

VARDO

1/4

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EXT. ACE BAHAMAS - DAY (MORNING)

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The trio is standing outside along the wall. A line is forming behind them as they wait at the door. Vardo and his cronies are behind them, waiting as well.

START

GABBY

My mummy was saying that we should pick out a gift for Ms. Pratt at the end of the summer.

WOODSIDE

What y'all would get her?

VARDO

(effeminately; mocking)

What y'all would get her?

Gabby puts up a talk-to-the hand. Johnneisha shoots dagger eyes, but Woodside doesn't look. He just keeps his eyes trained on Gabby, cautious not to say anything.

Meanwhile, the boys keep staring.

VARDO (CONT'D)

You could keep talkin' Woodside.

Woodside doesn't want to answer.

VARDO (CONT'D)

Muddafuck. His whole voice gone.

Gabby turns back this time, though Johnneisha tries to stop her.

JOHNNEISHA

Why y'all can't just mind y'all business? You stay bothering him. You like him aye? You want doggy?

WOODSIDE

(quietly)

Johnneisha, stop.

VARDO

(whining; imitating)

Why y'all can't just nya ya? If you wasn't a gyal--

JOHNNEISHA

Vardo, come. See what happen. I could be a nigga just for you. But you might like me. Sissy ass.

(MORE)

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JOHNEISHA (CONT'D)

(to WOODSIDE)

Just ignore them, hya.

Woodside still hasn't said a thing. The door opens. Donovan pokes a cautionary head out.

He looks around, questioning, but no one speaks. He lets it go and lets them in. Woodside doesn't make eye contact.

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INT. ACE BAHAMAS - CLASSROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

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The trio enter the lab-style classroom, which sports large, square tables instead of individual desks. Counters and cabinets filled with apparatus line the walls. Donovan and a counselor are standing along the wall.

SKIP

The three make it their business to take a seat all the way at the back in the corner. There are little tubs of water with small pieces of coral in them. There are also mangrove propagules on the tables.

Ms. Pratt is at the board, writing: MANGROVE AND CORAL REEF ECOSYSTEMS. She turns around, pretending to be shocked.

~~MS. PRATT~~

~~Oh wow. Did not see you here.~~

The room CHATTERS with laughter.

~~MS. PRATT (CONT'D)~~

~~I think I see some familiar faces around the room. A couple in the back.~~

Ms. Pratt looks to the three in the back, smiling. They wave, excited. Vardo and his boys look over, shaking their heads and sucking their teeth.

CONTINUE

MS. PRATT (CONT'D)

So we're talking about fish nurseries today. Can anyone tell me why they think the juvenile fish like the mangroves?

Gabby's hand shoots up, along with a few other slowpokes. Ms. Pratt points to Gabby, and she shoots up, beaming.

GABBY

Because they can zoom and hide in the roots away from the bigger fish.

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Vardo scoffs, making the other boys chuckle. Ms. Pratt notices, but brushes it off.

MS. PRATT

Good answer, Gabby. Lots of room to zoom.

MS. PRATT (CONT'D)

And?

Woodside is up next, assuming the hunch of Sergeant Rolle. Some of the other students tap each other, smiling, waiting for a show.

WOODSIDE

(as SGT ROLLE)

Well, Ms. Pratt--

VARDO

Bey, just answer the question. Always wan play around. Ya sissy ass.

DONOVAN

Vardo.

Woodside is instantly stunned, then pissed. The class ERUPTS with SHOCK, some laughing, others holding back. Some instantly look to Ms. Pratt. Vardo and his friends are laughing. Donovan SHUSHES some of the students.

MS. PRATT

Elvardo, that is enough.

The class goes deathly silent. You can hear a pin drop. Even Donovan and the other counselor look shocked. Vardo sits with a cocky confidence, leaning in the stool.

MS. PRATT (CONT'D)

(sternly)

Stop leaning in that stool and sit up.

~~Elvardo moves slowly, but follows her instruction.~~

~~MS. PRATT (CONT'D)~~

~~When did you become an adult and decide to say whatever you want in my program in my lab?~~

GABBY

(standing)

~~And cursing, too.~~

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MS. PRATT

~~Gabby, I do not need your help.~~

Gabby immediately sits. Ms. Pratt eyes her for a second, while Gabby mouths "sorry". Ms. Pratt returns to Vardo.

MS. PRATT (CONT'D)

Now I guess I don't know you yet, and I assume you don't know me, lil boy. But you will get to know me very soon, okay? I. Do. Not. Play. You hear me?

VARDO

(mumbling)

Yes, ma'am.

Ms. Pratt is not satisfied. She cocks her head to the side, arms crossed.

MS. PRATT

Because I will have you removed immediately.

Ms. Pratt is standing on business. The class is quiet.

MS. PRATT (CONT'D)

Are you ready to act right so we can learn?

VARDO

(louder; clearer)

Yes, Miss Pratt.

END

MS. PRATT

Thank you. And Woodside, you sit down, too.

WOODSIDE

I didn't get to finish ans--

MS. PRATT

You weren't answering the question. You was playin' around. Sit. Down.

A hurt Woodside takes his seat, brows furrowed, lips tight. He stares down at the coral in the tub. Vardo scoffs.

MS. PRATT (CONT'D)

Actually, Donovan, call Vardo's mother. I think he's done for today. Vardo, grab your things and go with Donovan.