

OR WHAT

by

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FADE IN

EXT. BOULEVARD SIDEWALK - DAY

MOTHER, a young African-American woman dressed in affordable office clothes, bolts down the sidewalk, heels clicking rapidly on the concrete. On her arm, she carries a school backpack.

A couple of feet behind her, BARRY, a pudgy 10-year-old-ish African-American boy drags his feet and swipes through clips on his smartphone playing at a loud volume. He wears cool jeans, a brand T-shirt and fresh Jordans.

MOTHER

Baby, will you please keep up?
Don't know how long this is going
to be, I have to drop you off after
this and head back to the office.

The distance between the two grows.

MOTHER

Barry, honey?

She stops to look back, son keeps his pace.

MOTHER

Know what? Never mind, can you stay
and wait here, please?

-- meaning the public bench on the sidewalk she stopped by.

BARRY

Or what.

She just drops the backpack on the bench and rushes into the neighborhood BANK.

Barry manages to take a seat without taking his eyes off the phone. In doing so, he steps on a chewed gum.

He grabs a notebook out of the backpack, rips out a piece of paper and meticulously unglues the gum stuck to the bottom of his shoe.

He scrunches up the paper as he's done and throws a no-look shot towards the closest trash can. Misses by a mile, it drops on the pavement.

He turns his phone sideways, waits for something on it to load. Then he starts pressing rapidly with both thumbs as gunshot sounds pops loudly.

On the other side of the street, a couple of KIDS struggle carrying a heavy ladder. Both are smaller than Barry, KID 2 is visibly younger than either. They rush with it and jaywalk successfully.

As they cross Barry's face, they are almost out of breath. He notices them.

KID 1
Come on, we gotta hurry!

KID 2
My arms hurt!

KID 1
Stop crying about it. You think
she's really naked? Like-- really
naked?

KID 2
I don't know, Tony swore by it.

KID 1
Man, I can't wait.

KID 2
I go first!

KID 1
No waaay!

As they navigate the sidewalk, Kid 2 stumbles and falls all over the ladder, not long from Barry. It brings down Kid 1 as well, both let out pain moans.

KID 1
Come on, get up! Grab it better.

KID 2
(to Barry)
Hey man, can you help us out?

KID 1
What are you doing?!

As he snatches the ladder out of Kid 2's hands--

BARRY
Give me that!

KID 2
Go, go!

They pick up the pace. Kid 1 leads the way, Kid 2 runs joyfully behind them.

KID 2
Oh, man. My dear Mrs. Johnson, here
I come!

They reach a narrow BACK ALLEY and Kid 1 makes a turn for it--

EXT. BACK ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

An OLDER KID stands tall at a fix point in the alley. He watches as the other three run towards him.

KID 1
(out of breath)
All right, we got it! She's still
there?

OLDER KID
You bet she is. Just fresh out of
shower.

KID 2
Oh, man! Naked, real naked? Can we
see... Everything?

OLDER KID
Completely naked. She just made
herself a fresh cup of coffee,
probably laid on her sofa watching
a movie or grabbing a book.

BARRY
Wait, who is she?

Older Kid takes a second to notice him.

OLDER KID
Mrs. Johnson? Blonde lady, green
eyes, used to own and work the
bookstore down Union? You know--

He uses his hands to imitate large breasts.

Kid 1 & 2 raise their heads at the same time, their eyes
turn in awe to the same second-level window.

OLDER KID
Now, who goes first?

In unison--

KID 1 & 2
I go!

BARRY
I'll go.

Pause. He silently imposes himself on the two smaller kids
as they drop their enthusiasm. Barry grabs the ladder and
places it firmly on the side of the building.

OLDER KID
Easy, now. Naughty boys got to pay
first, it's a dollar per peek.

Barry reaches in his pocket. Grabs out a couple of bills,
picks the correct one and hands it to him.

BARRY
What do I do?

Older Kid points towards the second-level window.

OLDER KID

See that one up there with the warm light coming out? There's your target. Sit on that ledge, make sure to sit to stay balanced and you don't fall down. Keep scooting over until you reach it. But don't just go, you know, full-head crazy look. Take your time, peek a little, do it gently, so you don't get us caught. A dollar gets you two minutes, friend, then you come on down.

Barry grabs the ladder with both hands. Kid 2 grabs it behind him and holds it steady on the wall for him.

Barry reaches the second-level ledge, carefully turns his back to the wall to sit safely on it. He starts to slide, little by little, moving slowly towards the window. Warm light he can almost reach. He's at the side of the window, he can almost reach over and peek, when--

He almost falls down, feeling some grabbing him by the feet. Fazed and confused, he looks down--

As Kid 2 jumps back down off the ladder, in hands holding Barry's Jordan sneakers. Kid 1 and Older Kid calmly grab the ladder, each by an end, and head off with it by their side.

As he runs back onto the sidewalk--

KID 2

(yelling)

See you, son, take care now! And blow Mrs. Johnson a kiss for me, will you?

They disappear. Barry clings closer to the ledge so he can look down. The fall or jump looks scary and long enough.

He turns his eyes back towards the window. Light appears brighter.

With his hands holding dearly to the ledge, he pulls himself closer and closer. Once more. He's there, he sits right by the edge of the window.

He makes himself small, lowers his head just enough and glances gently through the tiny bit of glass and into THE APARTMENT--

An old lady sits at the table. A plate full of salmon sits in front of her, as she hand-cuts with fork and knife tiny bits of fish and feeds them to the two cats sitting besides her on the table.

EXT. BOULEVARD SIDEWALK - LATER

Mother storms out the Bank as she holds a phone to her ear.

MOTHER
(on the phone)
Just done here.

She checks the clock on her screen--

MOTHER
I think I can catch the next train
in five, drop him home and then if
I'm lucky catch the 2:40 back to
the office. What time you think
you'll finish today?

She pauses. She stands right besides the public bench as she observes her son-- sitting quiet, no phone in sight, watching the cars drive by. Barefoot.

FADE OUT.