

STANDSTILL

Written by

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INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A cluttered mesh of Ethiopian art and sound equipment fills a one bedroom apartment.

INT. APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

An old sticky note on the fridge.

"Left dinner for your 10pm session in the fridge -- D <3"

INT. APARTMENT - LIVING ROOM - DAY

A worn notebook rests open on the arm of a couch. A small metal trash bin sits beside it with BALLED UP PAGES inside.

We catch a quick glimpse of a page. No, letter. "You're my whole world" is briefly made out.

INT. APARTMENT - BATHROOM

A his and hers sink. Half empty.

INT. APARTMENT - ENTRYWAY - DAY

Two long garment bags hang on a clothing rack near the door. A mixture of silk and cashmere fabric peeks through.

DIONNE (27) the "all or nothing" type steps into frame, wearing a plunging corset and stunning stilettos. She zips the bags up and takes them off the rack.

They're heavier than they look.

NASIR (29) enters. A quiet confidence and undeniable magnetism precedes him.

NASIR

I got it.

DIONNE

No. I got it.

Dionne folds the garments over both forearms and walks out.

Nasir stands still. Staring at the door.

Beat.

ANGLE

TWO KEYS hang on a hook. Nasir snatches ONE.

INT. APARTMENT - HALLWAY - DAY

Dionne presses the elevator button. Waiting impatiently. One by one, the numbers blink...until...the ninth floor. The doors open.

INT. ELEVATOR - DAY

Dionne steps inside and immediately presses the "close doors" button followed by "1L" for lobby.

The elevator doors begin to shut just as NASIR'S HAND SHOOTS THROUGH, reopening them.

NASIR
You wasn't gon say bye?

DIONNE
I was coming back up.

Beat.

NASIR
You should stick to what you're
good at. Lying isn't your forte.

Nasir steps inside and reaches past Dionne to press a button. The doors close and the elevator begins to descend.

Dionne stands off to one side while Nasir leans against the opposite wall. He stuffs his hands in his pockets and sneaks a careful glance at Dionne.

ON DIONNE: Stone-faced. Staring straight.

There's tension in the air. Nasir turns to break it.

NASIR (CONT'D)
How much longer you gon be staying
at your sisters?

DIONNE
What's it to you?

NASIR
Whadya mean? I deserve to know.

DIONNE
Again. Why?

NASIR
(sarcastic)
Why do you think?

DIONNE
Typical. Still can't tell me how
you feel?

NASIR
You already know how I feel.

DIONNE
God. You're impossible.

NASIR
What do you want me to say? Huh?

DIONNE
The truth!

The elevator JOLTS to a violent halt.

Dionne drops the garment bags and stumbles.

Nasir instinctively reaches for her and wraps his arms around
her.

The two cling to one another until the elevator cable
steadies.

NASIR
You ok?

Dionne unburies her face from his chest to look up at him.

DIONNE
Yeah. You?

They're close. Really close. If she craned her neck, she
could just reach his lips...

Dionne snaps out of it. Forcing her gaze away from his lips
back to his eyes... which are staring deeply into hers.

Nasir's eyes are dark. Seductive, as if with them, he was
coaxing her to his lips.

Dionne tenses then breaks away. She presses the lobby button.

DIONNE (CONT'D)
Huh?

She presses it again. NOTHING.

NASIR
Try the emergency button.

Dionne pushes the emergency call button, over and over. No response.

Overhead, the elevator's lights begin to blink...

DIONNE
Oh fuck. Fuck.

Her panic intensifies with every passing second.

DIONNE (CONT'D)
We're stuck!

NASIR
Calm down. It's probably just a glitch.

Nasir pulls his phone out and holds it up to the ceiling.

DIONNE
Don't tell me to calm down!

Dionne mimics Nasir in a separate corner.

NASIR
I got nothing. You?

DIONNE
Same.

NASIR
The power must be out.

DIONNE
So what do we do?

NASIR
Shit. The only thing we can do is wait for help.

DIONNE
Are you crazy? Who knows how long that'll be?! My editor is waiting for me on the other side of town.

NASIR
(accusing)
You dress like that for all your editors?

DIONNE
I am *not* having this conversation
with you. Right now, we need to
focus on getting out.

Nasir takes a deep breath. Clearly annoyed. He looks around.
Besides the powerless display screen and buttons...

NASIR
There *is* no way out. Not while the
power's shot.
(re: Dionne's face)
Panicking isn't gonna solve ---

THE LIGHTS TURN OFF.

OVER BLACK:

NASIR (CONT'D)
Shit.

CUT TO:

The soft glow of phone screens bathe the elevator in dual
orbs of light.

A chuckle escapes from Dionne despite herself.

DIONNE
Figures. Of all people I could be
trapped with, I would wind up stuck
with you.

Nasir's patience runs thin.

NASIR
'Scuse me?

DIONNE
Forget it.

Dionne types in her phone.

NASIR
Nah, speak up.

DIONNE
Drop it. Ok?

NASIR
Fuck that.

A MALE CONTACT PICTURE appears on Dionne's screen.

NASIR (CONT'D)
(re: phone screen)
Are you fucking somebody else?

Dionne scoffs in response.

NASIR (CONT'D)
It's that fake gay stylist isn't
it. Terrance?

DIONNE
TRAVIS. And no. I'm not sleeping
with him. Not that that's any of
your concern.

Nasir clenches his jaw.

NASIR
Then what is it?

DIONNE
Why do you care? We broke up!

NASIR
You know what? You're right. I
don't.

DIONNE
Good.

NASIR
Cool.

Dionne and Nasir lean back on opposite ends of the elevator.

DIONNE
Besides...it's not like you didn't
have *plenty* of girls that threw
themselves at you at "work."

NASIR
For the *millionth* time, I HAVE to
go to the club to network.

Dionne rolls her eyes like she's heard it all before.

NASIR (CONT'D)
I've never cheated on you! I dunno
why you tripping.

DIONNE
Don't sit up here and act like you
don't know how we got here.

The elevator's LED lights FLICKER ON. They're harsher than before.

NASIR

I DON'T KNOW! YOU WON'T TELL ME.

DIONNE

I HAVE told you. For the
"millionth" time.
You don't listen!
You NEVER listen.

NASIR (CONT'D)

Cap.
That's cap.

DIONNE (CONT'D)

Yeah? What was the last thing I
told you the day we broke up?

NASIR

Something about... you being tired.
That you were done... I don't know.

DIONNE

Exactly.

NASIR

You say a lot when you're mad.

DIONNE

You give me a lot to be mad at.

NASIR

Like what?

DIONNE

Like coming home smelling like the
club, spending all night in the
studio.

NASIR

(cuts in)

All that shit comes with being a
producer!

DIONNE

But you never asked about me. I'd
get a feature published, and you'd
barely look up from your beat pack.

NASIR

I was *working*. That last track sold-

NASIR (CONT'D)

56,000 copies the first week.

DIONNE

56,000 copies the first week.
I know.

DIONNE (CONT'D)

And I'm happy for you. I am. But I got sick and tired of you giving the world everything and giving me what's left. I have needs too!

NASIR

Are you for real, D? You make it sound like I'm bullshitting. I'm out here hustling to build a better life for us!

DIONNE

Us or you?

NASIR

(lowers his voice)

Don't do that.

DIONNE

You took every opportunity to advance your career even if it was at my expense. Going city to city, chasing artists...

NASIR

You wasn't complaining when all the money was coming in!

DIONNE

I never asked you for all that! I just needed you to support me!

NASIR

I *did*. You just didn't like the way I did it.

Dionne shakes her head. Tired of talking at each other, instead of to each other.

DIONNE

You're so deluded. I can't believe it's taken me this long to see it.

NASIR

I'M deluded? You're the one who can't just fucking stand still with me. Why's everything gotta be a fight with you?

DIONNE

Why's everything have to be YOUR WAY?!

A fire ignites in Dionne.

DIONNE (CONT'D)

When you started blowing up, I
shrunk myself down to make space
for your dreams, thinking, *hoping*
that someday you'd support mine
too. But you didn't. It was always
about you.

NASIR

You think this is easy for me? I'm
not chasing fame-- I'm chasing
security. Building something that
might actually last. You think I
wanted to come home drained every
night instead of being with you?
Fuck no! But I had to do what I had
to do. I don't get no handouts!
Every day, I'm proving I deserve a
seat at the table. And I come home
and feel like I gotta prove myself
there too.

Dionne doesn't raise her voice. Doesn't need to.

She just stares at him--full of fire, and full of grief.

DIONNE

You didn't have to prove yourself
to me, Nasir. You just had to
choose me. And you didn't.

NASIR

EVERYTHING I did was for you and
you threw it all away! Don't act
like I'm the only one who BROKE
something.

DIONNE

We were already broken.
(then)
You didn't fight for us.

NASIR

(resolute)
I'm fighting now.

Nasir steps toward Dionne.

NASIR (CONT'D)

Earlier, you asked me the last
thing you said when we broke up.
(slowly)
(MORE)

NASIR (CONT'D)

You said: "You're so busy tryna
build a life, you forgot I was
supposed to be in it."

Dionne softens.

DIONNE

So you did hear me.

NASIR

I always do. I just don't always
know what to do with it. But I can
change that. I *want* to change that.

Beat.

DIONNE

I got a job offer with a fashion
publication in New York.

NASIR

That's...that's dope!
Congratulations.

DIONNE

Thank you.

NASIR

It's remote right?

Dionne casts her eyes down. Nasir's faux happy expression
begins to crumble.

NASIR (CONT'D)

...Did you take it?

DIONNE

I did.

Nasir scratches his beard. Doesn't meet her eyes.

NASIR

Huh. When do you start?

DIONNE

Tomorrow.

Nasir shifts, struggling to process what he's hearing.

NASIR

When were you gonna tell me?

DIONNE

I've tried-

NASIR

We broke up two weeks ago and now
you're moving to New York? Just
like that?

DIONNE

It wasn't an easy decision!

NASIR

It sure as hell feels like it.

(then)

These past few weeks, were you
really staying with your sister?

Dionne stiffens. There's nowhere to run.

DIONNE

...No. I've been moving into my
apartment.

Nasir roughly scratches his beard again. A tic of his. He
feels betrayed, angry, but most of all scared; the reality
that he's losing her fully sinking in.

DIONNE (CONT'D)

Maybe I'm an asshole for not making
it clear but...I dunno. You were
always someplace else. This
elevator's the only place I ever
had your full attention.

Beat.

NASIR

It doesn't have to be.

(softly)

Stay with me.

Dionne holds his gaze. Long. Searching.

DIONNE

What happens when the doors open?
You go back to work and I go back
to sleeping alone?

Nasir says nothing. Can't.

They stand there. Breathing.

The power HUMS BACK ON.

A few painfully long seconds go by before the elevator
continues its descent.

The duo stare at each other in tandem silence until the doors slide open.

INT. LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Bright light floods in. They're on the first floor. The fire department greets them.

FIREFIGHTER
Sorry about that. Everyone still
breathing?

Neither of them respond.

They stand inside the elevator. Together. Apart.

Dionne bends down to pick up her garments then steps out.

Nasir doesn't.

NASIR
What if I visited you in New York?
In between shows?

Dionne pauses then looks back. Her voice small. Final.

DIONNE
Goodbye, Nasir.

Nasir stays in the elevator, watching her go.

Alone. Small.

The elevator doors close on him.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END

