

HIGH JINX

"Pilot"

Written by

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TEASER

EXT. NEW ORLEANS - ESTABLISHING SHOT - NIGHT

-A mother and son walk along a row of french colonial houses, a few with lights on, others boarded up, half destroyed.

-A crocodile's eyes surface in the murky waters of the bayou before disappearing once again.

-A man smokes a cigarette on a lit and lively Bourbon Street.

EXT. ELRICH HOME - NIGHT

A sprawling antebellum style home.

SUPER: 2014

INT. ELRICH HOME - NIGHT

Inside that home: it's gorgeous, you can smell the money.

Two young BOYS (4) and (6) race around the house, fighting over an old worn-out VOODOO DOLL. A pair of manicured hands separate the boys roughly. They belong to SCARLETT LINZ (26). She rises showing off a perfect figure. Is she their mother? No that's...

ALENA ELRICH (38) enters looking sour. She's put together like always, but no glamorous outfit in the world could mask this woman's distaste for life.

ALENA

Boys, come give me a kiss goodbye.

They attack her with hugs, clinging to her like monkeys.

BOY

When is daddy going to be home?

ALENA

He'll be back in a few days. We'll still have fun okay?

But the boys are no longer listening. They're running off, the voodoo doll the center of attention again.

Alena masks her hurt when she faces Scarlett. Any soft qualities she possessed a moment ago evaporated.

SCARLETT

That's a beautiful ring you got there Mrs. Elrich.

She eyes Alena's flashy ring, encrusted with rubies.

ALENA

It was an anniversary gift.

Alena takes a step closer to her. Scarlett recoils.

ALENA (CONT'D)

I want them in bed by seven. No excuses. I'll know if you let them stay up, so don't try it.

She eyes a NANNY CAM in the corner of the room. Scarlett doesn't catch this.

SCARLETT

Y-yes ma'am.

Alena goes to leave, but hesitates. She takes one last look at her ring, then to Scarlett. She slips it off her finger.

INT. ELRICH HOME - ALENA'S CLOSET - NIGHT

Scarlett is running her hands over Alena's collection of designer clothes when she spots her jewelry box. Without a second thought Scarlett opens it to reveal the RUBY RING.

She puts it on, admiring its beauty. Her trance is interrupted by the sound of a faint KNOCKING. Scarlett, oddly calm, follows the noise.

INT. ELRICH HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Scarlett approaches the basement door. There's that knocking again, coming from the other side. Her hand lingers on the knob before ripping it open to reveal HAROLD ELRICH (43). Neither looks surprised to see the other.

SCARLETT

Well hello Mr. Elrich. What took you so long?

HAROLD

Are the boys asleep?

SCARLETT

Out cold.

HAROLD  
And Alena?

SCARLETT  
Left thirty minutes ago.

A beat. He grabs her. These two are locked at the lips so long we're surprised they haven't come up for air.

One unzipped fly and a hiked up skirt later, and the two are engaging in passionate sex.

Close up on the nanny cam BLINKING.

INT/EXT. ALENAS CAR - BAYOU - NIGHT

Alena is sitting in her parked car watching the nanny cam footage in real time as Scarlett has sex with her husband.

ALENA  
There it is...my ring.

INT. UNKNOWN LOCATION - NIGHT

A new hand enters the frame, it's owner not revealed. It spins the same RUBY RING in it's fingers.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. BERNAVILLE APARTMENT - DAY

In contrast to the Elrich home this second story apartment is small and messy, located above a laundromat.

ROSALINE BERNAVILLE (41) biracial, attractive, and a little fed up, sets the table for her daughter ZELDA (18) not easily interested in things that aren't about her or high school, and her son CLEON (13) boyish and chipper, he lets life roll off him.

ROSALINE

I have a little surprise for us  
this morning...

She places a plate of fresh baked beignets on the table.

ROSALINE (CONT'D)

Straight out of Cafe Beignets oven.

CLEON

Sick! What's the occasion?

ROSALINE

Well the laundromat had a good  
week, figured why not? We haven't  
treated ourselves in a while.

ZELDA

I really shouldn't be eating this  
stuff at the peak of cheer season.

CLEON

More for me--

He goes to grab her beignet. Zelda swats him away.

ZELDA

I said shouldn't be, doesn't mean  
I'm not going to. Hey mom, if  
things are going so well can we get  
my car?

ROSALINE

I said we had a good week Zelda.  
Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Zelda lets out an aggravated sigh.

ZELDA

How are three people supposed to share one car?

ROSALINE

Does Cleon have a license I don't know about?

ZELDA

You act like I'm insane for wanting one!

ROSALINE

You act like I created Katrina! You think I'm happy about this?

She gestures to the apartment.

CLEON

I could make a good amount of cash if I join NOVA.

ROSALINE

What?

ZELDA

What?

Cleon instantly regrets what he said.

ZELDA (CONT'D)

Are you crazy?

ROSALINE

What is that? Some sort of school club?

CLEON

Uh yes?

ZELDA

It's a gang, mom.

CLEON

Take a joke. They're trying to recruit me, but I'm obviously not accepting. Good to know both of you think I'm an idiot.

ZELDA

Who's trying to recruit you? Is it Ron Dern? I'm gonna kill that kid--

ROSALINE

Listen to me, there will be no car and there will be no joining of gangs.

(MORE)

ROSALINE (CONT'D)

If you aren't satisfied with our current situation you can both get jobs.

Zelda gets up from the table, not absorbing anything her mother is saying.

ZELDA

Well here I go, walking to school, which *is* a full time job by the way.

ROSALINE

Oh your life is just so hard Zelda.

Zelda takes a moment to look around the apartment.

ZELDA

You're right. It is.

A stand off. Cleon pulls Zelda away before the fight can escalate any further.

INT. STORYVILLE JAZZ CLUB - DAY

The early morning light peaks through the thick velvet curtains hung on every wall of this place. Heavy cigar smoke hangs low in the air from the night before.

This is STORYVILLE, the best mens club New Orleans has to offer. Where bigwigs go to be anonymous. Where regulars go to hear excellent jazz.

Waitresses dressed in old time burlesque outfits line up against the bar. LACY (26) leans down and pulls hundred dollar bills from of her garter.

Behind the bar is PONS ABERNATHY (22). He sticks out like a sore thumb in this place with the appearance of an honors kid. He counts Lacy's money.

PONS

Twelve hundred...thirteen hundred. Jeez you made out.

LACEY

Got that Carson fella. Tips a ton just for hand stuff.

Pons puffs out his cheeks, she shouldn't have said that.

PONS

Turn around.

LACEY

Excuse me?

PONS

You spent all night with that scumbag Carson and you're telling me this is all you got?

He holds up the stack of cash. She rolls her eyes and spins around.

PONS (CONT'D)

You know I don't like strip searching any of you. C'mon Lacy, just hand it over.

She pouts.

PONS (CONT'D)

Would you rather deal with me, or Big Easy?

She huffs before pulling two more bills from her bra.

PONS (CONT'D)

And the other half?

She kicks off one of her heels and hands him a few more bills.

PONS (CONT'D)

Now we both know you've got a Benjamin tucked in your cleavage, but I know it's your son's birthday on Friday. So I'll keep that one between us.

She beams. He hands her back her share of cash.

LACY

Thank you, Mr. Abernathy.

She pecks him on the cheek. Pons blushes and rubs off her lipstick before beckoning the next girl forward.

He jumps when a meaty hand clamps him on the shoulder. It belongs to BIG EASY (40's), tall, fat, rocking a lizard tattoo that cuts through his eye, the owner of Storyville himself.

BIG EASY

Heard you'd like to have a chat boy.

INT. STORYVILLE JAZZ CLUB - BIG EASY'S OFFICE - DAY

Big Easy leans back in his chair, hands resting on his gut. He's half listening to Pons, who's trying to state his case.

His muscle GATOR (27) stands behind him, a large teddy bear attempting to look tough.

PONS

Look Easy, I get I'm the new guy, and I'm all for working my way to the top. But you've heard me play, I know you have. I'm better than half your headliners--

GATOR

Kid does play sax like he's got fifteen fingers.

BIG EASY

Who's askin' you?

PONS

All I want is a few more spots a week. The university's really been riding my ass about last semester--

BIG EASY

So you need money.

PONS

Yeah...

BIG EASY

Well are you apart of the Cold Blooded, or not?

He taps on his tattoo.

BIG EASY (CONT'D)

Listen kid, you joined us when your mom passed, so I went easy on you. Plus you play well and the girls like you. But if you want money, and you really want in with us, you gotta start doin' the dirty work. That'll make you more than any dinky set you play here.

PONS

I don't know...

BIG EASY

Tell you what, wanna make a thousand big ones? Come with me this afternoon.

Pons rubs his hands together hesitant.

BIG EASY (CONT'D)

Don't shit your pants or nothin' it's just a rough up. Hell if anything it'll be fun.

Pons just nods, he's desperate.

BIG EASY (CONT'D)

Before we go, fire Lacy. Bitch is stuffin' scratch between her tits again.

This really makes Pons deflate.

INT. BERNAVILE LAUNDROMAT - DAY

Rosaline is rolling quarters from the laundry machines when the door chimes. She looks up to see Big Easy flanked by Pons and Gator. They don't look like they're here to do laundry.

Rosaline clamps down hard on the roll of quarters behind her back, but keeps her cool.

ROSALINE

Afternoon boys, what can I do for you?

Big Easy saunters over to her.

ROSALINE (CONT'D)

Colors? Whites? That tee of yours could use a bleach--

BIG EASY

So, you must be the missus.  
(looking her up and down)  
Well aren't chew hotter than a goat's ass in a pepper patch.

He goes to touch her cheek but Rosaline steps back.

BIG EASY (CONT'D)

Go get hubby, he'll know what it's about.

ROSALINE  
Yeah? Who's asking for him?

BIG EASY  
S'cuse me, where are my manners?  
(extending his hand)  
Big Easy.

A flash of recognition in Rosaline's eyes. She leaves him hanging.

ROSALINE  
I'm afraid he's not available,  
*Easy.*

Easy puts his hands on his hips, flashing her his gun.

BIG EASY  
And why the hell not?

ROSALINE  
Because he's dead.

Sadness washes over her features, contorting her poker face. Pons instinctively steps forward, Gator eyes him, he steps back.

BIG EASY  
Isn't that convenient, he owes me more money than god and decides to kick the bucket. Great day for him, shit day for you.

ROSALINE  
W-what do you mean?

BIG EASY  
He's not around to cough it up so you're the next in line sweetheart.

ROSALINE  
There's clearly been some sort of mistake. I hope you find who you're looking for. Now if you would please--

She walks towards the door but Big Easy steps in front of her, his smile gone. He's done playing with his food, now he's ready to sink his teeth in.

*Click.* Gator locks the front door. Pons turns the open sign to closed, his hand shaking.

BIG EASY

There's no mistake darlin'. Five years back your man came cryin' to me. Said he had no more money, pissed it away at your local dice joint. Gave me this whole sob story bout wanting to rebuild his family a home, that Katrina fucked em, so I act like a big softy and hand this numb nut fifty grand with the promise I'll get it back with another ten large. Long story short, I'm here to collect.

Rosaline's shaking now, she knows it's true.

BIG EASY (CONT'D)

WELL?

ROSALINE

I-I don't have it.

Big Easy slams his hand on the counter making her jump. He's nose to nose with her now. His eyes that of a rabid dog, until he cracks into a smile.

BIG EASY

The fucked up thing is, I believe you. Lucky for you, I'm in the mood to make a deal. I just fired one of my hoochies down at Storyville. How bout you take her place? I take half your tips for the foreseeable future, and we call it even.

He tucks a lock of her hair behind her ear, creepy.

BIG EASY (CONT'D)

Plus you got an air of experience about you that I like. An old bitch who can still learn new tricks.

ROSALINE

My brother's a cop, what if he were to hear about our arrangement?

BIG EASY

Then it's six feet under for you and your two darlin's.

Rosaline goes to strike his face with her roll of quarters but Big Easy catches her wrist.

BIG EASY (CONT'D)

You are a pissar.

Rosaline thinks fast and knees him in the balls. As Big Easy keels over Gator draws his gun.

BIG EASY (CONT'D)

You wretched bitch. Now it's personal. Storyville, 10pm, tonight. Wear your nicest pair of underwear and your cheapest perfume.

(beat)

Don't worry sugar, after suckin' your third cock of the night it won't even feel like work. Maybe you'll even start to enjoy yourself.

They leave. Pons's eyes never leaving the ground.

INT. BERNAVILE LAUNDROMAT - DAY

Every inch of the countertop is littered with quarters. Rosaline groups them into dollars manically.

She counts them.

ROSALINE

397, 398, 399...

She slides another quarter over. \$399 and twenty five cents. Not nearly enough. She breaks down, knowing she'll have to work her shift.

INT/EXT. BIG EASY'S CAR - TULANE CAMPUS - DAY

Big Easy and Pons pull up to the campus. Pons chews his lip.

BIG EASY

You takin' any business classes? Cus you shouldn't be. I could teach you business better than any of these retards--

PONS

I thought you said it was just gonna be a rough up.

BIG EASY

What did you think that was?

PONS

Pulling a gun on her? Forcing her into prostitution? She's not even the one who owes you--

BIG EASY

You know this broad?

PONS

No.

BIG EASY

Then it seems like a whole lotta not your problem. Learn to take your money and shut up.

Pons knows better than to keep arguing.

BIG EASY (CONT'D)

I got you on for two spots tonight. And since you're so sweet on our newbie I want you to keep an eye on her. Make sure she doesn't try any funny business.

PONS

What if she does? Then what?

BIG EASY

Then we handle it.

PONS

Handle it? Is that code for whack her?

BIG EASY

Can we stop talkin' about this? I don't like poppin' women. Makes me feel like I'm goin' straight to hell.

Pons rolls his eyes, knowing that's exactly where Easy's going.

PONS

Do you really need the money? I mean wasn't this deal years ago?

BIG EASY

So that's it? I let it slide, let the debt die with her old man? Then what? I get the rep of being a softy, everyone can owe me, no consequences?

(MORE)

## BIG EASY (CONT'D)

Nah kid, that's just not how this works. Like I said I should be the one teachin' business.

Pons throws open his door, there's no getting through to him.

## INT. STORYVILLE JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

We follow a waitress through the club Goodfellas style. It's hopping. That same smoke haze is in the air. The jazz band is in full swing. Pons is wailing on the sax.

The waitress passes Rosaline, who's wearing the same burlesque outfit as the others. Now we follow Rosaline as she delivers cocktails to a table of business men.

Next to them is a booth filled with COPS, one of whom whistles to her.

COP

Sweet cheeks, we need another round.

Rosaline sees they're cops and quickly averts her eyes. She can't be recognized. She taps the nearest waitress.

ROSALINE

Hey I'm a little backed up, mind getting those cops?

WAITRESS

Sure thing honey. You're the new girl right?

Rosaline nods.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

You sure you wanna give them to me? Cops are usually the nicest in this joint, great lovers too.

She winks.

ROSALINE

I'm sure.

WAITRESS

Alright alright, didja get your first Vieux Carre yet?

ROSALINE

My first what?

WAITRESS

You know...your first client.  
That's what they order.

Rosaline looks lost.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

Watch me.

Rosaline watches as the waitress approaches the table of cops. She flirts well, a seasoned professional here.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

What can I get for ya'll, a few  
beers? Maybe a few Vieux Carres?

Two cops raise their hands. She motions for them to follow her.

She looks at Rosaline and points to the back of the club where she's leading the cops. There's a large neon sign that reads PRIVATE over a red velvet curtain. Rosaline is ashen, gets the message.

INT. STORYVILLE JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

The waitress returns the cops to their booth, looking disheveled. She offers Rosaline a small smile.

Rosaline returns it, feeling guilty. The waitress approaches her.

WAITRESS

Don't be so nervous. You'll do  
great. Here.

She pulls a clip out of her hair. It's an ALLIGATOR TOOTH with the HEAD OF A VODOO DOLL.

She slips it into Rosaline's hair.

WAITRESS (CONT'D)

One of my good luck charms. Keep  
it.

They're interrupted by a man waving Rosaline over, he sits alone. It's the famous CARSON (55).

ROSALINE

Hiya, what can I get you--

CARSON  
(deadpan)  
Vieux Carre, rocks.

ROSALINE  
Like the drink, or like-

CARSON  
If I wanted a drink, I'd hit the  
local watering hole.

Rosaline is overcome with a wave of nausea. She takes his hand and leads him towards the back.

Pons, still on stage, clocks this. He puts down his sax.

KEYBOARDIST  
The hell you doin'?

PONS  
Uh, gotta piss.

KEYBOARDIST  
Now?

But he's already off the stage. He bumps into the waitress serving the cops.

PONS  
That her first of the night?

WAITRESS  
Yeah, poor thing got Carson too.  
Shoulda took the cops like I told  
her.

Pons turns towards the back, but Rosaline is gone. *Shit.*

**\*\*\* TO READ FULL SCRIPT PLEASE EMAIL [skm461@nyu.edu](mailto:skm461@nyu.edu) \*\*\***