

I Hope You Heal

written by

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Jon returns to Jade's apartment and knocks. Jade appears refreshed when she opens the door. A full face of makeup. Her hair is in rollers. She's dressed in a robe and slippers. Lingering perfume. The smell of a hearty breakfast escapes with the open door. Jon enters, closes the door behind him, and puts his gym bag in the bedroom. He returns to the front area. Jade stands in the kitchen.

JADE

Hey you. How was the gym?

She scrambles eggs.

JON

Arm day. It wasn't too, too bad.
'Feeling good.

Jon looks at the spread on the table set for two. French toast and freshly cut fruit.

JON (CONT'D)

I'm glad you're still home. Don't you have an early block of showings today? I would have left a little later.

Jade hardly looks up. Too busy cooking.

JADE

Yep. My broker's fees are bananas this month. I suppose people are trying to move before the winter gets crazy.

Jade bites a piece of toast.

JON

That's great babe. I'm proud of you. Breakfast looks amazing. I hope I'm not throwing you off schedule.

JADE

Not at all. The eggs are just about done. Once you text me about your binder I figured you may be hungry after the gym, but do me a favor and take your bag with you. I have Airbnb guest reservations here the next two nights beginning tomorrow. I spoke with my sister. I'll most likely either stay at her place or Monique's. Are you down for a lunch date? I have more good news, but I need to head to the office soon.

(CONTINUED)

Jon retrieves his bag and slips his binder inside.

JON

Wish I could, but I have a big audition today, remember? I thought I told you about it...

JADE

(dismissive)

Right. What about dinner?

Jon's irritated. Strike #2.

JON

Tonight I'm supposed to be grabbing drinks with Shawn for his birthday.

(under breath)

I'm pretty sure I mentioned that, too.

Jade finally looks up. She pushes herself on top of the kitchen counter to sit.

JADE

You know, If you ever want to take the leap into real estate-

JON

You're seriously doing this right now? Before my audition?

Jade continues to nibble.

JADE

(offensively)

I could help you is all I'm saying. I let you borrow all of my practice exam books--Did you even open them?

Jade brings the eggs and toast over to the table. She sits to join Jon. Jon helps himself to eggs.

JON

You of all people should know that's not the direction I want to go in. It'd be nice to have your blessing with my acting. You didn't seem to think I was wasting my time when I paid for the deposit, first, and last month's rent on our new place...

Jade gets up from the table. She walks over to a kitchen drawer and retrieves an envelope with keys. She returns to the table and waves the envelope as she speaks.

(CONTINUED)

JADE

And I'm grateful. The past 4 years have been alright work-wise for the both of us, but what happens when you don't get a callback?

Jade removes a set of keys from the envelope, hands them to Jon.

JON

Wow! We got the place?!

JADE

Yeah. That was the good news.

Jon leans over to Jade. They kiss.

JON

I love you. Can we discuss work later? We're gonna be fine. I promise.

A manilla box of a room. No windows. Hopeful actors (various ages and backgrounds) wait in a holding room. Some sit, some stand. Inaudible mouth drills, stretching. The competitive energy is thick enough to cut with a knife. Jon enters. He's unbothered. Same shit, different day. He scans the room. Sees best-friend, IMANI (late 20's) and walks to greet her. She's flawless and paid. Petite physique. Natural hair. She's dressed in a black leotard and jogger pants. Imani and Jon hug.

IMANI

Hey boo! I didn't realize you were going out for this play, too. I'm auditioning under dancer, today though.

JON

Alright now. Don't hurt 'em. When are you free to catch up? I have mad shit to fill you in on.

Agent's ASSISTANT (40's) enters holding room. She's plump, drained, and over the day already.

ASSISTANT

(announces to room)

All union dancers follow me please. All union dancers only.

Imani picks up her items, prepares to exit with Assistant and fellow dancers.

(CONTINUED)

IMANI

Guess that's me. Text me. We'll figure it out. Break a leg, lovie.

Imani exits. With his binder in hand, Jon reviews his portfolio. He patiently waits.

6 INT. AUDITION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

6

Long table. Piano. AGENT (50's) and REPRESENTATIVES #1 and #2 (40's) sit and await members of the talent pool. In and out. Jon places his binder on the table for review.

REPRESENTATIVE #1

Good afternoon. Please slate your name, character, and type of material. Begin whenever you're ready...

JON

(addresses camera)

Jon Molyneaux. Auditioning for the role of 'Neighbor'. Monologue.

Jon re-positions his body. Steps closer to the tape marker on the floor.

JON (CONT'D)

Heal. Part of speech...verb. A verb is an action word; something that you do. Heavy on the action. Definition 1: Of a person or treatment. Cause. A wound, injury, or person to become sound or healthy ag-

Flamboyant male NARRATOR (30's) interrupts Jon's monologue.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Say it again for the people in the back, baby!

Jon peers out the corner of his eyes. Takes preparation breath.

JON

Definition 2: To become sound or healthy again. Definition 3: To alleviate a person's distress or anguish. Indeed. -- It's a sick world we're living in.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Yass! C'mon, now!

Jon's puzzled. No reaction from the panel. He closes his monologue.

(CONTINUED)

JON

Anyway, I hope you heal. Thank you.

Jon collects his items. Exits audition room.

TITLE CARD.

INT. ARCADE BAR - EVENING

A dimly lit purple and indigo room. Neon lights. Hard flooring. Ping pong and pool tables. Arcade machines. Bar. Various patrons play games and socialize. Jon greets friend, SHAWN (30). Shawn's an African-American male. Poster handsome and scruffy around the edges. Flex beard. Muscular. Gentle and snarky. Jon enters. Shawn awaits Jon at the bar. They greet each other.

SHAWN

And niggas actually showed up at a respectable time? I fuck with it!

Shawn extends his arm for a hand shake and hug. Jon laughs.

JON

What's good?

SHAWN

Nothing much, man. Same shit. Glad to see another one. What's good with you?

JON

That's real. Happy birthday, bro.

Shawn nods.

JON (CONT'D)

Nothing much. I was already in the area. I had an audition earlier, so I just stuck around.

SHAWN

As long as you keep doing that modeling shit I'm gonna keep calling you GQ Molyneaux. Pretty boy ass.

Shawn laughs and mocks Jon. He holds his head at different angles.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

I mean, I look good enough to model, too nigga, but these females can't handle it when their man is prettier than them. I'm telling you.

(CONTINUED)

JON

So you think I'm pretty?

Shawn gives Jon his straightest face.

SHAWN

You wild. Speaking of females, how's the old lady?

JON

She's good. We got that new spot I was telling you about.

SHAWN

Damn. That was fast. I mean, it has been 4 years, but are you sure you want to live-live with her like that. I heard shit gets real different.

JON

It's not like that with Jade. She has her ways, but it's nothing I'm not used to. I'll let you know when the housewarming is. You ready for a birthday round?

SHAWN

Nah, you got it. I respect it. Thanks, man.

Shawn strokes his hair waves and thick beard. They take a shot.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

(grunts)

I'm getting old man.

Jon laughs.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

At least my shit's connecting.

Shawn points his chin in Jon's direction.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

Nigga you see it. Anyway-- I've never been to this spot before, but they have all kinds of shit. They have the classics, laser tag, and some new virtual stuff. You heard from Dominiq?

JON

Yeah, he told me he was on his way.

(CONTINUED)

SHAWN

Cool. Let's go see what's good anyway.
That nigga is liable to come after
closing.

They laugh and check out the arcade offerings.

INT. JADE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Jon returns to Jade's apartment. He brings leftovers. Jade watches t.v. in shorts and a tank top. She kisses him at the door and peeks into the bag of food.

JADE

Hey. How was your day?

They walk into the living area.

JON

Not too bad actually. I think my
audition went really well. I tried a new
monologue and-

Jade takes fries out of the takeout box and pops some in her mouth.

JADE

You met up with Shawn, too, right? How
is he?

Jon walks into the bedroom and settles in.

JON (O.S.)

Shawn is Shawn. Can you believe this
fool is 30 now? I remember when we used
to hit licks at the bodega as kids. He's
a whole engineer now. 'Shit is crazy.

Jade turns off the lights in the front living space and joins Jon in the bedroom. He sits up with crossed legs and uses his computer.

JON (CONT'D)

Did you like the food?

Jade enters the bathroom to remove her makeup.

JADE

It was alright. Thank you.

Jade reenters the bedroom. Still beautiful, just less enhanced. She wraps her hair tightly. Jon closes his laptop and gives her soft kisses to the back of her neck.

(CONTINUED)

JON

Lift up.

Jon removes Jades tank top and shifts her around from the waist. He unclamps her bra and licks Jades breasts.

JADE

(through moans)

We need to use a condom.

Jon stops in his tracks. What for? Jade looks Jon in the eyes.

JADE (CONT'D)

Something is in the water and I don't have time. We're already moving in together as it is. I don't want to make that an invitation to start working on the whole package.

Jon's confused.

JON

I understand. Not a problem. I'll be right back.

Jon gets up.

JADE

Wait...

Jade grabs his arm to stop him.

JON

I thought you wanted me to-

JADE

Backdoor?

In high frustration, Jon enters the gym. The emptier, the better. He locks up his bag and scans the machinery. Jon mind-plots his workout: free weights, punching bag, pull up bar, squat rack, treadmill. Time to release.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

QUICK CUTS:

-- Jon punches bag.

-- Jon bench presses.

(CONTINUED)

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CONTINUED:

10.
9

-- Jon runs.

END MONTAGE:

10

INT. CLINIC - AFTERNOON

10

A sterile facility. A white room with powder blue accents. Safe sex posters galore. Various patients sit in anticipation of their exams. Jon fills out patient survey and chart information. He waits to hear his name from NURSE (50s). Nurse is hefty with bags under her eyes. She's dressed in character scrubs. Inviting voice.

NURSE

Jon?

Jon collects himself and follows nurse.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Right this way, honey. How are you today?

JON

I'm okay. How about yourself?

NURSE

Eh. Busy. I'm going to get your height, weight, take your blood pressure, and the doctor will be right in. What brings you in today?

Jon sits on the examination table and removes his sweater to get his blood pressure taken.

JON

Just a routine check up.

NURSE

Got it. Well you've come to the right place. Everything looks good. Seems like you're taking good care of yourself.

JON

Thanks, trying.

NURSE

It'll just be a few minutes for the doctor. Take care.

Nurse exits with her materials. DOCTOR (50s) enters momentarily. He's a short Middle-Eastern man. Thick salt and pepper hair. Antsy mannerisms. He reviews nurses notes.

(CONTINUED)

DOCTOR

Hey there. I hear you're looking to have an annual exam. Do you have any concerns at the moment? Any discharge, itching, or discomfort?

JON

No. I don't have any symptoms. Last night my girlfriend of 4 years asked me to use a condom. Something just seems off.

DOCTOR

Understandable. Do you think there may be some infidelity on her end? Is there any from you?

JON

I don't think so. For my tests, I'd like to have a full deck please.

DOCTOR

Do you know what a full deck entails? You don't need a full deck.

Doctor flips through Jon's charts hastily.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, it's just that you don't look-

JON

Like a faggot? Is that what you were thinking of?

DOCTOR

What? No. I apologize. I just didn't... How would you describe your sexual preference?

JON

I'm bisexual.

DOCTOR

Right. Very well then. A couple of swabs, we'll need a urine sample, and we can get you out of here. Were you wanting an HIV test as well? It'll only take a second.

JON

(matter-of-factly)
Right. A full deck.

(CONTINUED)

10

CONTINUED: (2)

12.
10

The doctor clears his throat.

DOCTOR

You can actually get dressed. I'm going to send you down to my colleague who's the LGBT specialist here. He can tell you about PrEP and the lot. Good day, Jon.

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INT./EXT. CAFE- EARLY EVENING

11

A trendy cafe. Equal parts coffee shop and boutique market. Picture windows with generous natural light. Additional globe-shaped lighting. High tops and banquettes. Strategically placed love seats. Jon enters and surveys cafe for friends PATRICK (mid-20's) and KYLE (mid-20's) for a meetup.

Patrick is the queen of hearts. Super sassy, but sweet. He sports a face beat for the gods, an over sized, wool trench coat, closed-toe stiletto heels, and a satchel handbag. The aunt you wished you had. Snatched much?

Kyle is sharp and ratchet. Street smart and artsy. Lux galas and trap paint-n-sips, balance.

Kyle and Patrick sit and talk on a couch.

PATRICK

He wasn't ready for this bussy!

KYLE

Trick, you 'betta let these muthafuckas know!

Jon approaches and sits opposite them.

PATRICK

Baby! Hi!

Kyle pretends to be aloof.

KYLE

Hmph! Don't woo-woo for him.

Kyle sucks teeth.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I called you heifer. No callback?

JON

Hey to you, too Kylie.

(CONTINUED)

Jon blows Kyle a kiss and gives Patrick an actual kiss on the cheek. Kyle catches the air kiss and stomps it out.

PATRICK

Kyle you are so petty. Maybe he was busy. Like, maybe he has a life. That's why we're all gathered here today, no? It's tea time!

KYLE

We went ahead and ordered already. For you, too I suppose.

JON

Thank you!

A BARISTA (20s) brings starters and pastries to the table. Kyle goes in for an almond croissant, but Patrick pops his hand.

PATRICK

Uh, grace much?!

Patrick reaches for hands and closes his eyes. He begins prayer.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Thank you for this meal we're about to receive. Let it nourish us. Wishing Megan's knees on me and my family. Long live a good twerk. And I manifest a big, burly, bear with a pension. Amen.

JON

Sis, what kind of prayer-

PATRICK

Baby it's all about suspending disbelief. Let it flow, let it go. Don't knock it.

Kyle laughs.

KYLE

The ghetto. So where's the gossip? I'll take everyone's bad news first and the good after.

Jon and Patrick look at each other.

PATRICK

Okay, I'll start. My thorn is that I woke up again without a billion dollars in my bank account.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PATRICK (CONT'D)

My rose is that I just got promoted to lead makeup consultant on the floor at work. I get to do beat downs for our top clients!

JON

That's great, Pat. Congratulations.

Patrick smiles. Kyle ushers his hand for Jon to speak.

JON (CONT'D)

Alright. My bad news is that I haven't gotten a callback from yesterday's audition. I thought I nailed it. Maybe I just need to be patient. My good news is that Jade and I are moving in together. We just got a new spot downtown.

KYLE

(to Patrick)

It'll be another 10 months before we see this one now.

JON

Why is everyone saying that? Nothing's going to change. Kyle, your turn.

Jon spots Jade's sister, NIA (30s) and her young daughter, CHANELL (5). Nia's the older image of Jade, but shorter. Long twists. Curvy. Chanell's precious. A big semi-toothless grin. Big bows and bo-bos. Sequin boots. Chanell waves to Jon and runs over.

KYLE

Oh look! Saved by the bell.

CHANELL

Hey Jon! Are these your friends?

JON

Hey! Yes. This is Kyle and this is Patrick.

CHANELL

(whispers to Jon loudly)

Why is your friend wearing makeup?

KYLE

Makeup is for everybody. Would you like Patrick to do your makeup some day?

Chanell smiles and nods her head yes. Nia emerges after placing her order.

(CONTINUED)

NIA

I am so sorry about that, y'all. Good to run into you, Jon. Tell Jade to call me. If she wasn't with you I'd be sending a search party after her already. She's so hard to reach lately.

JON

Sure will. Good to see you, too.

CHANELL

(to Patrick)
I like your shoes.

PATRICK

(to Chanell)
I like your shoes.

CHANELL

Bye!

Nia and Chanell exit the cafe with their pick up order.

JON

Hey. I've got to get going. Let's do this again soon.

Jon leaves money on the table to thank the duo. He exits the cafe and leaves his bike on the stand. He orders an Uber.

Jon waits for the elevator. It doesn't come soon enough. He opts for the stairs. He approaches Jade's apartment door. Audible moans sound from outside. He puts his fist up to bang on the door, but changes his approach. He reaches in his wallet. A card. Nope. Pocket knife. Nope. He reaches for his keys and remembers a spare. Bingo.

He enters slowly. The headboard bangs loudly against the wall. Surely no one hears him. Too busy. Jon scans the apartment. Men's pants, Jade's bra and panties strewn about on the living room floor. Next to the entry, Balenciagas.

JON

(mouths to self)
I know this nigga.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

-- Jon exits gym. He holds the door for a man to enter.

(CONTINUED)

-- Jon looks at the spread on the table set for two.

END FLASHBACK:

Jon reaches for the bedroom knob. Twists it. He witnesses Jade partially wrapped in sheets. She freezes in her mount at the sound of company and hops off ZIAIRE. MAN from gym.

JON
(furious)
Really?

JADE
Jon? When did you? How did you?

JON
I think I should be the one asking the questions here.

Ziaire smirks devilishly. He gets up and gathers his belongings.

ZIAIRE
I'm Ziaire.

JON
Nigga nobody asked you.

ZIAIRE
I'm standing right here. You mad 'cause your bitch chose me.

JADE
Bitch?

Jon motions for Ziaire to stay.

JON
(to Jade)
Good taste.

Jon exits Jade's apartment with a slam.

A starter garden-level Brooklyn apartment. Cozy. A generously-sized kitchen. Accented jewel tones. Green, blue, magenta hues. Loaded with plants. Eccentric minimalism. Imani sports an oversized sweater and leggings. She welcomes a defeated Jon. She takes his gym bag and coat at the door.

IMANI
Hey love.

(CONTINUED)

Jon manages a response, but nothing comes out. Imani hugs Jon tightly. Jon stands statue straight. He lifts his arm to wipe his teary eyes before Imani can see. She already feels his body panting. She helps Jon remove his shoes and escorts him to sit down on her sectional.

IMANI (CONT'D)

You want some tea or something?

JON

Do you have green?

IMANI

Are we still talking about tea? I have both actually. Give me a minute.

Jon checks his phone for a word from Jade. Nothing. Imani notices what Jon is doing from the kitchen. She swiftly goes around the island, snatches Jon's phone, and chucks it away on the opposite side of him.

JON

Yo!

Imani goes back to the kitchen. She returns with piping hot tea on a saucer. She removes a small bag from a jar on the coffee table and sits next to Jon. She rolls a joint to share.

IMANI

(sighs)

I'm sorry to hear about you and Jade. You know you can crash here as long as you need to, right?

Jon lights the blunt and partakes. He passes to Imani.

JON

Definitely not trying to be all in your space like that, but I appreciate it. I'll be out as soon as I can.

IMANI

Well let me know if there's anything I can do. I know everything just happened, but have you thought about seeing someone?

JON

I should right. I know I'm a good motherfuckin' catch. People are so fucking full of themselves.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JON (CONT'D)

And here I go trying to do the whole "good man" thing focusing on Jade thinking shit was actually gonna go somewhere.

Jon blows his tea and takes a sip.

JON (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Still too hot. He sets his mug down a while longer to cool. Imani takes a drag.

IMANI

'Careful and it's not an act, you are a good man, but I meant like a therapist. I know the last time you tried it the whole situation sorta went left, but I think it could be worth revisiting.

JON

Sit on this couch. What's your problem? Let's get into your feelings. Hell no I'm not doing that shit.

Jon revisits his tea. All good now.

IMANI

But wasn't the guy an old, hetero, White man? You're a young, bisexual, Dominican man. Exactly what'd you think he was going to do for you?

JON

Point.

Imani pats Jon on the thigh. He leans on her shoulder.

IMANI

Exactly. I'm not saying go tomorrow. Just think it over.

FADE OUT.