

EBONY'S CHOICE (TV PILOT)

Written by

Quentil Pompey

Sample

Address
Phone Number

FADE IN:

EXT. FINE DINING RESTAURANT -- EVENING

Automatic lighting illuminates the night.

INT. FINE DINING RESTAURANT - KITCHEN --

And a FAST PACE KITCHEN. Lead by one and only

DONALD KHALIEF, COOK (40s), should have his own kitchen the way he occupies the GRILLE, checks the temperature of his MEAT. And with finest around other KITCHEN WORKERS...

ON THE LINE

He snatches the next TAKE-OUT ticket. And with a basketball roll around - re-maintains his focus - a sight to see.

INT. FINE DINING RESTAURANT - KITCHEN -- LATER

End of shift. Spotless. All eyes are on Donald.

One brave enough out the bunch, SHORT-STOCKY (24), curly hair, believe he's in his prime, not their to work but flirt - Steps out to say something to Donald.

SHORT-STOCKY

Hey young-man, why don't you chill out? It's more to life.

And so smooth and non-intimidating as he is Donald - ZIPS AND lifts his BOOKBAG - around his shoulders.

DONALD

What?

SHORT-STOCKY

Why do you work so hard? Those people served- spend way more than you make.

And with the OTHERS new-found faith pump him up with "YEAH"

SHORT-STOCKY (CONT'D)

You should fight for more money. With your skills. And we all are behind you. Strike!

Donald - out numbered by the majority - younger and cooler - he understands - but keeps a modest smirk on his face as if nothings wrong.

DONALD

You're right. It is more to life.

But paused by entering, MARK BURRELL (40s) - too fly for the KITCHEN - spends more time tallying for collection. He scrutinizes the kitchen to the mute and approval-lusting Staff. Wipes his FINGER across the GRILLE.

When he looks up, their is Donald.

MARK

(to the others)

I hope everyone has clocked out. We don't pay tips and over shifts.

The STAFF disperse like if they didn't wanna be there in the first place. So does Donald, but on his way.

MARK (CONT'D)

Donald?

Donald turns that smirk toward Mark.

MARK (CONT'D)

This shift to shift thing is getting old. Why don't you just come on full-time? You run the kitchen already -

DONALD

C'mon Mark, you know I like my freedom.

MARK

Freedom to do what? A ghetto enterprise: vendor at festivals? And backyard barbecues for your homeboys? There's no real money in that.

DONALD

I manage to keep it steady...

Does he really? And Donald shy away from looking into the eyes of Mark.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD HOMES - NIGHT

A CAR parks on the curve. Donald hops out the CAR. Still dressed in his APRON.

DONALD POV: A BUILDING BOARDED UP. Looks shut down but...

He walks...

ON SIDE OF BUILDING

Where the night shadows blur anything ahead and only because of a stream of light from the CITY STREET LIGHT a door without handle is visible. Donald steps in front, hesitant to knock at first. But does so.

INT. AFTER HOURS SPOT -- CONTINUOUS

A LIVE GO-GO BAND cramped - plays

The interior is structured like a hole in the wall joint. A few CHAIRS and small TABLES occupy the area. And at those tables and in those chairs is a small crowd of LOCALS.

Donald's the party-starter -having a good-ol time. Looks alone. Grabs turned on WOMEN (30s) out their seats. They know him. Dance. Donald dances with everyone. Everyone loves him.

INT. AFTER HOURS SPOT - BAR -- DRINKS LATER

ON: SIX EMPTY CANS.

And Donald imbued with his seventh one - 'drunk talks'- everyone around him.

DONALD

Stop giving our money to them.
Simple. The business model is
clear. You start your business. He
start his business.

MAN 1

That black power shit you speaking
can be a reality, brotha'.

A Bartender (40s) familiar with Donald cleans off the six cans into a trash

BARTENDER

(point made)
It's lots of commercial abandoned
properties around here.

(MORE)

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

But that's you and me Donald.
Entrepreneurship. Everybody ain't
on it.

DONALD

(unfortunately)
So like the days of Noah...

Most who comprehend agree.

WOMAN 1

How do we get us to buy only from
us?

ANOTHER WOMAN

I've had a Spa for ten years and
get more white and Spanish women
than my own.

DONALD

We have to make it available first.
Then affordable.

ANOTHER MAN

The product cost plus shipping can
affect retail for sure. It's not
we're overcharging for sheer
pleasure.

DONALD

Maybe team up with a black or
African manufacturer - work
something out - where you win they
win. Ideally, so that the money
stays within. But instead of moving
out the hood - when we get a lil
change - stay here - rebuild.

OLD FLAME (O.C.)

But you left the hood, suburban D.

All Laugh because he did.

She's someone Donald remembers well in other ways. Donald
face frowns, he struggles with that also.

DONALD

(to Old flame)
What does that suppose to mean?

OLD FLAME

What it means.

DONALD

You didn't answer my motherFUCKING
QUESTION!

Donald not meant to be aggressive, it's just the inherited raspy passion in his voice that comes out louder than he implies. But...

The Bartender familiar with this. Snatches the rest of Donald's beer and disposes.

BARTENDER

(to Donald)

Alright, D -

DONALD

No I need- need to know what she meant by that. Otherwise she can be just a bitter one.

OLD FLAME

Y'know what Donald, forget you and your fake ass 'builder life.'

To the oh's and ah's and continued belittlement the Old flame shoot at Donald, he reaches for his beer - that is no longer there. Looks up at the Bartender who gestures for him to vacant the premises.

INT. DONALD'S CAR -- LATER THAT NIGHT (MOVING)

Arrives at an ELECTRICAL GATE which protects yet segregates a well-to-do HOUSING COMMUNITY.

Donald fidgets for the window mechanism to lower the DRIVER-SIDE WINDOW. He gets it.

Outside is a key pad, Donald pecks at - juiced, hoping that he's computing the right code.

THE GATE OPENS

Donald eases at the pace of the gate opening - tosses a few breath mints in his mouth and squints through the BRIGHT transient of STREET LIGHTS coming toward him.

THE HOUSES are nice. Not a lot of LAND but architectural designs and catered amenities are eye catching.

DONALD

(slurs)

Suburban, D. You moved out the hood. To this.

Donald car lights are switched off, and he turns into the
 KHALIEF'S - MINI MANSION - DRIVEWAY. Parks. Shuts down
 engine.

Exits his CAR and eases close his driver door, then walks to
 the FRONT DOOR, slides in his key and turns the nob...

INT. KHALIEF'S MINI MANSION -- FOYER

Dark. Everyone *should be* sleep at this hour.

Donald is the only drunk fool awake and up to no good, tip-
 toeing in side - shutting the door without a click.

Passing by a STAIRWAY nearly tripping... And

SETH (8) his baby boy, descends from stairs, yawning and
 scratching his lower back - and before Donald can announce
 himself, Seth only sees something.

SETH

Ahhhhh!!!! Mommy! Daddy!

And Donald's reassurance is no match for Seth traumatized
 screams. So, Donald's intending BEDROOM DOOR, is open -
 lights are cut on and DEMETRA (40s) a refine queen, shoots
 out closing her robe.

DEMETRA

What is going on! Seth what are
 you doing up?

SETH

(still sobbing)

I was thirsty...so-so I came
 downstairs and thought dad was
 something.

DONALD

(to Seth)

I'm sorry I scared you. Okay.

Seth not worried no more, dries his last tear.

DONALD (CONT'D)

(melo-dramatic)

Now! Go receive your life's water's
 free, my son.

Seth exits to Kitchen.

And Donald leans back on the wall - one to balance himself and two to try and convince Demetra he's not that drunk -

DONALD (CONT'D)
He thought I was something.

Donald expected that look from Demetra and her glare.

And Donald hoped that helped. But he remains the interest of Demetra.

So, Donald finds there beautiful and upscale taste of a LIVING ROOM and plops on COUCH.

Not to mention that the entire house has of now been awoken.

KHALIL (O.C.)
Yo, why Seth gotta scream like a girl?

TANISHA (O.C.)
It's almost sunrise.

KHALIL (16) the eldest athletic and TANISHA (13) time-boyish, creative but can appear antisocial. Both at the LOFT PART - talking down from the BANNISTER in their nighties - confused.

KHALIL
(to Donald)
Pop are we being robbed? I got your back.

And Khalil bravely advances down the stairs to Donald's amusement at least.

TANISHA
(doubtful)
Please. As soon as you see whatever it is you'll be back in your room with the door lock.

DONALD
(to Khalil)
I appreciate first born. - Are we prepared for the championship?!

KHALIL
Next Friday.

DONALD
Are you destined to win?

KHALIL
For sho.

Demetra cuts him a glare for his ebonics.

TANISHA
(curt)
Sensationalism is so contagious.

KHALIL
(to Tanisha)
Shut up, you starving artist!

TANISHA
At least I have a soul.

And before Khalil can combat.

DEMETRA
(yells)
School in a matter of hours! Back
to bed!

The teens abide and so do Seth returning, but as he heads
back up the steps.

DEMETRA (CONT'D)
(to Seth)
No dishes left in your room.

SETH
Okay mama.

Demetra looks at Donald stupid self stretching back on the
couch - getting cozy - for sleep.

DEMETRA
It must be nice.

DONALD
I'm a sociable individual.

DEMETRA
Good for those who actually get to
socialize with you. And hopefully
it's genuine because we -

DONALD
- I support you.

DEMETRA
(sharpe whispers)
You have a problem. Coming in at
all hours waking the house up.

DONALD

This not a house. It's a mini mansion. Own by 'black people'.

DEMETRA

If were starting the feeling sorry for working hard again, I think I'll return to my dream.

(then)

And before the lie formulates, I know you didn't work over. Mark already called to see if you could open in the morning.

DONALD

(to himself)

Good luck on that morning shift Suburban D.

(broken english)

Yous a not in the rightsa mind says a boss.

Donald puts a PILLOW cushion from the couch over his face. Demetra just shakes her head at his narcissism.

DEMETRA

(exiting)

Have fun sleeping on your California King. Seems that's more your wife now a days then me.

And SLAM goes the bedroom DOOR.

INT. DONALD'S CAR -- DAY

Pulls in LOT. Parks.

Donald takes a SWIG from his FLASH. And another. Grimaces at the burn down. Replaces the top and hides in his GLOVEBOX.

Now he's ready to work. A smile appears on Donald's face as he removes his keys from ignition and steps out jolly.

INT. FINE DINING RESTAURANT --

THE SIZZLE OF T-BONE STEAKS smoke rises pass a strategic Donald - with pic-fork - he flips them.

DONALD

(calls out)

Franco, I need those onions asap!

FRANCO (O.S.)

Come!

Donald looks around to see if any one is looking - pulls out a blank container - that has seasoning - he dumps over the STEAKS.

FRANCO (CONT'D)

And that is why you be very rich man one day.

Donald caught, smiles, slides the container away. FRANCO (60s) Mexican bred holding Donald's call - a BOWL of ONIONS.

FRANCO (CONT'D)

No matter what other kitchen workers think - you perfect cook. I taste your food. Barbecue. You sell at park.

Donald relieves Franco of the bowl of Onions.

DONALD

Oh- *One Family festival*. You were there Franco? With all those black folks?

FRANCO

Me no care. But I come for food. Delicious barbeque.

But Franco leans in closer to Donald with concern.

FRANCO (CONT'D)

But Migo, I smelly alcohol. The other people talk. But no sure. I see. Me know. Be careful. You good man.

Donald dumps ONIONS covering the STEAKS half listening to him out of respect. But then Mark enters BOH as if looking for someone.

MARK

Khalief!

Mark wave to Donald is serious. So Donald gestures for Franco to take over the GRILLE.

INT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT -- BOH -- MARK BURRELL OFFICE

TWO MEN, look to be OWNERS, marvel over Mark's elaborate office.

Mark seats behind his desk.

MARK

Here is your very own Donald
Khalief.

Everyone seems to be elated and know what's going on but
Donald.

OWNER 1

(shakes Donald's hand)
It's an honor to meet you in
person.

OWNER 2

Not only from Mark's mouth, I've
heard so much about you.

DONALD

Well if you didn't hear about me
from my food then it's a lie.

Everyone laughs. But Donald gets it. Cuts Mark a 'are you
serious' look.

MARK

And Khalief has had his play in the
tiny-freelance world also.

OWNER 2

(to Donald)
Dinner parties? Catered events?

DONALD

Vended festivals. And if hosting a
few barbecue's and home cooked
dinners - for mostly friends and
family.

OWNER 2

Well it's all cooking.

OWNER 1

Avenues to showcase your skills in
the Kitchen.

DONALD

(shoots them with his
finger)
Pow.

The only one seemingly dubious is Mark. And his words come
from a dark place.

MARK

No deny. Khalief's skills are
impeccable. It's just often our
vices can be our kryptonite.

Donald and Mark only share this information, and we can see
with the glare Donald has, he doesn't like Mark speaking
toward what ever the issue is. So Mark talks away from it...

MARK (CONT'D)

Even he sneakily dabs his
unregistered seasoning.

Donald catches a knowledgable wink from Mark - something he
thought that only he kept sacred - until a few minutes ago
when caught by Franco - but that's okay - Franco's cool and
supportive - yet - Mark definitely wasn't suppose to know.

MARK

(poses for the better)

It has spiced up your taste and not
only our already-original-taste -
but the cash case.

(to Donald)

Guess asking your secret is taboo?

DONALD

Yes.

(then)

It's African base. When I was young
- my father - he used it. Said he
picked it up in Africa.

EXT. SKYVIEW -- DAY

Right as the NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN splits to the South, an OIL
REFINERY assist in shaping the MAINLAND of SHANTY TOWNS
bordered with DIRT ROADS, and where colorfully dilapidated
HOUSING is a sight - it's as if we are behind a century.

A LARGE WATER FALL plummets to the softer waters - into suds
and follow the-stream up the current.

DONALD (V.O.)

Bioko province.

But the view of what was called once occupied SPANISH GUINEA
widens further mainland to a very beautiful STRUCTURAL CITY,
aiming toward homeliness and piety. With it's CATHEDAL DE
SANTA ISABEL - tall HOTELS & RESORTS -

And through active transformation: the BUSINESS CORRIDOR - along with freshly paved roads and fantastically-shaped CORPORATE BUILDINGS - the most prominent being PALACIO DE JUSTICIA and PARLEMENT DE LA CEMEC PARLAMENTO CEMEC with it's flags of nations curved around.

This is MALABO, EQUATORIAL GUINEA in the new.

INT. FINE DINING RESTAURANT --

OWNER 2

Your father, he's still
incarcerated?

This has a bitter place in Donald, he looks him in the eye and out of his mouth comes injustice.

DONALD

Close to thirty years.
(then)
Against his will.

MARK

We can agree to disagree on
somethings about that.
(indicates Owners)
But my reason for calling you in
here and their reasons for being
here Donald, is to offer you an
opportunity. Things are changing.
I'm going off to do better things
and soon - they would like to know -
whose taking lead - and has
complete control of the entire
front and back house.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. EQUATORIAL GUINEA 'BATETE' - MARKET DISTRICT

Affixed to a VILLAGE

The FLEET OF RESIDENCE skip around the outside market-place of fresh fruit, vegetables, herbs, spices, other black market items - but most importantly COCOA.

Where Laphilia watches the VENDOR (70s) measure out POUNDS of COCOA BEANS in her RUCKSACK. She receives dirty looks from other patrons; maybe it's her upper class style of dress.

LAPHILIA (IN SPANISH)
 (to Vendor)
 Are these shipped from Cameron?

VENDOR (IN SPANISH)
 I have a farm. 25 kilometers that
 way.

The Vendor points towards WOODS.

VENDOR (CONT'D)
 But don't know how long I will be
 able to fight off the Fang. During
 the revolution, my family all died.
 I was the only survivor. My father
 own that land for very long time.
 His father gave to him.

Laphilia empathizes with him as he completes her
 transactions.

LAPHILIA (IN SPANISH)
 (sympathetic)
 Things are changing. For the
 better.

Laphilia lifts her rucksack of cocoa beans and with no fear
 or shame burst through the CROWD of casting curiosity - with
 a friendly smile.

BEEP!!!

From A NICE VEHICLE - HEMA (60), rough around the edge but
 has to be...

HEMA (IN SPANISH)
 (to Laphilia)
 Time is too precious to be hanging
 down here. We have mass in an hour!
 What are you waiting until the sun-
 sets?

And the arrogance of Hema nerves Laphilia. Laphilia opens the
 back of VEHICAL

INSERT: VEHICAL REAR DOOR

Other rucksacks of vegetables, grains, and miscellaneous
 items fill the back. Laphilia lifts the rucksack full of
 cocoa beans and finds a place for it.

LAPHILIA
 I have three children plus three
 adults to feed.
 (MORE)

LAPHILIA (CONT'D)

Besides these are our people. If the sun sets, I don't believe they'll be bothered by us if we did decide to hang around.

Laphilia shuts the rear doors to Hema frown at her sarcasm. Skips around the car to DRIVER SIDE...

HEMA

Your father made it a point for you to not labor. That's why we have servants.

Laphilia enters...

INT. NICE VEHICAL -- CONTINUOUS

LAPHILIA

Of course I don't expect you to understand.

HEMA (IN SPANISH)

I am a woman of higher class. Anything you think you know I already knew before it was manifest. Your father isn't the only one with brains.

Laphilia glares at Hema, CRANKS CAR and drives off.