THE CURIOUS CASE OF LOLA BITRUS

Written by

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Original Screenplay

FADE IN:

INT. TRAIN STATION - CORRIDOR - DAY

High Angle - A torn out piece of a newspaper lying uselessly on the floor with a big headline that reads:

“THE SERIAL KILLER AMONGST US”

Camera follows the paper as wind blows it forward and out of frame. Continue moving forward, the camera still facing the floor as it slowly TILTS upward and enters into

INT. TRAIN STATION - RESTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Two ladies gathered around a faucet chit-chatting. LADY A stands beside her friend, reading stuff from her phone loudly while LADY B powders her nose.

LADY A
...Like its crazy! They’re no physical injuries or whatever!

LADY B
I know right?

LADY A
Its like he somehow enters their heads and boom! They’re dead.

LADY B
Omo.

As the ladies talk, a woman walks out of the toilet. She’s **LOLA BITRUS**, 32, elegantly dressed with a beret on her head. She smiles courtly at the two ladies as she approaches a second faucet and turns on the tap.

LADY B (CONT'D)
He’s probably one of those freaks that can’t get it, you know.

They begin to laugh as they stroll out. Lola stares at them curiously.

LADY A (O.S.)
All these men that can’t get laid to save their lives haha.

Lola turns and looks intently at herself in the mirror, as if she’s unsure of the person staring back at her. Water continues to run from the tap.

She raises her right hand and gently touches the right side of her face. She rubs it in a circular motion without blinking.

LOLA (V.O.)
What can I say about The Man? What can I say about Man that hasn't already been said? Or thought. Or felt?

She rinses her hand SLOWLY but the camera remains on her face. Water continues to run.

She opens her hand bag and brings out a piece of hand wipe. She begins to wipe her hand SLOWLY. Camera RETURNS to her face.

LOLA (V.O.)
The incandescence of his existence. The durability of his might.

She walks out of the restroom into the corridor, leaving water still running in the faucet.

We PUSH IN to the faucet, revealing a blood-stained wipe, and blood draining into the sink.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Lola walks to the train terminal and pauses until the vehicle pulls up. She enters the train.

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

She finds her way to a sit.

LOLA (V.O.)
Crafted impeccably by the greater man, anointing him to the top of the food chain. And barely, from his rib, just as an afterthought, a "She" was brought along as a mere companion for the ride.

She stares outside the window, lost in her thoughts.

LOLA (V.O.)
Who's to say the greatest invention wasn't a façade? The chicken always comes before the eggs.
(MORE)

LOLA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
One day, maybe the chicken's wings will evolve enough to fly and not be continuously kitchened.

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

The train pulls to a halt and passengers spread out. Lola steps out in glorious slow-mo walking among the crowd, away from the train.

TITLE CARD: **THE CURIOUS CASE OF LOLA BITRUS**

EXT. CITY STREET - CONTINUOUS

Lola walks to a road side and a car pulls up. Before she enters, a newspaper guy approaches and she collects one and hands over cash.

INT. MOVING UBER - CONTINUOUS

Lola stares at the headline on the cover of the paper. Its the same as the one from the opening scene. The driver **BELLO** drives enthusiastically, looking back and front between the road and Lola through the front mirror.

BELLO
Do you want some music ma?

Lola doesn't hear him. Her focus is on a minor headline about an ABIKE BITRUS contesting for the Governorship elections. MINOR DETAIL.

BELLO
(Looking back)
Ma? Ma?

Lola removes one ear piece.

LOLA
Excuse me?

BELLO
I was asking if you wanted some music.

LOLA
I'm fine, thank you.

She focuses back on the paper. Bello turns the wheels, takes a turn.

Bello keeps shooting glances at her.

BELLO
I can't believe someone will let the devil use them like that.

She indulges him.

LOLA
What do you mean?

BELLO
That man that is just killing people up and down.

LOLA
And what has the devil got to do with that?

BELLO
Ah ah. If not devil, why will any man in his right senses commit such hideous acts!?

LOLA
You know, the world would be a much better place if men took responsibility for their actions.

Bello gives her a look. Too much English.

He keeps looking into the front mirror.

BELLO
(Holding up a candy flirtatiously)
Care for something sweet?

She shoots him a daring look. He minds his business.

EXT. LOLA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The car pulls to a stop and Lola gets out. She walks towards her apartment.

LOLA (V.O.)
Just like the stars in the sky, I'm absent during the day but I shine in the dark. The only thing I lack is luck, mother nature finger-licking my destiny, cracking my solid rock.

As she’s about to open the door, a man softly yells “Hello” at her. He’s **MUSA**, a homeless man. She turns, irritably smiles and nods at him before opening the door.

INT. LOLA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

The door opens and Lola walks into the house. She relaxes her body. She’s home.

Lower angle - focus on bed - She throws her mobile phone on the bed and begins to undress.

A notification sparks the phone. Its a reminder for a therapy session. She ignores it.

She taps a button on a speaker on a desk and Lesley Gore kicks to life.

“...don't tell me what to do

Oh, don't tell me what to say

And please, when I go out with you

Don't put me on display...”

She proceeds into the bathroom.

INT. LOLA'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The shower shoots water down and she washes.

LOLA (V.O.)
Did you know, that Lesley Gore’s women empowerment anthem was written by two men?

The shower ceases.

CUT TO:

INT. LOLA'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - DAY

A therapist’s office. We hear a man sobbing. A psychotherapy degree certificate from the University of Pennsylvania hangs proudly on the wall. A signage tag reads:

“LOLA BITRUS: Clinical Psychotherapist.”

Lola sits smartly dressed with her legs crossed. Her beret covers her hair. A pen and jotter rests in her hand. She stares apathetically at the man seated across her crying.

Seated across her is the crying man, her patient, **JUDE OKONKWO** - early forties. He's trying to keep it together but his emotion is obviously getting the best of him.

CLOSE UP - Lola stares intently at her patient. His eyes, mannerisms, his build. Its like she's performing a mental autopsy.

LOLA (V.O.)
Isn't it amazing what power does to a man?

She pushes a serviette closer to him. He picks one up.

JUDE OKONKWO
(Sobbing, wiping)
I'm sorry. I don't know why I'm this...

LOLA
It's fine.

JUDE OKONKWO
...emotional.

LOLA
Take your time.

He collects himself. She waits a second for him to shush.

LOLA
So you had a panic attack during your stakeholders' meeting.

JUDE OKONKWO
It wasn't a panic attack. I ran out of air during a speech.

Lola steadies her eyes on him. Nothing.

JUDE OKONKWO
I know what people have been saying. The press,... my competitors. But know this.
(Leans forward, tightens face)
We wouldn't consistently meet our quarter targets without my experience and competence.

He leans back.

But Lola still stares at him.

JUDE OKONKWO
Well, aren't you going to write anything down in your book?

LOLA
You know, there was a research published in the 60s by a group of anthropologists from the Harvard. They concluded that people usually become defensive when their position of power is threatened. What does power mean to you, Mister Okonkwo?

Mr. Okonkwo starts chuckling. He claps sarcastically.

JUDE OKONKWO
(Pointing at the degree certificate)
Is this what you were taught in your little Ivy League school? Look here young lady. I started Pride Harbour Bank 20 years ago from nothing. I led it through its first IPO, crushed and absorbed Assurance Bank during the merger and led it to its position today as a top 5 commercial bank in Nigeria.

A beat.

JUDE OKONKWO
You wouldn't know anything about the pressures that comes with this position. I'm talking about making decisions that influence the entire financial industry.

Lola stares at him. But this time she looks puzzled.

LOLA
So why then are you here, Mister Okonkwo? I'm mean you're right. I have no idea about the power you have in your position. And apparently you didn't have a panic attack. A couple of good nights rest and you should be fully back on your feet.

Silence. Lola closes her book. They stare at each other. He understands the sarcasm.

LOLA
You see Mr. Okonkwo, everything you tell me here is bound under doctor-patient privilege. We can't move past a problem if we refuse to acknowledge it's existence in the first place. I'd like you to shutout all the noise in your psyche. All your responsibilities, just fade them out. Let's talk as two humans.

Okonkwo lets out a sigh.

JUDE OKONKWO
Where do I start?

Lola leans in.

LOLA
Tell me about your family. How are things at home?

Okonkwo starts speaking. Lola studies and gauges him with intent. BLUR his voice out. A clock starts to tick tock, building slowly.

LOLA (V.O.)
You can tell a lot about a man by the state of his affairs at home. Loyalty, discipline, love, cowardice. These are fully expressed in the freedom or lack of freedom in his house.

Off Okonkwo's muted speaking, PAN SLOWLY around the room until the camera meets Lola who's now standing at the window, staring out.

LOLA (V.O.)
Whether physical or mental, every man has idea of what freedom means in his mind. A dead bedroom is the hallmark of a fully expressed wife.

ANGLE ON Mr. Okonkwo: The tears are back. A couple of used tissue papers rest in front of him. The tick tock continues to build.

Lola slowly turns and faces her patient. She gazes at him intently. He looks like a child that needs his mother.

LOLA (V.O.)
Mother Nature is very particular about order. Lionesses trample their own cubs when they show signs of weakness during hunting. The food chain has to be maintained.

Lola walks back to her seat and picks up her note. The page is now full.

LOLA
Tell me, Mr. Okonkwo. What do you want?

He breaks down.

JUDE OKONKWO
I want to be free. I just,... This burden. Its too much. I can't be responsible for everything! My family, the bank, the club, everything. I'm, I'm… I'm just a man.

Lola stares at her patient. Her face writhes in slight concern this time.

LOLA
Don't be too hard on yourself, Mr. Okonkwo. You see, Mother Nature didn't design this world to be perfect in any way. There's a beautiful imperfection that exists in the chaos around us. We're all functioning as a part of her experience. And if a part can't function properly, it needs to be replaced.

Mr. Okonkwo sobs on.

LOLA
Do you see where I'm going with this? You said it yourself, I have no idea what it means to be in your position. To yield such power.
(A beat)
You need to let go of the ego and accept that your consciousness is misaligned at this point in time. Maybe the universe needs you someplace else. Where your thoughts are properly echoed and order is maintained.

A beat.

She HOLDS him in an intense eye contact. He looks defeated.

Lola nods him. A smile spreads across his face.

LOLA (V.O.)
The man gets it.

She opens her book and draws a line across the page.

FADE TO BLACK:

FROM BLACK,

LOLA (V.O.)
What is left in this world for the girl child?

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Arial shot of a pool. Still waters. Nobody's inside.

Lola bursts out and swims to the shallow edge.

LOLA (V.O.)
Her very essence has been stripped off. Her timidity is expected. Her excellence tolerated, as though society requires her weaknesses and limitations to function.

Lola sways to the handrail and checks her phone. A couple of notifications are on the screen. She dries her hand, puts on an AirPod and turns, facing the pool.

We see what she's watching. A news reporting.

NEWSCASTER (O.S.)
"... Disturbing new reports are also reaching us right now. On the early hours of this morning, Mr. Jude Okonkwo, the CEO of Pride Harbour Bank was found dead in his Maitama pent house. Investigators at the scene have ruled the cause of death as a suicide pending official autopsy reports. A dozen ecstasy pills were found scattered around his corpse.
(MORE)

NEWSCASTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
A representative at Pride Harbour Bank has announced that Dr. Cecilia Ade will assume the position of CEO of the multi-national bank. She will be the first woman to attain this position. The wife of the deceased has declined to give any comments at this time....”

SLOWLY PULL AWAY from Lola. A SLY smile spreads across her face.

LOLA (V.O.)
Birds flying high, you know how I feel.

Camera still SLOWLY pulling out.

LOLA (V.O.)
Look at the world around you. What do you see?
A grotesque realisation of a never-ending struggle. I mean I get it, resources are limited. Everybody can’t thrive. Natural selection happens in our thought processes and focus.

The following shots appear as the narration is recited:

- Lola walking past a public park, observing people.

- Lola lost in her thought as she contemplates items at a supermarket.

- Lola seated in Church, looking uninterested in whatever is going on.

- Lola being teased by friends to smile while taking a picture.

LOLA (V.O.)
Our attention is the product. We’re continuously enticed by our learned obsession to have digital good times.

INT. MOVING UBER - NIGHT

Lola idly stares out of the window, lost in her thoughts.

LOLA (V.O.)
How did we become this naively optimistic about a system getting better. It is a system. When our consciousness was colonised, it wasn't to make the world a better place; it was to make profit.

Lola steps out of the car and walks towards her apartment door.

LOLA (V.O.)
And we're forced to acknowledge a god---

Her thought is interrupted sharply by Musa. A big smile shines on his face.

MUSA
(Waving)
Hello

Lola gives him an irritated stare, contemplating. She ignores him, opens the door and heads in.

CUT TO:

INT. LOLA'S APARTMENT - OFFICE - DAY

Lola is standing by the window, looking into yonder. Another patient is seated down, jovially occupied with a phone call. He's COLLINS, late 30's in an incomplete pilot's uniform.

COLLINS
(into the phone)
...We cross-checked the flight manifest together and everything was A1. Yeah, yeah... Can you imagine? These white people never take responsibility for anything!... Exactly!

Lola walks and takes her sit.

COLLINS
Alright man. Look I gotta go now. Let's talk later... Yeah.
(To Lola)
Hello Ms. Lola.

LOLA
Hello Mr. Collins. You're in great spirits today. That's good to see.

COLLINS
Yes. You have certainly worked wonders on my mind.

LOLA
I have?

COLLINS
Isn't it obvious?

LOLA
I can't see your mind, Mr. Collins. You're obviously in a good mood though.

COLLINS
(Laughs)
"Our actions and words are physical manifestations of our minds."

LOLA
Fair enough. Well its your last day of therapy. How do you feel?

COLLINS
How do I feel? How do I feel? Let's see...

Lola OBSERVES him.

COLLINS
I feel great. They're no more anxieties, you know. I'm no longer letting things I can't control occupy my mind. It's all noise.
(gestures with his hands)
I'm living in the moment. I just feel... I feel free!

LOLA
And how has that affected your well being and all?

COLLINS
I'm more energised. I feel like I've become a better person. More in control.

Lola nods.

A beat.

LOLA
And how's Mabel?

Collins' countenance changes. Question struck a nerve.

He leans back into his sit. Touches his forehead.

LOLA
Mr. Collins? I asked about your wife-

COLLINS
(cutting in)
-Can we just not talk about her please? Don't spoil the mood.

And in that instant, he loses his collectedness. Lola stares intently at him. Her mental autopsy.

LOLA
I assume your wife is part of the noise you're trying to block out?

COLLINS
(fidgets in his chair)
I never said that.

LOLA
"Our actions and words are physical manifestations of our minds."

Their eyes meet. She HOLDS the eye contact.

LOLA
Tell me Mr. Collins, why is the mere thought of your wife enough to change your entire mood? Why have you given her such a negative power over your mind?

COLLINS
I didn't give her anything. She just has this exhausting vibe about her. Its work, work, work, everyday. She's forgotten her primary duties as a wife. I don't know what point she's trying to prove. And she thinks she's better than all these other wives that stay at home... Its just...

He breathes a heavy sigh and retreats into his seat.

Lola writes something on her book.

LOLA
Are you aware it was your wife that personally called and asked me to accept you as a patient?

COLLINS
And what has got to do with anything?

LOLA
She said she missed you. Or a version of you that used to exist.

He gives her a look.

COLLINS
Is this now marriage counselling?

LOLA
We're addressing problems in your mental health and apparently, your wife- or marriage- is currently the source of your stress.
(A beat)
This was suppose to be your final session Mr. Collins. Your marriage was the one positive thing you shed light on when we started our session. What went wrong?

Collins sits on the edge of his seat.

COLLINS
I always thought the reason for the pollution in my mind was external. Work and all. But coming here, I've realised the primary source has been right under my roof. It's like our coexistence is forced. I'm just tired.

LOLA
Of?

COLLINS
Pretending.

A beat.

LOLA
You weren't tired when she was the breadwinner while you were trying to figure things out.

COLLINS
Excuse me?

LOLA
Would you agree with me that for some reason, your wife reminds you of a time in your life that you hate.

Collins says nothing.

LOLA
You see, Mr. Collins, human beings are very funny creatures. We're fickle emotionally yet we depend on an emotion so steadfast as Love to function. Collins and Mabel are two separate entities. Forget what the laws of marriage or religion says. You're both individual branches in Mother Earth's tree of life. Don't let society's expectations of a wife cloud your judgment of who she is. The femininity that attracted her to you in the first place still lingers around her psyche. Find it.

COLLINS
And what if I can't?

She looks away into yonder.

LOLA (V.O.)
People misunderstand certain facets of life. Sometimes giving up and letting go are virtues.

She gets up and walks to him.

LOLA (V.O.)
No woman should ever be shackled by the myopic ego of her companion.

Lola stops at his seat. She bends down and whispers something in his ear. He looks up, terrified.

Off Collins' face,

CUT TO:

EXT. HIKING BASE - DAY

A group of hikers are gathered at a road ready to begin their hike. A lady, **GWAZ**, 29, walks away from the group drinking a bottle of water. She MEETS her friend, **AMINA**, 29. They're the friends who were forcing Lola to smile in the earlier scene.

GWAZ
How far? Where's Lola?

AMINA
I thought she was here already.

They both look around.

GWAZ
See the yeye girl.

Lola approaches them.

LOLA
Hey guys.

GWAZ
We're about to leave.

Amina pulls Lola close. She points at a man in the distance.

AMINA
Chris is here.

The two friends tease her.

LOLA
Oh please.

Suddenly everyone in the hiking group starts checking their phones. There's concern everywhere.

A lady yells in the background.

AMINA
What's going on?

They check their phones. Lola stares at them, waiting. The hikers start moaning and cursing.

GWAZ
Oh no. No, no, no.

AMINA
What happened!?

GWAZ
There's been a plane crash this morning...

Amina peeps into Gwaz' phone.

GWAZ
A flight from Abuja to Lagos. Everyone on board died!

Gwaz and Amina begin to tear up. Lola just stares at them, absorbing all the information.

GWAZ
Holy shit.

Lola's breath is now heavier. Her eyes searches the ground.

AMINA
They're saying the crash was caused by the pilot's negligence. Some Captain Collins Faaji.

As Lola hears the name, she shoots a shocked look at Amina. She's now physically shaking.

GWAZ
Wait, that name sounds familiar.

The friends pause in their thoughts. Lola is now taking SLOW steps backwards, away from her friends.

GWAZ
Holy shit, Lola. Wasn't he your patient?

They both stare at her. Behind them is pandemonium.

Lola frantically shakes her head.

LOLA
(Under her breath)
No, no, no.

Gwaz and Amina tries to console her but she takes off. They call out to her.

EXT. HIKING BASE - CAR PARK - CONTINUOUS

Lola frantically approaches her car and enters.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

She enters and bangs the door close. Tries to catch her breath.

She puts her head on the steering wheel and the horn goes off.

She tries to steady her breathing. She collects her phone from her bag and dials “Mom.” It begins to ring.

The line connects.

MAN (O.S.)
Hello there.

LOLA
Hello? Who’s this?

The man starts humming a song. Lola drops the phone from her ear and looks at it confused. She put the phone on speaker.

LOLA
Who’s this?

We hear a woman snatch the phone on the other side. The man and woman giggle. Lola is irritated. The woman is **ABIKE BITRUS**, Lola’s mom.

LOLA
Mom?

ABIKE (O.S.)
Adelola my baby.

LOLA
Mom who just answered the phone?

ABIKE (O.S.)
Don’t worry jare. How are you my baby?

LOLA
(Trying to keep it together)
Mom that sounded like Honourable Peter.

Abike doesn’t answer.

LOLA
Mom? Mom!

ABIKE (O.S.)
Forget about that jorh. You bother too much. Ahn ahn.

Lola is losing it.

LOLA
Mom how can you be sleeping with the running mate of your opponent? What is wrong with you!?

ABIKE (O.S.)
Please let me be jare. Did you call to attack me. I'm just playing my part, Lola. Don't hate the player, hate the game.

Lola stares at the phone irritated. She suddenly becomes calm.

ABIKE (O.S.)
So how is my baby doing?
(No response)
Hello? Adelola?

Lola lets out a heavy sigh and ends the call. She leans back into the seat and puts her hand on the head. "You gotta be kidding me."

LOLA (V.O.)
Sometimes we're the cause of our own problems.

She starts the car, puts it into gear and drives off.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Lola is on her way home, walking through the city streets.

LOLA (V.O.)
We yearn for empowerment but alter our bodies according to the tastes of those we need empowerment from. Underestimated ambitions, I'm only taken serious when I'm with a deadly weapon. My body aiming and shooting at victims on the way to the top of the food chain, only to find on top, a rotten pie served ever so graciously.
(MORE)

LOLA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Decades of decadence has culminated in a society so out of touch with its role in the flow of consciousness. Look around. It makes perfect sense that a man is charge. God knows I can’t wait to leave.

EXT. LOLA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Lola walks to her apartment door and unlocks the door but before she enters, she looks around for Musa. He’s nowhere to be seen. His cardboard and blanket are the way they usually are. She looks kind of disappointed. But just as she’s about to walk through the door she hears “hello.”

Its Musa, smiling and waving ever so warmly.

Lola takes a moment. She nods at him and returns the smile this time before entering the apartment.

THE END.