I'm going to star in your first feature!

ANTHONY
My feature. Sure.

Anthony picks up the two big black bags and the back pack. He steps up to a door and drops the bags in front, then leans his head against it.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

I have this nightmare. Know it's gonna sound like a joke, but it's not. I'm shooting a feature, with two blocks of trucks! And behind me these big time directors are judging me.

I call "Cut!" And Scorsese gives me a 9.8. A perfect 10 from Danny Boyle! And then this one judge gives me a 5.3?! That's all it takes to bring me down....

(hesitating, then softly)

Damn if it's not my mother! She doesn't know anything about filmmaking. Why does she get to judge me *in what should've been my dream?!...*

(absentmindedly)

It must have been all the swearing....

Anthony takes out a key.

ANTHONY

(beseechingly)

Come in? Something warm?

April impetuously gives Anthony a peck on the cheek.

APRIL

When you're not being a "guy", I like you. When you're directing me, you're interested in my ideas. You're interested in everyone's ideas. I dunno, it makes me think we could be friends.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

CLICK! SOUND OF KEY TURNING

The back door swings open and light from the street illuminates the dark hallway. Anthony and then April enter. THUD! Anthony drops all the bags.

SLAM! Anthony shuts the door shut and the hallway is enveloped in film-noirish shadows.

Uneasy, April pulls away from Anthony who now seems to be blocking the door.

(CONTINUED)

As April backs up, she is startled from behind and turns quickly -- *A male figure wearing a hat and a bulky coat looms over her!*

April does a double-take, realizing she has backed into a loaded coat rack.

APRIL
WHERE'S THE LIGHT?!

April goes behind the coats feeling for a light switch on the wall.

Anthony makes a game of reaching through the coats, pretending to search for April.

ANTHONY
(groping for her)
You are soooooo wonderful!
(triumphant)
GOTCHA!

Anthony grabs April playfully through the coats.

April jerks out of Anthony's grip and loses her footing. Both April and Anthony tumble, landing on a mess of men's shoes and sports equipment.

APRIL
HEYYYYYY!!!!!!

Anthony cups a hand over April's mouth to muffle her.

APRIL
I can't breathe!!!

ANTHONY
Sssshhhhhh!!!

April snaps out of Anthony's reach.

APRIL
(near hysterical)
Please don't be that kinda guy!

Anthony sobers, realizing April is frightened.

ANTHONY
I'm not going to hurt you!....My
roommate is sleeping. I was
worried about the noise....

(CONTINUED)

Anthony half stands and his hand reaches for the wall. A dim hall light comes on, breaking up the shadows. Anthony plops down -- and his butt lands on a sharp object, causing him to jump.

ANTHONY

Ouch!

April and Anthony look around at the same time at the mess they sit on and suddenly they are both snickering.

ANTHONY & APRIL

(laughing like kids)

Haaaaa--Haaaaa!!!!

April starts to sniff again. Anthony pulls a crumpled napkin out of his pocket and hands it to April. He looks at her for a moment, in his own private thoughts.

APRIL

You were so kind today, so patient.

ANTHONY

Serious. You think I'm a good director?

APRIL

You have a lot of confidence --- even when I know you're still trying to figure things out.

Anthony suddenly has lots of energy again. An open bag of softball bats leans against an overflowing big bag of dirty laundry. Anthony throws off his jacket and pulls out a bat.

Without his bulky jacket Anthony looks smaller, more boyish. He sets his stance, and sways the bat back and forth.

ANTHONY

Been shooting music videos since I was nineteen. They're fun. Brings in a little money and attention.

Anthony hits an imaginary home run and watches it take off. Satisfied, he sets the bat down. He crouches next to April.

ANTHONY

I want to get out of the backyard -- onto a real playing field. Film is a different level. *I know I can tell a great story --- fuck the grades I got!*

(CONTINUED)

I'm sick of being told what I don't got, don't know, and them telling me what I should do!

That's why I'm going to do a film about ordinary people. We're the biggest mystery because we don't know ourselves. There's been a huge conspiracy to make us feel small.

We don't want anyone to know us in the raw, so we get secretive and tell little white lies -- *and end up acting crazy!*

(looking to April for answer)

Why's it so easy to get messed up?

April abruptly stands up and buttons her coat tight.

APRIL

(unsettled)

I should be going -- I'm really hungry. I've got to eat something or I'll be sick!

ANTHONY

(jumping up)

Don't leave! Please! I'm too awake to sleep! Help me calm down. Just talk for a while. I'll get us some food. Please!

APRIL

(uncertain)

Okay...for a little while.

Anthony opens a door into a dark room and reaches in. A light comes on. He gestures for April to go in.

April looks into the room and then quickly pulls back.

APRIL

That's your bedroom!

ANTHONY

It's the only room I have. Sure there's a bed -- but there's also a little sofa, a desk, an electric coffeepot. I mean, I meet with people here. It's okay. I'll just grab some food from the kitchen.

(CONTINUED)

APRIL
Why can't we eat in the kitchen?!

ANTHONY
(embarrassed)
Because...I have a roommate.

APRIL
So?

ANTHONY
So, this apartment is mostly my
roommate's. His room is right next
to the kitchen and he's a light
sleeper. Noise and a
mess? Nah. He's a neat freak.

APRIL
My mother was a neat freak --
always "*My House -- Don't do that
in my house*". Don't breathe.
(letting out her breath)
This is getting strange ---

April turns away from Anthony heading for the back door.

ANTHONY
(bitterly)
What, am I too poor and pathetic
for you to associate with?

APRIL
(turning)
No! This is just confusing. I'm
not a first date kind of girl --
and this isn't a date.

ANTHONY
(embarrassed)
Hey, I like you. I don't talk like
this with other people...
(changing to lighter mood)
I'm pretty hungry now too! Let's
act like little mice and go find
the cheese!

Anthony makes a mouse sound in April's ear. April's serious
demeanor starts to crumble as Anthony does a strange mouse
dance on his tip toes.

APRIL
(laughing)
Ha-ha-ha ---!

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY
(raising finger to his lips)
Ssshhhhhh! Don't wake the
aliens! Follow me, lieutenant!

He leads April past his bedroom door and down the shadowy hall.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

A door opens and the kitchen lights up. It is an old-fashioned and simple room, but spotless and artful, with homemade decorative touches. There is a small round table with three chairs, refrigerator, stove, sink, and counter space. There is another door off of the kitchen.

Anthony and April tiptoe into the kitchen still playing. Anthony points at the other door.

ANTHONY
Shhhhhh! The alien's cave!

April nods okay and goes to the refrigerator without an invitation and opens it. She starts investigating, opening things and tasting, then putting what she likes on the counter.

Anthony takes one taste, then stands back and watches as April takes out more and more stuff, making a mess. Anthony looks with concern towards the closed door, afraid his roommate might come out.

But after a while he forgets to watch his roommate's door as he becomes amazed by April. She's no longer chewing in between tastes. At first it's comical, like an "I Love Lucy" routine, but then it gets seriously weird.

ANTHONY
(low voice)
Hey, slow down! You're going to
make yourself sick.

April has lost interest in the contents of the refrigerator and turns to a cabinet and starts to open it. Anthony quickly puts his hand on the door so it can't open and points to another cabinet.

ANTHONY
That's my -- my -- roommate's. This
is my cabinet.

(CONTINUED)

April opens Anthony's cabinet and immediately starts tasting and then tossing aside food items. Anthony watches, concerned but uncertain as what to do.

April finds a small, double-bagged, tin foil wrapped object hidden in the back of Anthony's cabinet.

ANTHONY

Found my secret stash.

Curious, April starts unwrapping and is surprised. It's an avocado.

ANTHONY

(embarrassed)

My roommate hates avocados.
M---He's not allergic or
anything. I dunno why, just hates
them.

(now excited about sharing)

But they're my favorite! Avocados
provide like twenty essential
nutrients....

April has quieted down, transfixed by the avocado. Anthony hooks his finger in April's waistband and gently pulls her closer. He gently kisses her forehead.

ANTHONY (CONTD)

...When they're soft and ripe, I
love to peel back their skin and
eat them like a fruit...

Beneath Anthony's adoring glance, April stares ferociously at the male finger hooked in her waistband.

April suddenly bats Anthony's hand away from her body. She slams the avocado on the counter and picks up a sharp knife and stabs the avocado. Her body starts shaking again.

Anthony is first stunned, then concerned.

ANTHONY

(quietly)

You okay?

April doesn't hear him. Anthony hesitates, then slowly puts his arms around April in a gentle fatherly embrace.

April squirms, but then she goes slack, exhausted. She begins to cry.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

You're safe.....Wanna talk?

APRIL

I'm sorry I lost it on the set. All that crying.

ANTHONY

No, it was amazing!

Anthony releases the now quieted April.

ANTHONY

(excited)

You made me re-hear that stupid song -- and see it could mean something different! If it was me, that would be the take.

(laughing)

You totally scared Keith! I thought he was going to yell -- "*You Got To Cut! What The Fuck's Going On?!*" -- But then you totally got to him too. I want to be as honest with my filmmaking as you were in that moment.

APRIL

(incredulously)

Really?

ANTHONY

(thinking)

To be squared, I need to be real in life too....

(awkwardly)

I think April, maybe you had a bad experience with some guy....Trust me, I don't want to be that guy.

Anthony takes a can of condensed milk out of the cabinet and the orange juice out of the refrigerator.

ANTHONY

I'm going to make you a drink like Eggnog. It really fills you up. Dante put me on to it.

(uncertain pronunciation)

Morir Sonando. He says that means "To Die Dreaming". Way to go, right!

BEEP! BEEP! Anthony pulls out his phone and reads a new text message.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

OH SHIT!!! Somehow Rodney got the Famous Actor to agree to a walk-on in the funeral scene tomorrow. He'd be perfect as my lead! -- If I can get him to read my script. Damn!

Anthony starts bouncing around, unable to contain his excitement and temporarily confused as what to do next.

ANTHONY

I've got to go to my room and gets some messages out!
(remembering to lower his voice)
---I'll be back in a few ---.

Anthony hurries out the door, leaving a stranded April staring at the unappetizing chaos of her crazy food binge. April sinks into one of the kitchen table chairs, exhausted and unhinged.

April looks towards the door where Anthony left, then behind her shoulder at the roommate's door.

Furtively April pulls from an inner coat pocket a tiny plastic bag with white powder. She takes a small make-up case out and opens it. Tapping a small white mound onto the little mirror, she pulls a waiter's crumber out of a different coat pocket and edges out a line.

April bows her head and sniffs. She sits back, eyes closed and breathes deeply.

CLICK! The roommate's door behind April opens.

April turns her head, curious to meet the roommate. Suddenly April jumps up.

APRIL

OH SHIT!!!!

BETTY, Anthony's mother, a tired looking, 45 years old, black woman, enters. She is dressed in a robe. She looks back at April with equal shock.

Regrouping, April reaches behind her back and feels for the make-up case and crumber, slipping them quietly into her pocket.

(CONTINUED)

BETTY

Who are you?! Where's Anthony?!

APRIL

I'm...I'm...

(sniffing)

April. I'm an actress. I'm in
Anthony's video.

Betty looks beyond April and takes in the mess on the
counter.

BETTY

What have you done to my kitchen?!!

Then the mother sees the tiny bag of white powder on the
table.

BETTY

(freaking out)

You disgusting thing! How dare you
bring that into *my house*!

APRIL

(guiltily backing away)

It's not mine!

BETTY

Get your drugs and your disgusting
self out of *my house*!

April rushes to the door leading to Anthony's hallway.
Betty blocks her.

BETTY

You are not going back to my son's
room!

(pointing to the door she came
through)

Front door's through my bedroom --
that way! Leave!

April scurries out that door. SLAM!!! Sound of front door
closing behind her.

Betty angrily pockets the little baggie in her robe
pocket. She walks wearily to the counter and starts dealing
with the mess.

The door to Anthony's hallway swings open.

(CONTINUED)

ANTHONY

April! It's going to happen! ---

Anthony's mouth falls open when he sees his mother. He looks frantically around the room.

Betty continues cleaning without looking up.

ANTHONY

(enraged)

This is why I hated moving back home!

His mother turns towards him, equally enraged.

BETTY

How dare you do *that* in *my house*!

ANTHONY

Look Mom, I'm not a teenager.
April's not underaged. Can't we be adults about this?

BETTY

Have you been doping other girls in *my house*!

ANTHONY

Doping?

BETTY

(voice cracking)

I raised you not to be like *that man*!

His mother thrusts the tiny bag of cocaine in Anthony's face.

ANTHONY

What? -----

(shaking his head)

It's not mine!

Then Anthony realizes -- and looks towards the direction April left.

Betty, disgusted, turns her back on her son. She pours the white powder down the sink drain and turns on the water.

As she stands at the sink, and he at the kitchen table, they are in two different worlds and not aware of each other.

Anthony has his phone out texting April and waiting for a response.

(CONTINUED)

Betty's back hides her emotional state from her son -- as her anger turns to tears. She continues to move things on the counter as though cleaning, but really can do nothing.

BETTY
(whispering to herself)
I sacrificed so Anthony wouldn't be
like *him* -- that Animal! *He kept*
me...

Silent sobs rack the mother's body.

Anthony, off the phone, stares with frustration at his mother's back, sure she's still angry at him.

ANTHONY
Mom, April has problems, but she's
a good person.

BETTY
(swirling angrily around)
When *good* people do *bad* things,
you still call them *good*?!!

ANTHONY
Mom, the bad thing April is doing
is hurting herself. Maybe there's
a reason.

BETTY
(accusing)
I don't recognize you any more.

With a sigh, Anthony works silently alongside his mother to put things back and restore order.

BETTY
(trying to soften)
This film thing is not good for
you. The people are not good for
you. You tried. I'm proud of how
hard you have worked! But you need
something that has a decent
future.

Betty opens a drawer and pulls out a small flyer and holds it out to her son.

BETTY
Home Depot is hiring -- You're
smart! You'll work into a
management job. And it's
physical! No desk! You could keep
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BETTY (cont'd)
doing little films. Maybe get a
discount on things you need ---
(a little smile)
After a while you'll have the dough
to move out from under this old
lady's roof.

Anthony grabs the flyer and balls it up. He flings it
against the wall.

ANTHONY
Why can't you respect me?! If you
want me to pay more rent, I'll pay
more rent. But don't give me any
more flyers!!!

Know what my classmates use to call
me? -- Bobblehead! I was always
dozing off. I had 5 classes and my
internship, while I worked two
jobs. Plus doing your fix-it
projects and taking you to
appointments! I can't count how
many days there's been no break for
night. And then there's the \$60
grand in loans.

(sighs)
I know it's really hard for us,
being raised right next to all this
New York "greatness", because all
we see is the wall. But I got a
peek behind it when I was in
school, and sometimes now when I
serve people. It's all here, and
I can't stop thinking about it. I
believe, no matter how you feel,
you get up, you show up, and you
never give up.

Mom, I'm still in my twenties, not
dead yet.

The mother sits down tiredly at the table. Anthony kneels
in front of her to get her attention.

ANTHONY
Didn't you ever really want to do
something? I mean, aside from me
-- Betty -- what did you want?

The mother, confused at hearing her name, stands abruptly
and returns to moving items on the counter. Suddenly her
eyes rivet on something she has uncovered.

(CONTINUED)

Anthony follows his mother's glance.

The stabbed avocado sits on the counter.

ANTHONY

(gently)

Mom, why do you hate avocados? Do you even remember what an avocado tastes like?

Dumbfounded, Betty looks away from the avocado.

ANTHONY

I think I know why you hate avocados. Somehow they remind you of *that man*, my father.

Momma, I'm sorry for whatever he did to you. But trust me -- please. I am not that man. I never even knew him. You raised me and I *have* learned the things you taught me. Why can't you see that?

Not looking at his mother, Anthony takes out a plate and sets the stabbed avocado on it. He pulls out the knife and cuts the avocado in half. Leaving the skin on, he slices one half and fans it on the plate.

Anthony sneaks a look at his mother, who has been watching intently. Finally Anthony faces his mother.

ANTHONY

Mom, I love avocados because they are healthy and they taste good! Some things you think bad, well, maybe they aren't.

April, the woman you just chased out of here --- Mom, I think she might have been raped.

Betty gawks speechless at her son.

ANTHONY

A lot of stuff came up for her today at the shoot. And right now, she's kind of out of control. I've got to go check on her, make sure she's good.

(CONTINUED)

BETTY

Maybe if something bad happened to her, it's too much for her to talk about.

ANTHONY

She doesn't have to talk. I just want her to know I'm there for her. I'm her friend.

Betty looks with growing respect at her son.

ANTHONY

I'm due back on the set in just few hours, and I have to do a couple of pick-ups before that....

BETTY

So I might not see you for a day or two, I know. Babala, promise me you'll eat.

Anthony leans over and kisses his mother's forehead.

ANTHONY

Stop worrying. I'm really okay. Anyway, it's too late to change me. I'm what you got.

Anthony heads towards his door.

ANTHONY

(turning back)

Sorry about the mess.....Hey, can you do some laundry? I need my blacks. I'll be at the shoot until 4pm and I just picked up a shift for tomorrow evening. You're so great! Thanks!

Anthony hurries down his hallway before his mother can say no.

ANTHONY (O.S.)

Love you!

The mother smiles. Suddenly Betty's attention is riveted again by the slices of avocado. There is a dialogue going on between her mind and the avocado.

She takes the plate and opens the garbage can lid, ready to toss the avocado. But then she looks towards where her son left.

(CONTINUED)

Betty stares at the avocado and sighs, releasing her breath and shoulders. She sets the avocado on the table and sits down next to it, transfixed.

Carefully Betty picks up a slice and peels back the skin, hypnotized by the green flesh. She puts her tongue out and cautiously places the avocado on it, then curls her tongue back into her mouth. She moves the avocado around her mouth. Her fears give way to an experience of the rich texture and flavor.

Betty looks towards her son's door as she licks her fingers. Then she sprinkles salt and pepper on the other slices and daintily eats.

FADE OUT

END OF EPISODE