

Hopscotch
by
J. E. Clarke

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J. E. Clarke
janetgoodman@yahoo.com

FADE IN ON:

EXT. NYC SIDEWALK - OUTER BOROUGHES - DAY

POV: from a window.

Sweltering heat beats down. The asphalt SIZZLES.

KESIA WILLIAMS (6) watches a car barrel down the street. Rap BOOMS as it passes by. A skirt flutters at her knees.

Kesia's SHOVED from behind. She staggers. Pink pigtails fly in the air.

TRICIA (7) GIGGLES behind her. She drops a penny into Kesia's hand.

TRICIA

Your turn.

She points to the sidewalk. A hopscotch board's sketched on the ground. Cartoon characters decorate the edges in multi-colored chalk.

MS. OFELIA (70s) appears at the window, watching the girls. Her face; shrunken and criss-crossed with wrinkles. The hint of a twinkle in her eye.

Tricia nudges Kesia.

TRICIA

That old lady's watching us again.

Kesia steals a glance towards the window.

KESIA

I dunno. She don't seem so bad.

TRICIA

My mom says she's from the old country. Into spells. Really weird.

Ofelia hears the comment, withdraws a bit. Kesia looks away. Embarrassed. Shrugs.

She tosses Tricia's penny. Starts to skip down the board. Left foot. Right. A hop to the side. The home base square in Kesia's sights.

Kesia gathers scrawny legs for the leap. Doesn't hear wheels SCRAPE behind her...

A skateboard ZIPS by. DARREN (16) shoves Kesia out of the way. She tumbles to the ground, skins her knee.

DARREN

Yo, Tater Tot. Get outta the way!

Ms. Ofelia's eyes widen. She struggles to her feet, and faded away from the window.

Two more skateboard teens (TYLER and STEPHEN) rush by Kesia on both sides. They drag oversized feet along pavement, blurring the hopscotch grid lines.

Tricia hits one with a pebble.

TRICIA

Hey!

The teens LAUGH. Keep going.

Kesia SNIFFLES. Examined her skinned, oozing knee.

OFELIA (O.S.)

(Creole accent)

Hey little gator. You okay?

She leans over the girl, balanced on a wooden cane. Kesia blinks at the old lady's kind and wrinkled face.

Ofelia picks her up, sets her on her feet. Tricia dances around them - angry and energized.

TRICIA

You see that? That was Darren. My sister says he's nasty. And the cops been lookin' for him at school.

KESIA

He called me a Tater Tot.

OFELIA

That ain't so bad. Just means you're yummy 'nough to eat.

KESIA

They messed up our board.

Ms. Ofelia brushes dust off Kesia's skirt. Picks chalk off the sidewalk.

OFELIA

Nothing a little drawing can't fix. Never mind those big boys. They just need someone to teach them manners.

Kesia smiles. She reaches for the chalk - hope dawning in her eyes.

ZOOOOOOM. Darren ZIPS by again, and shoves Ms. Ofelia. Her cane goes flying. The old woman totters. Falls.

A skateboard SCREECHES to a stop on top of it. The three boys hop off their boards, full of attitude and awkward teen muscle.

Darren scoops the girls' pennies from the sidewalk.

Tricia darts at him. Stephen shoves her off her feet. Ms. Ofelia flops like a fish out of water.

OFELIA

Put those back. They ain't yours!

Tyler picks up her cane.

TYLER

You want this, you old witch?

He raises it over Ofelia's head. The shadow of the cane falls across her face...

...Tyler tosses it in the bushes.

TYLER

(to Darren)

Bitch thought I was gonna hit her.
Probably pissed in her Depends!

Kesia pummels Darren with little fists.

KESIA

You leave Ms. Ofelia alone!

STEPHEN

Or what? You gonna call your Mommy on me?

(beat)

That's right. You don't *have* one. Or a Daddy either. 'Cause they both in rehab.

KESIA

My brother's gonna...

Darren walks over. Pennies JINGLE in his hand.

DARREN

You tell your brother Robbie your folks owe us money. I'll take this as down payment. But he better have the rest tomorrow. Or I'll take *you* instead.

Stephen throws Kesia in the bushes, on top of the cane. The teens LAUGH. High-five. Jump on their boards and scoot away.

Kesia crawls from the bushes. Dried leaves stick to her hair. Tricia helps Ms. Ofelia to her feet. Runs to retrieve her cane.

The girls look up at the old woman. Terrified.

KESIA

You okay, Ms. Ofelia?

OFELIA

I'm fine. You girls... should probably go inside.

Kesia glances at the board. Her lower lip trembles.

OFELIA

Oh, don't worry 'bout little things like that.

KESIA

Darren's gonna beat up my brother!

Ofelia shuffles towards the hopscotch board. Gathers broken shards of chalk. She starts to redraw the grid. Talks to the girls, her back turned.

OFELIA

Don't pay them no attention. Boys like that are all talk. And as men, they just as bad. They don't got the balls... I mean, the muscle to back up their yammering. The best thing to do...

...she draws a bright pink line.

OFELIA

Is just put them clean out of your mind.

Ofelia moves across the sidewalk. A knee CRACKS with old age. She GROANS, crouches down.

She touches up a cartoon of a teddy bear. The drawing morphs into a fearsome looking demon. The sides of the "creature" surround the hopscotch board; the head positioned at home base. Big eyes. Even bigger teeth.

A subway train RUMBLES underground. Tricia examines Ofelia's doodle.

TRICIA

Oooo, scary!

OFELIA

Just a little something we used to draw
back in Orleans. Kept us safe and
entertained, back when I was just "yay"
high...

She holds out a crippled hand to demonstrate. Wobbles
back and forth on her cane. The girls run to her side.

KESIA

Come on, Ms. Ofelia. We'll help you home.

OFELIA

(sighs)

I sure ain't as spry as you young 'uns.
Well, not anymore.

She turns and tosses a penny on the grid's home base.
Kesia and Tricia escort her inside.

LATER

Darkness falls over the street. Bodega lights flicker in
neon. An ice cream truck JINGLES far away.

Kesia walks down the street with big brother ROBBIE (15).
She licks an ice cream cone, and holds tight to Robbie's
hand. The apartment complex is just steps away.

KESIA

Then, Tricia threw a rock right at -

ZOOM. A skateboard flashes in front of them.

Darren PUNCHES Robbie in the head. Comes to a stop as
Robbie falls. Kesia SCREAMS, and drops her cone.

Tyler and Stephen stand over Robbie. Stephen KICKS him in
the ribs. Kesia throws herself at Stephen. Tyler SLAMS
her to the ground.

TYLER

Stay out of it, Tater Tot!

STEPHEN

You gonna call your grandma on us this
time?

KESIA

Ms. Ofelia's not my grandma!

DARREN

That's right. You ain't got no family.

He turns an evil eye to Robbie.

DARREN

'Cept your bro. And he ain't gonna be around too much more.

Kesia darts for the apartment entrance. But she doesn't have the keys.

She RINGS buzzers desperately. A few lights turn on upstairs. A MAN peeks out. He spots the teens, and shrinks away.

KESIA

Help!

Kesia BANGS on the door.

Robbie drags himself across the sidewalk, blood mixing with chalk on the ground. The teens trail him, menacing.

STEPHEN

Where you going?

TYLER

Better be to get money. What you owe. Plus interest!

Robbie keeps crawling. Kesia reaches for him. He waves her away.

ROBBIE

No. Kesia, stay away!

Stephen pushes Kesia into a corner, picks her up by the collar. Darren pulls out a knife. Grins as he walks towards Robbie.

DARREN

Yeah. With interest. One way. Or another.

He steps across the hopscotch board...

Stumbles. Something's got his leg. He looks down. No gum on the sidewalk.

Darren tries to lift his foot. It doesn't budge. A stripe of chalk lies across his shoe. One of the claws from Ofelia's "demon."

The line seems to move. Darren looks down at it. Blinks.

Robbie GROANS. Darren takes an extra step.

DARREN

Ow!

He lifts the cuff of his jeans. Blood oozes from punctures in his ankle.

Tyler jumps back and points.

TYLER

Yo man! Over there!

Darren's eyes drift towards the sidewalk.

The rest of the "demon" is moving. It blinks 2D eyes. The mouth widens into a SNARL. Something RUMBLES nearby. Sounds kind of like a subway train. Overlaid with something meaner.

The chalk-claw outline flows up Darren's leg. His side. He SCREAMS as bloody slashes RIP his shirt.

He reaches for Stephen and Tyler.

DARREN

Help me!

TYLER

No fuckin' way!

Stephen drops Kesia, and runs for his skateboard. He steps on the "creature's" face. 2D jaws SNAP shut like a steel bear-trap.

Stephen SCREAMS. Darren HOWLS in abject pain.

Kesia pulls Robbie towards the entranceway. As far away as possible from the board.

The sidewalk lights up with a eerie, red flare. Too far away to be the bodega.

The cement SHIMMERS. Darren and Stephen are dragged down. They melt into the sidewalk. Their SCREAMS are cut off by a CRUNCH. Soon, every last trace of them is gone...

Kesia and Robbie stare at the scene. A drop of blood glimmers on hopscotch tiles.

The chalk demon has stopped moving. The hint of a smile on its face...

Tyler SCREAMS. Turns tail and runs.

Down the street, around a corner. A SCREECH, HONK and CRASH follow soon after.

Kesia and Robbie look at each other, dazed.

ROBBIE

What was that?

KESIA

I don't know. Ms. Ofelia's monster.

ROBBIE

Don't be a baby! Life ain't no fairy tale...

KESIA

(beat)

Should we call the cops?

ROBBIE

What would we tell them?

KESIA

(points)

That it ate Darren...

Robbie drags himself to his feet. Fumbles for his keys.

ROBBIE

Let's just go inside, where it's safe.
We'll figure it out later.

The siblings limp inside.

A siren WAILS in the distance. If it's coming for Tyler, it's too late.

A light flickers at Ms. Ofelia's window. She peers out at the sidewalk and nods. A satisfied smile on her face.

FADE OUT: