

1 EXT. THE GREY SPACE - TIMELESS

1

The definition of "Joy" scrolls across the screen:

Joy: Coming out of the dark night of the soul with sureness of foot. Divided self reunited. Inner peace. Recognizing the True Self within. Knowing you can trust yourself. Seeing light in self and others. Energy and warmth throughout the body.

Black joy - all of the above, but Black AF

TITLE STINGER: **BLACK JOY ALWAYS WINS**

2 INT. BANQUET HALL - NIGHT

2

A large parade of Black people playing various instruments, singing and dancing as they enter and fill the Banquet Hall.

JOI (Mid-30s, natural hair, medium build, and riddled with anxiety), is decorated with colorful veils, beads, and scarves. A adornment fit for a "queen for the day."

A number of BLACK WOMEN of various ages and sizes, also colorfully adorned with veils and jewels line up across the stage, portraying a mix between a beauty pageant and a religious ceremony.

Suddenly, everyone breaks out into the same trance-like dance.

The ANNOUNCER (40s, male) places a glowing crown and sash around Joi.

ANNOUNCER

Miss Joi Johnston, you are the chosen one! What will you do with your newfound absolute power?

Everyone applauds wildly. Joi fidgets and tugs at her adornments as they push a life-sized golden statue placed atop a pedestal as though it were a trophy, onto the stage.

They stop right next to Joi.

JOI

Umm, well, I'm gonna have to give that some thought -

ANNOUNCER

- Joi...this is a highly esteemed calling, only given to the ones who are truly ready! What do you have to say for yourself?

JOI

Umm- I think you may have the wrong person? I'm not really -

BLACK JOY (Blackity-Black, fabulous, 8M years old, but timeless in appearance) suddenly animates and interrupts Joi, with loud raucous laughter.

Joi squints at the statue, perplexed.

BLACK JOY

Oh yeah - I'm a let you finish, sugar - but first I gotta say...

Black Joy steps off her pedestal and begins twerking on Joi.

BLACK JOY (cont'd)

I'm coming for yo Azzzzzzzzzzzzzz....

3 INT. JOI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

3

The last syllable of Black Joy's words morph into Joi's cell phone buzzing with a skull and cross-bones flashing across the phone. It's JOI'S MOM (mid 60s, filled with toxic positivity) calling.

Joi jerks awake, hitting her head on the shelf above her bed.

JOI

Unnnnnnggghhh...

Joi picks up the phone angrily.

JOI (cont'd)

Hi mom.

JOI'S MOM

Bless God!

Joi's mom begins singling loudly into the phone.

JOI'S MOM

Riiiiise and Shiiiiine and give God your glory glory!

Joi puts the phone under her other pillow to muffle the sound, and picks up her cigarettes, which were under her other pillow.

JOI'S MOM (cont'd)

Hello? Hello, Joi? Are you there? I hope you're not smoking again! No one wants to kiss a woman with smoker's teeth!

Joi begrudgingly picks up the phone again.

JOI

Ugh - I'm here. I was having the best dream tho...I was onstage, winning this award-

Joi's mom bursts out laughing.

JOI'S MOM

Are you high already? You have to finish something to win an award for it, sweetie.

Joi winces at the snark, but sighs and continues.

JOI

Ok- um, Noooo, I'm not high - like I said, I was asleep! I was just telling you about a dream...

Joi whispers under her breath

JOI (cont'd)

You know - those things people have before you stomp on them?

JOI'S MOM

Mmmm-hmm you sound distracted - you have company? Ha! I know the answer to that question. When was the last time you had sex? Or a boyfriend. Or a girlfriend? Or a date?

JOI

Wait, what?

JOI'S MOM

Join us in the real world, would you honey? You sound uptight - just checking on you - you spend too much time alone, you start getting like those Unibombers I've heard about...

JOI

Wow. I think there was only one
Unibomber, but I -

JOI'S MOM

- Oh you think you're funny!? Well,
considering you haven't even had a
dog in the last 10 years of your
life, you need to be glad I'm
checking! Let me also remind you that
today is the first day of your new
job?

Joi rolls her eyes and lets out a long defeated sigh.

JOI

Please don't.

JOI'S MOM

I surely will! Your Uncle Chester
pulled a lot of strings to get you
that position! Don't you mess it up.

JOI

Strings?! It's a temp job...probably
at a beige office full of beige
people, who's jokes I'll have to
pretend to laugh at.

JOI'S MOM

You don't have to love everyone - you
don't even have to have love in your
life, if that's what you choose for
yourself for God knows why, Joi - but
you *do* have to start making money.
You know that stuff you pay your
bills with? Or, better yet - you
have to *start* paying your bills
with?!

BLACK JOY (O.C.)

Oooop! Unh-unh girl...

Joi drops the phone on the bed, startled. She looks around
the room, checks under the bed. Still confused...she shakes
it off and returns to her conversation.

Joi's mom is still talking, completely unaware of what is
going on on the other end of the line.

JOI'S MOM

...because I'm not interested in continuing to financially support my "lost child". I have my own life to tend to! Shoot! Things are getting serious with Jabari - I may not be around for you to abuse much longer! He who finds a wife!

JOI

...I can't do this right now...

JOI'S MOM

What's that?!

Joi straightens up in the bed and clears her throat, preparing for battle.

JOI

Look ...I know I've been a burden financially, I'm sorry...Um -look - I've been really close to selling a sculpture, but I'm just trying to wait for a good pri-

JOI'S MOM

And you just going on faith you'll be taken care of 'til it sells, eh?! For someone who doesn't go to church, you shole live your life waiting on Jesus to save you! So get your ass - ahem - your A-S-S out of bed and get to work before my grace runs out! ... Um-Bless God.

Joi's mom hangs up passive aggressively.

Joi stares into space for a second, processing what just happened.

JOI (V.O.)

She didn't have to come for my love life tho. Dam sun.

Joi's alarm suddenly goes off, playing the song "Another One Bites the Dust".

Joi sullenly pulls her vibrator - also from underneath her pillow, then turns off her alarm and gets out of bed.

4 EXT. ART WALK - MORNING

4

Joi walks slowly, taking in the beauty of the street art surrounding her. She pauses before each piece to take in the colors and the lines. At times she mimics the pose of the subject of the piece, as though she's trying to be absorbed into the art itself.

She finally arrives at the end of the art walk, which ends abruptly at a large, off-putting beige building with peeling paint on the doorway.

5 EXT. BEIGE CO, INC - DAY

5

The exterior office bldg sign:

"BEIGE Co, Inc." is crookedly hung over the fading door. There appears to be at least three drips of fresh bird poop hanging off the edges of the sign...apparently waiting for the next unlucky soul to surprise in the forehead.

Joi sighs and stands staring at the sign for a bit. She takes out a cigarette, lights it, and hears her mother's voice in her head.

JOI'S MOM (V.O.)

No one wants to kiss a woman with smokers' teeeeeeth...

Joi takes one pull of the cigarette and puts it out. She takes another deep breath, and begrudgingly walks inside.

6 INT. OFFICE - LATER

6

Six co-workers are gathered around Joi's desk, which has been decorated with two balloons and a small cake, singing "Happy Birthday" to a CO-WORKER (30s, beige in affect and style) who is extremely excited for the attention.

CO-WORKERS

(lackluster and off-key)

Haaaappy BirrrrrthDaaayyyy to Yooouuuuu.

Joi's cell phone vibrates. She looks at it and hits 'ignore call'. KAREN (mid 30's, quite white and intrusive), wheels her work chair into Joi's space and begins speaking a little too closely to her face.

KAREN

Joi! We're so happy you joined us this week - By the by, sorry for taking over your area, but this is where we usually throw our gatherings. I'm sure you don't mind.

JOI

Um, yeah, it's no prob-

KAREN

- And I hope you didn't get confused today! It's another 'Joy' who works here that we were celebrating today, not you!

Karen chuckles at herself, obviously pleased with the attempt at humor. Joi pauses, then feigns a laugh with Karen.

JOI

Yeah, I know, my birthday's not until -

KAREN

Isn't it crazy how your names are the same though?! I love it when that happens.

Karen begins massaging Joi's shoulders as she speaks, causing Joi to dissociate into her own thoughts at the intrusion.

KAREN

Like me - my name is Karen Beckerson, and my cubicle is right next to Rebecca Carrington. Isn't that just hilar?!

JOI (V.O.)

I cannot believe this chick is touching me! I cannot get fired, tho! Ugh, I haven't even see another colored person in so long -

Joi snaps back to the moment and notices Karen has paused for an awkwardly long time, obviously waiting for a response.

Joi nods slowly and fake laughs again, pretending she's heard anything from the last few moments.

KAREN

Anywho, welcome to the team, and I'm sure we'll find a way to tell the difference between you and the real Joy - I mean, the original 'Joy'? - Ha! Well, you're way more *original* though, right?

Karen winks, laughs hysterically at herself again and wheels herself away in the office chair, shooting finger guns.

Joi fake laughs again, a little too long this time, and absent-mindedly picks up her cell phone to play her missed voicemail.

Right as the beep on her outgoing message plays -

BLACK JOY (O.C.)

Burn it down!

Joi drops her phone on the desk in surprise, cracking the screen.

JOI

The hell?!

Joi looks around for the voice, searching under her desk. She bumps her head coming back up, frustrating her enough to give up her search. She picks the phone back up gingerly to play the voicemail.

JOI'S MOM (V.O.)

Bless God! Heeeellloooo honeeeyyy... just checking in to see how your day is going. I've got news! Jabari decided to follow another path - *however* - where one door closes, another one opens - because Pedro and I....

Joi's mom giggles like a school girl.

JOI'S MOM (V.O.) (cont'd)

are eloping! Stop it honey, I'm on the phone - and guess what else? I'll be relocating to the DR for the rest of the year to be with his family. Isn't that wonderful!? Sun, sand, and sexiness twenty-four seven!! Oh, I'm soooooo happy.

(MORE)

JOI'S MOM (V.O.) (cont'd)
 And I know I'm doing God's work with
 this union. His kids are still
 little, and they really need my help.
 And I'm not worried about you at all!
 You've been doing so well lately!
 Even if you don't keep your jobs
 long, you always find a new one fast!
 Probably because you're so, um-
 charming!

Joi slouches in her chair and picks her nose.

JOI'S MOM (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Well, honey - I'm saying all this to
 let you know I won't be able to - umm
 ..

Joi's mom begins to whisper into the phone.

JOI'S MOM (V.O.) (cont'd)
 ...help with your bills anymore -
 but maybe sooner than we initially
 expected. I know we spoke about this
 earlier, but well, I need it to start
 immediately. Pedro's people need my
 whole self - AND my whole check. But
 you're a working girl now, so I'm not
 worried.

Joi's mom goes back to her regular overly loud, chirpy tone.

JOI'S MOM (V.O.) (cont'd)
 Love you, watch your attitude and
 don't forget to keep a smile on your
 face so you don't get fired! I'll
 call you when we get to the
 isslllllaannnd...

The voicemail ends, but Joi holds the phone to her ear for a second, frozen with her mouth open.

Karen suddenly appears again, holding a crumbled piece of cake and a balloon with writing on it.

KAREN
 Hey Joi! I wanted to bring you a
 piece of cake...and let you know
 we've figured out how to tell you two
 apart! Look what we made for you!

Karen holds up a balloon with the words "Black Joy" written across it.

KAREN (cont'd)
See!? It's just a little welcome gift from the office, so you know you have a place here. We want you to be comfortable.

Joi, still holding cell phone, looks at the balloon, then looks at Karen.

JOI
Actually, um - that's not how I spell my -

KAREN
I knew you'd love it! Have a great afternoon!

Karen walks away, pleased with herself yet again.

Joi stares at the balloon a while, the creepy fake smile still frozen on her face.

The balloon slowly rotates, revealing a horrible hand drawn cartoon of Joi in black marker on the other side.

BLACK JOY	JOI
Motherfu -	Motherfu -

The balloon pops on its own.

Joi definitely hears Black Joy this time and immediately jumps out of her seat and out of the office.

7 EXT. PARK BENCH IN A NEARBY PARK - DAY

7

Joi lights another cigarette with a shaky hand.

JOI (V.O.)
C'mon! You can't start hearing voices the first day on a job! Losing my mind, losing my help ...

Joi deeply inhales - and immediately hears her mother's voice again.

JOI'S MOM(V.O.)
Smoker's teeth smoker's teeth
smoker's teeth...