

Open on an unmanned "spa-like" station with multiple, different sized ring lights, swamped with social media tags/qr codes displayed and neon lit name sign on the wall, a facial steamer and a towel warmer on a stand next to the station, black towels rolled perfectly and stacked in a pyramid shape on shelves, private men's product line and small succulent plants displayed on a shelf, with personalized cape draped over the barber chair, barber license displayed, no barber.

Another unmanned station surrounded with multiple plaques, certificates and awards perfectly displayed on the wall, with Office-like "desk nameplate" dead center station, barber license displayed, no barber.

A few clients in the shop getting cut/waiting.

Panning thru the shop to the front door.

Eric reaches for the door, it opens.

MONEY MANNY (mid 30s, African American, clean-cut, pretty boy, fly street wear dressed, somewhat cocky, Eric's longtime "very single" friend, and sidekick) greets Eric with a stare, as he walks into the shop.

ERIC

What's wrong with you foo?

MANNY

Yo ass know GOTDAMM well what's wrong with me...how come she didn't give you a ticket?

Eric acts confused.

ERIC

What you talkn about?

Manny looks around the shop.

MANNY

START

EVERYBODY in here done got tickets, except YOU E! How??

The other barbers and a client raise their hands/nod to confirm this statement.

ERIC

Bro, I don't know! Maybe she feels sorry for me or something.

MANNY

Sorry for you for WHAT?

ERIC

Probably because she knows I gotta deal with y'all asses everyday.

BISHOP, (early 40s, African American, the "Preachy" barber, always wears a hat, dickies and a plaid shirt, sort of scruffy beard, gives almost sound advice, often unsolicited) jumps in the conversation.

BISHOP

That might be true, you do gotta deal with **THEY** crazy asses....but come on E, no ticket? You left your car halfway in the street **AND** you didn't put no money in the meter!

Eric looks outside at his SUV.

~~Unbothered, he walks over to his station and sets his case on top.~~

~~TRE, (late 20s, African American, born female, he/him pronouns, plus-sized, dreads partially covering his face, tatted, suffers from PCOS, has slight mustache and a beard, always in over-sized t-shirt and cargo type pants, calm voice) serious and changes the subject.~~

TRE

What happened at court E?

ERIC

Shiidd, they gave me 2 life sentences.

They all laugh.

Tre doesn't find it funny.

Eric catches Tre's seriousness.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Nah... I'm bullshitting, I get my girls back!

MANNY

Like on some every other weekend, Disneyland shit?

ERIC

Nah foo, mediator granted me sole custody, ~~SHE~~ gets the Disneyland shit.

Everyone is happy about the ruling.

Congratulations, hugs and fist bumps all around, including Tre.

Manny approaches Eric at his station.

Tre is at his station, next to Eric's.

The rest of the shop continue about their business.

MANNY

How did she take it Bro?

ERIC

She didn't even show up to court again, you know she don't care. She wanted this to happen. But it's all good, my girls are better at home with me anyway.

Manny joking.

MANNY

E, how? You don't even got milk in your fridge...bro you sleeping on a air mattress.(beat)

Manny realizes that this is a lot for Eric and backs off the jokes as he walks over to grab the broom.

MANNY (CONT'D)

But you're right bro, they got everything they need at home with you and Na-Na.

Tre can't hold back from sharing his thoughts on this.

This is a personal subject for him.

TRE

Man, them girls still need they momma, she gotta get her shit together. This type of shit can effect them in so many ways down the line. I know they got you and Na-Na, but damn.

Tre invites his client to the chair and puts a cape on him.

Bishop, who is cutting a client, decides to lighten the mood.

BISHOP

You know, It's a big responsibility raising children.

(MORE)

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Iyanla Vanzant said, "the children are our future, teach them well and let them lead the way". Just follow those wise words and y'all will be alright.

MANNY

Those are the wise words of Whitney Houston FOOL!

Mixed reactions from the shop, a few laughs and a few SMHs at Bishop.

END

Eric mumbles under his breath.

ERIC

Man, I need to "Bow down, pray to God and hope that He's listening" - wise words of the great Tupac Shakur.

Eric is still uneasy about this new "full-time" responsibility.

The guys continue cutting their customers.

Manny is sweeping the floor and approaches Eric.

MANNY.

All jokes aside bro, you know you can count on us. We got yo back with the girls, anything you need!

Eric thinks on what Manny has said.

He looks out the window in a daze, then turns back to Manny as Manny sweeps the floor near him.

ERIC

Aye, you think she likes me?

MANNY

Who likes you?

ERIC

Zha'Nee.

MANNY

Zha'Nee, who is Zha'Nee?

ERIC

The meter maid.

Everyone hears this, ears wide open.