

FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - NIGHT

The Queensboro Bridge. It spans the East River.

INT. PRE-WAR APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Apartment 4C. The C dangles on the old door. SOUND as locks come undone. Door squeaks open.

Out steps NIKKOS VASCO, 60s, Greek-American. He wears a cap and sweater. He clutches, COALIE, his beloved, senior Boston Terrier. Nikkos gives her a kiss.

NIKKOS  
No eatin' off the street.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Short buildings line this residential street. Welcome to Astoria. A slightly trendy, working class neighborhood in Queens.

Nikkos walks Coalie. Trees rustle on a breezy, autumn night. Coalie gives out a bark. Nikkos picks up after her.

NIKKOS  
Good girl.

Nikkos lifts Coalie. Tosses the doggy bag in the trash.

Another DOG WALKER, 30s, with a Labrador, walks by. The owner talks on his cell, while his dog relieves himself right on the sidewalk. The owner doesn't pick it up.

Nikkos looks at the mound, then at the owner. Clearly annoyed, Nikkos walks over to the owner.

DOG OWNER  
(to caller)  
Honey, she doesn't know about color. Have you seen the clients leaving the salon?

NIKKOS  
Excuse me. Hello?

Dog owner turns. Nikkos pulls a bag from his pocket.

NIKKOS (CONT'D)

Your dog just went. Do you need a bag?

DOG OWNER

A what?

NIKKOS

Your dog. Is that your dog?

DOG OWNER

Why?

NIKKOS

He just did his business. Right there. On my sidewalk.

DOG OWNER

On *your* sidewalk?

NIKKOS

Somebody could step in it. Drag it into the house.

DOG OWNER

Okay, first off, he's a she. Second off, I was plannin' on picking it up... on my way back. And I'm on the phone.

NIKKOS

You weren't gonna pick it up.

DOG OWNER

I'm sorry?

NIKKOS

You were gonna leave it there.

DOG OWNER

Oh my. Listen to you in that cute sweater vest.

NIKKOS

Come on. Be a good neighbor and pick up your shit.

DOG OWNER

You be a good neighbor -- and mind your own business.

The dog owner walks off. Nikkos stares after him.

NIKKOS

That's it? You're gonna walk away?

The dog owner flips Nikkos off now. Nikkos scoffs, then walks away with Coalie. He returns to his building.

DOG OWNER

(into phone)

Old man drama. What were you saying?

Nikkos darts back outside. This time without Coalie. He clutches something else in his hands now... something with a wood handle. Nikkos walks up fast behind the dog owner.

The owner hears his footsteps and turns --

DOG OWNER (CONT'D)

Seriously?

Nikkos reveals a big SHOVEL now. The kind with a big metal head. The dog owner backs up. His dog barks.

DOG OWNER (CONT'D)

-- Jesus.

In one swipe, Nikkos scoops up the shit off the sidewalk. He lifts the shovel up to the man's face, under his nose.

NIKKOS

Take a whiff. Go on, take a good whiff. It's got your name on it. Where do you live, huh? Come on, let's take a walk. I'll deliver it right to your door step. Free of charge.

DOG OWNER

Mister, you're fuckin' crazy.

NIKKOS

And you're lazy.  
(tosses shit into the gutter)  
Curb your dog. This is my neighborhood.

Nikkos walks off, shovel in hand, justified. The dog owner stares after him, mouth agape.

INT. NIKKOS' APARTMENT - SAME NIGHT

A spacious three-bedroom. Outdated decor, yet cozy. Furniture and appliances from another era. They're old, but built to last, like this tenant. SOUND: SHOWER.

INT. BATHROOM

Nikkos takes a hot shower. Coalie lies on the bath rug. She chews on a toy and waits for him.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME NIGHT

Nikkos, dressed for work in dark slacks and white button down shirt, cooks at the stove. He serves himself scrambled eggs. The rest goes right into Coalie's bowl.

EXT. ALL-NIGHT FRUIT MARKET - SAME NIGHT

Nikkos buys two oranges, two plums and bag of red grapes. He moves to the counter. He glances at clock on the wall. It's midnight.

EXT. ASTORIA SUBWAY - SAME NIGHT

Nikkos climbs the stairs to the N Subway Station.

EXT. SUBWAY PLATFORM - SAME NIGHT

N train arrives. SUBWAY RIDERS disembark, mostly white, single, millennials. Nikkos boards the train.

INT. SUBWAY - SAME NIGHT

Nikkos reads his Greek newspaper. Bifocals perched low on his nose. He circles something with a stub pencil. Riders around him tap iPhones. Nikkos is dial-up in a WiFi world.

EXT. SUBWAY TRACKS - SAME NIGHT

The N train snakes toward Manhattan.

EXT. QUEENSBORO BRIDGE - CONTINUOUS

N train descends into the tunnel deep under the East River.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - LATER

Doors open at 59th St. & Lex. Nikkos glances up from his paper. He sees garbage bags piled on the platform. RATS climb on them like kids on a jungle gym.

From Nikkos' reaction, this isn't an unusual sight. He returns to his newspaper.

SFX: Doors DING. Pre-recorded announcer warns "Stand Clear of the Closing Doors Please".

Suddenly, the biggest rat darts into the subway car.

Doors remain OPEN.

TWO WOMEN see the rat and SCREAM. They run to the opposite end of the car and jump on the seats. Other riders laugh, scream, pull out their phones to record the rogue rodent rider.

Nikkos gets up and chases after the rat with his newspaper and scoots it out to the platform just as...

.... the doors...

SHUT.

Riders cheer him. Their hero. Nikkos shrugs, grins and sits back down.

NIKKOS  
No free rides in New York.

EXT. PARK AVENUE - SAME NIGHT

Nikkos walks up Park Avenue after business hours. He enters a luxury hi-rise.

INT. DOORMAN STATION - SAME NIGHT

Nikkos checks himself in the mirror. He puts on his doorman blazer. He combs his salt-and-pepper hair. Moves to his station.

CARLOS, 30s, Puerto Rican, from the Bronx, sits there, plays with his iPhone.

NIKKOS  
Carlos, come on. Log off. Clock out. You're on my time now.

CARLOS

(head down)

Nikkos, made fresh coffee for you, bro. There's leftover cupcakes in the break room. Comps of Miz Klein's 80th birthday. Magnolias, yo. Pink one rocked.

NIKKOS

Will you look at me when you talk to me?

CARLOS

I'm playin' a game, my man.

NIKKOS

Look at me.

CARLOS

Sorry, man, love my phone more. Everythin' I need right here in the palm of my hand. Apps, music, texts. Even got a camera to break hearts.

Nikkos opens the desk drawer. He takes out anti-bacterial wipes and cleans off the work station. Carlos logs out.

NIKKOS

Always break up with a girl to her face, Carlos.

CARLOS

I do, yo -- on Facetime.

Carlos laughs and waves his phone.

CARLOS (CONT'D)

Do you even own a cell phone?

NIKKOS

(takes out his flip phone)  
Christmas gift from my daughter.

CARLOS

Damn, Buster Keaton. You need to upgrade. Get a smartphone.

NIKKOS

Why? Only dumb asses carry 'em.

CARLOS

(laughs)

Niko, embrace technology or you'll become obsolete. Heads up in the a.m. Boss man is swingin' by.

NIKKOS

My head's always up. Unlike yours.

The men slap hands. Nikkos takes over the doorman's station.

CARLOS

Manaña, Bro. Enjoy the cupcakes.

INT. BREAK ROOM - HOURS LATER

Wall CLOCK says it's 3 A.M. Nikkos sips coffee and eats a pink Magnolia cupcake. All is right in his world.

EXT. PARK AVENUE - NEXT MORNING

Nikkos leaves work.

EXT. QUEENS SUBWAY - SAME MORNING

N train exits the tunnel.

INT. SUBWAY - SAME MORNING

Nikkos sleeps in the empty car.

EXT. 30TH AVENUE - ASTORIA - SAME TIME

Nikkos walks up the avenue.

INT. FISH STORE

Nikkos points to fish on ice.

NIKKOS

(in Greek)

Fresh?

FISH STORE OWNER

(in Greek)

Swimmin' three hours ago.

NIKKOS  
(in Greek)  
Gimme the Tilapia.

INT. ASTORIA BAKERY

Nikkos points at loaves of bread. CASHIER bags bread.

NIKKOS  
And your softest buttered roll.

INT. GREEK MEDETERRANEAN STORE - SAME MORNING

Nikkos scoops olives into a plastic container at the olive bar. He tastes one. PETROS, 40s, works behind the counter.

PETROS  
Good mornin', Nikkos. What can I  
get you?

NIKKOS  
Bougatsa. Octopus. Half a pound of  
Feta for Lucy.

PETROS  
Sweet Lucy. She don't come in no  
more to see me. How come?

Nikkos looks up at the TV on the wall. It's the anniversary of 9/11. TV airs live coverage from Ground Zero: dignitaries, families, photos of 9/11 victims, bell tolls.

Petros brings items over. He catches Nikkos watching TV.

PETROS (CONT'D)  
Still breaks your heart, right. How  
life can change in a blink?

NIKKOS  
Lucy... doesn't come out... since  
her surgery.

PETROS  
Too bad. Tell her Petros says  
hello. I put some extra cold cuts  
in there for her.

Nikkos smiles and pays.

EXT. 34TH STREET - ASTORIA - CONTINUOUS

Nikkos walks down his street. Some NEIGHBORS wave hello. He kicks trash off the sidewalk into the curb as a street sweeper drives by. He breaks off the nose of the bread and nibbles.

NIKKOS' POV

TWO BOYS, 13 and 14, circle an elderly woman on the street. LUCY, 80s, appears disoriented and trapped. Boys taunt her. She wears a house dress that hangs open off her fragile frame.

As Nikkos approaches, he notices she is exposed under the dress.

BOY 1

Nobody wants to see that old pussy.

LUCY

Will you boys please go to the corner and buy me a buttered roll and a coffee with Splenda?

She hands her wallet over to the boys.

BOY 2

Sure, lady. You got money? Where you keep all your money at?

Boy 2 searches her wallet. Boy 1 tugs at her dress.

BOY 1

Saggy titties.

Nikkos puts his groceries down on the sidewalk. He makes a beeline for the young punks.

NIKKOS

Hey! You two! Hand it over. Now.

BOY 1

Dis my wallet.

BOY 2

We found it.

NIKKOS

That's her wallet. Gimme it. Get lost or I'll call a cop. You don't belong here.

BOY 2

Bet your balls droop like her tits.

The boys laugh. Nikkos stares them down. Boy 2, intimidated, tosses the wallet on the ground. Boy 1 grabs his crotch.

BOY 1

Stare harder, Old Man.

NIKKOS

Come back here and do that.

The boys run off. Nikkos picks up Lucy's wallet. He looks inside. Cash still inside. He retrieves his groceries. Lucy appears lost. He gently takes her arm.

NIKKOS (CONT'D)

Lucy, sweetheart, what are you doin' out here... half-dressed like this? All by yourself? What did I say? What did we talk about?

LUCY

Nikko, will you buy me a buttered roll and a coffee with Splenda?

NIKKOS

I got it, honey, right here. I called you to say I was on my way. You don't remember? I said to wait inside. Come on, close up your dress. Take my arm, dear. Tighter. Tighter. You can't come out by yourself, no more. It's not safe. It's not like the old days.

LUCY

I got my hair appointment.

NIKKOS

Watch your step. Hair appointment?

LUCY

At Josephine's.

NIKKOS

Josephine's closed years ago, sweetheart.

LUCY

I'm getting married today.

This stops Nikkos cold. Lucy fusses with her thinning hair.