

Untitled

By Teresa L. Hussein

Outline:

I. Setting: May, present day.

Fictional neighborhood called "River Hills" in Queens, near the Long Island border.

There's no river and the land is flat as far as the eye can see, past the all houses. The neighborhood has gone through changes throughout the time Xavier and family have lived there these past 10 years. It used to be very family oriented, lots of school-aged kids running around, but now it's mostly young married couples with very small or no children. There's no-one close to John Paul's age in the immediate vicinity. John Paul's best friend lives on the other side of the junior high.

It's still very much a 'bedroom borough' neighborhood, with morning rush hour traffic out toward Long Island almost as thick as the traffic toward Manhattan. Or rather toward the Long Island Rail Road, which is one of the ways to get into the city. The other is driving to a parking garage and taking the subway from a spot in Jamaica, Queens.

The house is a two family, mother-daughter structure. The family used to live upstairs in the three-bedroom apartment. After the death of their parents, Xavier moved John Paul and himself downstairs to the two-bedroom. The upstairs is rented to a couple of cousins, just a little older than Xavier, with a baby and a toddler. The husband works from home, the wife works in Manhattan. It's through her that Xavier got the job in Manhattan.

II. Theme:

A. Parents and children.

B. Growing up/ coming of age.

1. Seeking a separate identity from one's parents/ family/ family obligations.

III. Chapter 1:

A. Opening – At the store

1. Crazy author making demands on Assistant Manager and then refusing to do reading, running out of store. AM runs after author, crashed into by Manager Ralphie Delaware. AM down for the count, Xavier is tagged as replacement since he is assistant to AM.

B. Xavier is making his way home, to be there in time for John Paul to get home from after school program.

1. Home situation explained

a. Death of parents, Xavier is sole caretaker of John Paul

b. Quit college to take care of JP while mother in hospital, dying; Father died, Xavier never made it back to college

2. Janine calls

a. Relationship explained; Xavier refuses to have her sleep over, doesn't want JP to get attached to Janine because what if he and she break up? Xavier is the one who doesn't want the attachment, doesn't want to be so in love that he can't live without the other as his father was with his mother. Death of father, suspected suicide explained

b. Janine is planning the graduation celebration. We learn she's the same age as Xavier (24) but was a year ahead of him in school.

c. Janine calls him Xavier. She's never called him Junior.

3. Insurance forms
 - a. Relationship with insurance company explained; fight over payoff of mother's life insurance policy, looks like going to be fight over payoff of father's policy too. Carl Bennet, claims adjustor, introduced.
 4. Ethan calls
 - a. Best friend, wants to talk to Xavier about something important; between taking care of JP, making time for Janine, and now filling in as AM, Xavier has no time for best friend. Xavier has no time for himself, either.
- IV. Chapter 2:
- A. It's the next day. Xavier speaks to AM on the phone, while at work, to find out what needs to be done for the store.
 1. AM warns Xavier to steer clear of Ralphie; "just get it done. Don't involve him, unless you absolutely have to.
 2. Ralphie, the store manager, comes into Xavier's area, outside AM's office. Ralphie is full of advice on how to handle every situation. All of the advice is wrong. Xavier learns he has to plan for the next readings, that nothing has been done yet. Ralphie wants a particular author, one that Xavier has never heard of.
 - a. Xavier learns that the author is new, and a former school mate of Ralphie's. The AM just groans when they discuss it; Xavier doesn't know if it's from the pain of the conversation or the pain of the broken bones.
 - B. Parent-teacher conference requested at JP's school. JP in trouble? At first Xavier wants to call Max, his father's best friend, to come with them to the conference. Then Xavier realizes he's the adult, the 'parent.' He gets mad at JP, but is really mad at his father for leaving him in this position.
 - C. More explanation of father's death. Looking at handwritten note from JP's teacher, Xavier remembers finding note from his father with the apology. Apology for what? And then finding Frank dead in the house. Implication is that Frank committed suicide.
- V. Chapter 3:
- A. Max returns Xavier's phone call. Xavier explains that he was just going to ask for advice about how to handle the parent-teacher conference – duck and cover; doesn't want Max to realize that Xavier forgot for a moment that Xavier is the parent now. Max reminds Xavier that the headstone is ready and a date has to be set up for erecting the stone on his father's grave. Xavier puts it off, claiming too much work, explains the situation with the AM and Ralphie. Max asks why Ralphie still has a job there. Xavier explains that Ralphie is the son of the store's owner.
 1. As incompetent as Ralphie is, he'll never lose his position, because of who his father is. Xavier is in the situation he's in because of choices made by his father.
 2. Max calls Xavier "Junior." Name thing explained.
- VI. Chapter 4:
- A. Xavier takes Janine out for her graduation celebration.
 1. The restaurant is one Ethan recommended; nice, but cheap.
 2. For romance, Xavier takes Janine down to look at the Statue of Liberty from, which is all lit up at night. They're in Battery Park near Castle Clinton. It's well lit, very few homeless people, well cared-for lawns, and memorial statue in the park.

3. Janine tells Xavier the big news: she's got a position in a law firm already. She needs to study for the bar. She suggests studying with JP at home, after he comes home from school/ extracurricular activities and she from work. Xavier doesn't want to discuss her moving in. Huge fight. They break up.

VII. Chapter 5:

- A. Xavier goes to tend bar at Max's restaurant. Ethan comes in, wants to talk to Xavier, but the place is very crowded. Finally they find a chance to talk, but Xavier is too busy explaining what happened with Janine to learn why Ethan wanted to talk to him.
 - 1. Introducing Max more.
 - 2. Introducing the regulars at the bar/ restaurant.
 - a. Girl who likes Xavier. She calls him "Junior" but quickly switches to "Xavier" when he asks her to. Everyone else in the bar still calls him Junior.
 - 3. Ethan's out of work. Reminds Xavier to get more money from Ralphie for the extra duty he's assuming. Can the promotion be permanent? They definitely need more management at the store. Xavier is afraid to ask for more money and for a promotion. He remembers the good times, the happiness after his father finally found regular work. And how, less than three years later, both his parents are dead.

VIII. Chapter 6:

- A. Parent-teach conference with John Paul's teacher and principal.
 - 1. They want John Paul to take accelerated courses.
 - a. Xavier is thinking that there's no way to afford college for John Paul. He's had to start paying off his own school loans, which are large, and he was just at a state school. He doesn't want JP to have to deal with that, but there doesn't seem to be a way to avoid it. Guilt.
- B. At work, Xavier is yelled at for being late. He takes it but then ends up yelling on the phone at various suppliers. Ralphie hears it and comes in and congratulates him on standing up to the supplier. AM had been handling the supplier in question with kid gloves "and it was getting him nowhere." When Ralphie leaves, Xavier realizes with a sinking feeling that in all likelihood the store will not be getting a shipment from that supplier.
- C. Could this day get any worse? Of course. Ethan calls and reminds Xavier that they never talked. Xavier explains that he's tending bar again that night and that John Paul is staying with a friend overnight; does Ethan want to come over after work? Ethan says he's got a lot of errands to run the next day, will be starting at 7 AM and on the run all morning. How about lunch? They agree to meet for Ethan's lunch/ Xavier's breakfast at a local café.
 - 1. Xavier is looking forward to talking with Ethan again. We learn that Xavier has few friends left, and all seem to have moved away in recent years. Xavier thinks something along the lines of, "Good old Ethan, he's always there for me. Always there."
- D. At the bar, Ron, an old schoolmate of his and Ethan's, comes in. Ron has just moved back to the neighborhood after graduating from law school. Xavier starts to say, "my girlfriend just graduated too," then realizes he doesn't have a girlfriend anymore. The

temptation to get drunk is significant. A regular, who's a drunk, causes a scene and Xavier is glad he's not drunk.

1. Ron makes comments about Xavier scoring as the bartender. Xavier thinks about it. One of the regulars has always liked him. Xavier was planning on taking her home but then the drunks start brawling and she leaves. With Ron.

IX. Chapter 7:

- A. Carl Bennet, insurance claims adjuster, calls and starts to leave a message for Xavier about the status of the claim. Xavier picks up the phone in the middle of Carl's claim that it's 'very important that we talk.' Xavier is half asleep. He gets mad at Carl, doesn't want to talk to him, and finally says he has to get ready to go to work so he has to hang up. Carl asks why he's working on a Sunday and Xavier replies, "Because I have a kid to raise." Carl starts to ask about John Paul when Xavier really looks at the clock and finally manages to get off the phone. Xavier has only about 20 minutes until he's supposed to meet Ethan.
 1. As he's running out the door, post-shower, Max calls. Now Xavier really does have to work that day. "The lies one tells come back to haunt him." Or as Xavier thinks, "I never get a break."
- B. Lunch with Ethan. Ethan explains that he's leaving, and why. It's very soon, before the headstone will be in place on Frank's grave. Xavier is upset but tries to be happy for his friend. Of course he understands the desire to strike out in new territory; it's what made him leave River Hills and hit Manhattan. He wishes Ethan luck. And wishes it were him with the chance to drop everything and run off to try life on his own, in another country. Jealousy. Guilt, over the suppressed desire to dump John Paul.
- C. John Paul is home, thought Xavier was supposed to pick him up later. More guilt; Xavier feels he's failing his brother, that he's not a good enough parent. Resentment and more guilt.
- D. Ron calls. Xavier doesn't really give him the time of day.

X. Chapter 8:

NOTES:

Xavier has to have a showdown with Carl, the insurance adjuster, in which Carl decides to help rather than hinder payoff on Frank's life policy. Carl has to have a reason to want to help a son who hates his father for abandoning him. And it has to be true. Or at least in Xavier's eyes, X must be completely convinced. So maybe the showdown is with Max, the best friend? Or something Ron and Max cook up, and therefore Ron is proven to be a good guy. Or Ethan does it long distance? Arg!

So Ron feels like a sh!t himself and goes to Max looking for advice on how to make X's life better, to make it up to X, to make him, Ron, stop feeling like a sh!t. Heh.

Timeline note: NYU graduates mid-May. Headstone should be in place within 3 months.

THE END:

- A. Xavier gets the insurance money
 - 1. Xavier goes back to school? Starts a business? Starts writing a book?
- B. Xavier discovers that his father intended for him to go back to school
 - 1. Death NOT a suicide
 - 2. Xavier visits the grave for the first time since the funeral. Cries, asks for father's forgiveness.
- C. He's the hero, he gets a girl
 - 1. Or at least has the prospect of one. Janine was too far ahead of him, girl in bar is too far behind; he meets someone who seems nice.