

doomscrolling

by Adérónké Adéjàre

Act I

Scene 1

A screen plays vertical videos. They are lifestyle videos that feature Black women. One is a cooking video, another a dance video. One is a girl working “from home” in a café. One is a girl trying on new fleece leggings. One talks about new innovations in AI. They move as if someone is scrolling through them: slow enough that we get the gist of them, quickly enough that we don’t see the whole video. Then it lands on the next one and stays for the whole video.

Daya: Hey it’s your girl Daya Daze and here’s a Day in My Life! First I wake up at 7 AM and do yoga on the rooftop of my apartment for 30 minutes. Then I shower, get ready and take the train to work. I get to work by 8:50, just in time to get to my iced vanilla matcha latte for the day right before I hit my morning meetings. Then I’ll work and hit Sweetgreen for lunch. About 5 PM I leave work and head to my dance class. I’m in a hip-hop dance class and I’ve never danced so much before but I’m having so much fun! Then I get home around 8 and start cooking dinner. Tonight it’s simple because I had class so it’s just beef ravioli in tomato sauce and roasted asparagus. I eat around 9 PM while watching reality TV, currently obsessed with Love Island. Then I do some content planning and editing and try to get off my screens by 10 PM. Then I read a book, read my Bible, pray, and go to sleep before midnight. And that’s it for my day! Thanks for watching! Daya Daze, out.

Daya puts the finishing touches on the video and posts it. A bunch of likes and comments start flowing in and popping up above her head. “omg life goals” “This is so cool!”, etc.

Now she’s at a park. She walks to a bench where Bunmi is sitting and sits beside her. Bunmi just watched Daya’s video on her phone.

Bunmi: Girl ain’t no way you do all this in one day.

Daya: Not every day but on Thursdays.

Bunmi gives a BFFR look.

Daya: Okay I aspire to do this daily forever but I may have done extra because I knew I'd be making a video out of it. Don't hate the player, hate the game. No one cares to hear I'm doing all this to avoid dealing with emotions post-breakup. No one online cares to hear about how sad I am. The world's shitty enough they don't need my tears to worry about. My brand is about being an empowered working girl, not a depressed blob.

Bunmi: Okay fair enough but how are you truly doing?

Daya: I'm holding it together. But nevermind about me. How's your test prep going?

Bunmi: It's going well. It's in 3 days but I feel like I'm in a great position and I passed all my practice tests so far.

Daya: That's sick Engineer Extraordinaire.

Bunmi: Yeah allegedly. I just need to suck all the learning and resources I can from this job so I can move on to the next one.

Daya: Has it gotten any better?

Bunmi: Racists still being racists. Sexists still being sexist. There's always a push for "Black Girls Code" but not "men in tech stop being terribly racist and misogynistic." I'd quit but I enjoy the soft life it affords me.

Daya: Is it really a soft life if your mental health is taking a dive.

Bunmi: It affords me my daily emotional support latte so it'll just have to do. Do you know who you're voting for for mayor yet?

Daya: Noo. I don't know I'm thinking Mussab Ali or Solomon or O'Dea?? There's too many options that are all promising the same thing. Just not McGreevy though. Like yeah I'm glad you're a proud gay but don't be coming to Six26 thinking we gonna forgive you for cheating on your wife and putting your unqualified Israeli gay lover in a security position. Or your Trump donors. That is not for the gays!! I don't want that as my gay representation!!!

Bunmi: I know that's right. I'm voting for Joyce Watterman.

Daya: But she has no chance of winning.

Bunmi: Why not? I know she doesn't have as much donors or promo but she's real. And I appreciate real people. I feel like Mussab Ali is just Zohran's reheated nachos. And not even good ones. Like reheated Doritos. Like why he call himself Blackdani? Is he even Black?

Daya: No he's Pakistani

Bunmi: EXACTLY it's weird

Daya: But I read somewhere that there are some Black Pakistani people?

Bunmi: What like Onaija? I don't know but it seems weird to me y'know. I'd much rather support an actually Black candidate. But Mayor Fulop posted that Watterman could make it to the run-off election if she gets a lot of the Black vote.

Daya: There's another election?

Bunmi: I know!! They have a runoff if no one wins 50% of the votes the first time and that's definitely not happening this election.

Daya: So we gotta go through all this bullshit AGAIN. This is why we need ranked-choice voting in Jersey/

Bunmi: THAT'S WHAT I'M SAYING because we could be done with this in a week but now we have a whole other month of campaign BS

Daya: Stop the madness. The madness needs to be stopped.

Bunmi: Let's get back to the walk. It's a beautiful day.

Daya: Do you mind if I record for one of my videos?

Bunmi: Ughhh

Daya: You don't have to

Bunmi: Nah it's fine.

Daya & Bunmi get up.

Daya: My phone just got a new update but because of that it keeps overheating. I don't know what's wrong with it.

Bunmi: Give it a few minutes to cool down.

Daya: Ahh it's working now.

She puts her phone up at a(n awkward in hand but cute in video) pose.

Just a hot girl walk with my bestie!

The phone glitches and overheats again. Suddenly, Daya is pulled into her phone. Daya's phone drops to the ground.

Bunmi: Daya? Daya?

Bunmi goes to pick it up. She gets pulled into the phone too. The phone clatters to the ground. Blackout.

Scene 2

When they come to, Daya and Bunmi are in a kitchen. An unfamiliar kitchen that's modern but also gives coxy fall farm vibes. A Nara Smith-esque light-skin woman wears an apron. She's about the same age as our protagonists.

Whitney: *(whispers)* Fruit snacks can be so unhealthy so come with me as I make fruit snacks from scratch for my two children. First I cut the fruit we're making fruit snacks of. Today it's strawberries, oranges, and cherries.

Then I mash

Bunmi: Ugh what? How did we get here?

Daya: Omg that's Whitney Jones. She has millions of followers for her cooking content.

Bunmi: You mean her trad-wife, MAGA-propoganda content

Daya: Well...yes. But she also has some good recipes.

Whitney: So now I let the fruit gelatin cool in the fridge for 8 hours and spend time teaching my kids.

There's a "cut" and everyone is immediately dragged to a playroom/classroom where two lighter-skinned babies play with numbered blocks. Everyone feels normal except Daya and Bunmi who try to regain their balance.

Then they're pulled back into the kitchen.

Whitney: Now I just pop the fruit snacks out of the tin and give them to my babies.

She pops a fruit snack in her mouth.

So nutritious and way less sugar.

Bunmi: So we're in her house? How'd we even get here?

The video starts again.

Whitney: *(whispers)* Fruit snacks can be so unhealthy so come with me as I make fruit snacks from scratch for my two children. First I...

Daya: I think we're in her latest video.

Bunmi: Latest video? I don't want to be associated with this subservient, slave to a man bitch.

Daya: Hey cool it. Maybe I can collab with her and grow my audience.

Bunmi: I don't think you want the type of people who are following her. She's all stay-at-home country mom by 25 and you're a career woman, a city girl!

Daya: Tons of different people follow her. I follow her.

Bunmi: Why do you follow her?

Daya: She has really good recipes alright!

Bunmi: When do you have the time to do one of her recipes?

Daya: I don't but I'm trying to! Now that Sam left me, I have time for anything!

Bunmi sighs.

Bunmi: Okay I'm not judging... anymore.

Whitney: and spend time teaching my kids.

They're pulled back into the playroom/classroom. But there are no children.

Bunmi: Where are the kids?

The video pauses. Eerie music starts to play.

Whitney looks at them. She finally sees them. But not as themselves, as her children.

Whitney: Come on kids. Come tell me what number this is.

Bunmi and Daya look at each other.

Whitney: Come on! Come. Come.

They sit down on the soft foam puzzle grid floor.

Whitney: What number is this?

Bunmi: Uhh 2.

Whitney: Good job!

She turns to Daya

And what number is this my dear?

Daya: 5

Whitney: Great job!

They're pulled back into the kitchen.

Whitney: Now I just pop the fruit snacks out of the tin and give them to my babies.

Whitney pops out the fruit snacks from the tin. She gives a few to Bunmi and Daya. She encourages them to try them. They do. They spit that shit out.

Bunmi: Oh gosh that's awful.

Daya: Yeah I'm def not making this recipe.

Bunmi: Girl like you'd have the time to— oops sorry.

Daya: Anyway, *(she turns to Whitney)* Hi Whitney, my name is Daya, also known as Daya Daze and I'd love to do a collab with you—

Bunmi and Daya are suddenly pulled out of this video and into the next one.

Scene 3

They are now in a sea of cowboy hats, denim, sequins, and (ass-less) chaps. They're at Cowboy Carter Tour. They're dressed like the dancers on stage.

Daya: Oh my gosh we're at Cowboy Carter

Daya and Bunmi: *(excited)* Ahhhh!!!

Bunmi: Wait but we're on stage

Daya and Bunmi: *(terrified)* Ahhhh!!!

Daya: Hey but we're in these cute costumes!

Bunmi: But we're also standing in front of hundreds of thousands of people.

Daya: It's a stadium it's only like 70,000 people

Bunmi: Not helping!

pause

Okay in the last place we had to eat those nasty ass snacks to get here. And now we're here. Maybe we need to do something here to move on?

Daya: Move on to what?

Bunmi: I don't know but at least off this stage and away from 70,000 people!

Daya: Dance! We probably have to dance along.

Bunmi: I don't know how to dance. Not like this!

Daya: It's okay. You've watched Beyoncé Bowl 12 times

Bunmi: Yeah

Daya: Yeah you know it. And I learned this choreography in my dance class. Just follow my lead.

The music transitions from Summer Renaissance to Buckin'. The girls put their left arms forward and start swinging their right arms in the air. They do for choreography for Buckin' for 1.5 minutes. Daya is confident in it. Bunmi... a little at first and then not. She looks over and tries to keep up with the other dancers. She's about a second behind at any given moment but then she doesn't care and starts having fun with it. They're having fun and killing it! They move out of the way when the female dancers do in the set. The actress for Whitney also plays Beyoncé. Beyoncé finishes the song.

Beyoncé: A good night.

Blackout. Video ends.

Scene 4

Lights up. Daya and Bunmi are at a cafe. They're catching their breaths.

Daya: I can't believe we just danced with Beyoncé. My life has been made.

Bunmi: That was some serious cardio. I- uh-

She goes to the nearest trash can and vomits. Daya goes to hold her hair back and rub her back.

Bunmi: The world has stopped spinning. Where are we?

Daya: I think we're at a café.

Chanelle: Welcome to CreativiTEA a café for artists in the heart of Brooklym. I'm Chanelle the owner. I'm a photographer and mixed media artist that loves cafés. My wife Janie is a painter and digital artist and we wanted to provide a space for artists to work, meet, and collaborate. The space doubles as an art gallery, performance venue, podcasting studio, and anything else an artist could need. We also have art themed drinks and our baristas do designs on every hot drink. My wife and I started this space because we wanted to be in control of how we showcase our art and cultivate a place where Black and Queer artists can thrive. Come visit us on Troutman St in Brooklyn, right across from The Bush. See y'all soon!

Bunmi: I think I've heard of this place! I've been meaning to check it out.

Daya: We're here now and it's super sick. I should make a video for this.

Daya pats her side for her phone. She can't feel it. She reaches into her pocket. It's not with her.

Daya: That's weird. My phone isn't on me. Do you have yours?

Bunmi reaches in her pocket and pulls out her phone. A realization hits her.

Bunmi: Daya, I think we're in your phone.

Daya: What?

Bunmi: Yes I'm serious. We're in your Tiktok on your phone. You got the latest TikTok update right?

Daya: Yes

Bunmi: And you got an iPhone?

Daya: Of course

Bunmi: I just got this news notification from Wired.

“The New TikTok Update is Bringing Users In – Literally”

“Some users report being sucked into their For You page and being a part of video content that they normally consume. This was brought to attention when a young woman interrupted a clothes-selling live stream to beg for help.

“Please! I don't know how long I've been in here but I'm stuck in TikTok! I'm tired and hungry. My name is Samantha George and I need help –’ The live ended abruptly after that.”

Daya: Samantha's stuck? Serves her right for breaking up with me.

Bunmi: But we're stuck too bozo!

Daya: Oh my God we're trapped in The Algorithm.

Bunmi: It's not an algorithm it's a machine learning model and ugh. Yes we're stuck in it. The rest of the article says it's mostly affecting iPhone users and there's been no reported cases of it happening to Android users.

Daya: Yeah because Androids suck!

Bunmi: No probably because they have the right security and software to prevent this shit from happening.

pause. realizing.

I'm only in here because I picked up your phone after you disappeared. This only started happening after an American company bought the rights to operating TikTok in America. And iPhones are the most used phones in America so a lot of new tech is released on iPhones before Androids. And Apple probably colluded with this new company and the government to do this shit. If you can't beat them join them I guess... They're probably doing this to suppress dissent. If you trap all the young people in their devices they can't protest your regime.

Daya: Ohh that's so brilliant

Bunmi side eyes her.

Daya: Hey you love immersive technology

Bunmi: Not like this!

Daya: Yeahhh... So how do we get out of here?

Bunmi: The article doesn't say. It just came out 40 minutes ago but I don't know if time works the same way in here.

Daya: Yeah like I can scroll and suddenly an hour is gone.

Bunmi: Fuck! We can't even tell time. The time on my phone stopped working.

Daya: I hope your cards didn't stop working because I'm hungry. Since we're at this café we should get something to eat.

Bunmi: You owe me. Especially since I'm stuck in here with you.

Daya: Thank you for getting sucked into The Algorithm with me.

Bunmi: No one else I'd rather do it with.