

sic transit

by

Monique Ezeh

221 Avenue B #4

New York, NY 10009

(732) 589 - 8228

moniqueezeh@gmail.com

CHARACTERS

LYTZY/LUZ/LISA/LILIANA

A shy young woman who finds it difficult to figure out who she is, and finds it even more difficult to be that person; a people-pleaser; in love with NICA.

NICA/NATALIE/NORA/NOEL (F, 20 something):

A headstrong, fiery young woman; impulsive and passionate, always saying what's on her mind; in love with LYTZY.

KYLE (M, 20 something)

LYTZY's casually homophobic boyfriend; generally friendly; a bit wary of NICA

SETTING

A train in a generic urban city.

TIME

2021, 2001, 1981, 1961

NOTES

LYTZY/LUZ/LISA/LILIANA are to be played by the same actress. The same goes for NICA/NATALIE/NORA/NOEL. Both women are in their early-to-mid-20s.

/ denotes the next character beginning their line, interrupting the speaker.

— denotes a character cutting themselves off mid-word/sentence/etc.

SCENE 1: 2021

(Two girls, Lytzy and Nica, rush onto a train. They are standing right beside each other, arms looped around the same pole, legs spread to maintain balance. They are both wearing masks. The train lurches forward, knocking Lytzy into Nica; Nica's phone falls to the ground and Lytzy frantically reaches to pick it up.)

LYTZY

Oh my God, I'm so sorry.

(Lytzy picks up the phone, laughing awkwardly.)

NICA

No worries, honestly. It's / fine.

LYTZY

No no no I'm really so sorry oh my / gosh.

NICA

It's fine.

(Lytzy hands her the phone; Nica notices her large gold ring.)

Oh! I love your ring OMG.

LYTZY

Thank you!

(Beat.)

(laughing) Wait... Did you just say "OMG", like, out loud?

NICA

(sarcastic) I mean, yeah, but you just threw my phone on the ground so I'm not sure if you have the right to / bully me here.

LYTZY

(suddenly serious) I'm so sorry again.

NICA

I'm joking! It's really fine.

(Nica looks down at her phone, then shows the screen to Lytzy.)

See, it's not like it's broken or anything.

LYTZY

But still— /

NICA

Anyways, the ring. Where's it from?

LYTZY

Some Instagram store I forgot the name of... I kept getting their ads so I kind of gave in.

NICA

Happens to the best of us.

LYTZY

They're, like, kind of relentless.

NICA

Instagram ads tend to be.

(Nica laughs.)

LYTZY

My name is Lytzy, by the way.

(Beat.)

So do you normally talk to strangers on the subway, or am I special?

NICA

Sorry, is this— should I step back? I keep forgetting we're in a / pandemic.

LYTZY

Pandemic. I *wish* I could forget... I've got, like, major Covid anxiety.

But you're fine. I was just messing with you.

NICA

Oh! Well, I'm Nica.

(Beat.)

I'd shake your hand but you know... / pandemic.

LYTZY

(laughing)

Pandemic.

NICA

So are you from around here— I mean, if you don't mind me / asking.

LYTZY

I don't! I mean, I don't mind.

I only live a few stops from here, so yeah.

NICA

Oh wow... I get off at the end of the line.

LYTZY

Damn—/

NICA

But I like it.

I like to people-watch. And meet people.

Like you.

(Nica notices Lytzy fidget nervously.)

Sorry, was that too much?

LYTZY

Um— No! It wasn't too much.

I'm just weird about... being perceived I guess.

(Nica covers her eyes with her hands and turns around.)

NICA

(monotone) You are no longer being perceived.

(Lytzy laughs loudly. After a beat:)

LYTZY

So...

NICA

So...?

LYTZY

We're getting close to my stop...

NICA

Yeah...?

LYTZY

Would it be crazy if—

NICA

I was wondering if—

(They both laugh nervously.)

LYTZY

You go first.

NICA

You can go.

(They laugh again, less nervously.)

LYTZY

Um... I'll go.

I was just—

I was just thinking—

Maybe we could, like, stay in touch? Only if you want, obviously, like no worries or anything and I know we just met so maybe this is a weird request and I won't be offended if you say— /

NICA

(excitedly) I'd love to!

(more contained) I mean— That's what I was gonna ask too.

Do you have Instagr— wait, duh, that's where you found that sick ass ring!

LYTZY

You remembered!

NICA

It's a cool ring, of course I'd remember.

(awkwardly, with the energy of pointing finger guns) Cool ring, cool girl.

LYTZY

(Lytzy ignores how awkward Nica just was.)

Um... yes. I have Instagram.

(She gets out her phone and hands it to Nica, app open.)

Do you wanna put yours in? Or like... are you cool with touching my phone— /

NICA

Yeah! No worries. I uh... have hand sanitizer. So like... it's cool. And I'll just follow you back?

LYTZY

Sounds good to me.

(A LONG silence, at least 5 seconds. The girls avoid eye contact.)

(hurriedly, nervously) Um... are we flirting?

NICA

Do you want us to be?

LYTZY

I mean—

NICA

Like, maybe you already noticed or whatever but, like, *I've* been flirting this whole time. I actually don't normally talk to strangers on the train... Just for the record.

(She fidgets a bit, the first time she's been visibly nervous.)

So there's, um, that.

LYTZY

Okay so um—

It's hard to tell, I guess, because like— I don't even know—

I just get, like, weird about stuff like this sometimes? Because like— flirting is the ultimate form of being perceived slash perceiving others and, like, I don't *love* that sort of thing— I guess I already told you that, though.

So I wasn't sure if you were flirting with me. But I'm glad you were— or, um, are?

NICA

I am.

LYTZY

I'm just never sure about things like— /

NICA

Do you want me to prove it?

LYTZY

Oh! Um, I don't—

(regaining some confidence) Actually, yes. Prove it.

NICA

How?

LYTZY

Okay, so... DM me if you actually mean it. Because a lot of people say things like this and they don't actually do anything about it. And *I'm* not gonna do anything about it so, like, you can text me.

NICA

So I'll text you. Or DM, whatever.

LYTZY

Yeah?

NICA

Yeah.

(The train lurches to a stop.)

LYTZY

Well... this is me.

NICA

This is you.

(Lytzy waves and exits the train. The train and Nica are no longer onstage. Lytzy is alone, standing on the subway platform. Her phone buzzes (audio). She takes out her phone, sees something, and smiles.)

SHIFT

(The lights go down, but not completely black. We hear the train. We see Lytzy change her clothes, becoming LUZ as the scene changes. KYLE enters.)

SCENE 2: 2001

(A couple, Luz and Kyle, sit on the bench of a train. They are talking quietly and Kyle has his arm around Luz. They look *very* early-2000s.)

KYLE

So they put the new girl in the desk right next to mine, but she's definitely, like, one of the guys if you catch my drift.

LUZ

I don't.

(good-natured) Catch your drift, I mean. What are you talking about?

KYLE

She's, like, a total lesbo. Short hair, tattoos, the whole fuckin' thing, babe. And she wears suits like uh... what's her name? Ellen De-whatever.

LUZ

DeGeneres?

KYLE

Is that one the dy— /

LUZ

Yeah. She's gay.

KYLE

Cool. Anyway...

(He kisses her on the top of the head.)

No need to worry about the new girl stealing your man... wrong equipment down there.

LUZ

(sarcastically) Oh great, because I was *soooo* worried...

But maybe you could try being friendly. I'm sure it's rough being—/

KYLE

I mean, I respect the whole gay rights thing, it's just kind of weird that we buy our suits at the same shop, you know?

(He laughs, waiting for Luz to join in. She doesn't.)

LUZ

I was going to say it's rough being the only woman. But I'm sure being gay doesn't make things any easier...

(She looks at him intently. Kyle is still smiling, oblivious to her upset.)

Baby, I'm serious. Just... try. That's all I'm saying.

(The train stops. Natalie, Luz's friend, enters.
Natalie is visibly queer, wearing a shirt that says
"No one knows I'm a Lesbian," oversized pants,
combat boots and a leather jacket.)

KYLE

(under his breath) Speaking of lesbos...

(Luz elbows him in the side.)

Ow! Kidding!

LUZ

Nat!

NATALIE

Luz! ...and Kyle.

(Natalie sits down beside Luz.)

What are the odds, huh?

KYLE

I mean, realistically, pretty high. I take this train to work every day.

LUZ

And I always take it when I'm getting groceries.

KYLE

Honestly, I'm more surprised we haven't run into each other / before—

NATALIE

Okay, I get it! Kill me for making conversation.

Anyway! I'm headed uptown to get a tattoo. (to Luz) I'm thinking something Daria-inspired. I'll figure out the deets when I get there.

KYLE

You don't decide your tattoos in advance? Isn't it gonna, like, be on your body forever?

LUZ

You know how Nat likes to live life on the edge.

(Natalie bristles at this. Her demeanor changes a bit.)

NATALIE

You used to live life on the edge, too.

(She smiles. Luz looks nervous.)

Remember when we got our first tats together? The matching Frog and Toad?

KYLE

Oh, I didn't know you got those together...

LUZ

Yeah, actual—/

NATALIE

And then we got *soooo* fucked up after. Whose party was that, anyway?

LUZ

(tense, uncomfortable) I'm not sure. I don't really—/

NATALIE

That was the first time we dropped 'cid, I think.

KYLE

Sid?

NATALIE

Yeah, 'cid. Lucy. Tabs.

(exasperated, dismissive) LSD, Kyle.

(Kyle appears surprised.)

(to Luz) Wait... wasn't that the night you hooked up with—/

LUZ

Natalie!

NATALIE

Oh. My bad. I guess you guys haven't been together long enough for him to know about your mega sordid past.

Your secrets are safe with me, babe.

(She mimes locking her mouth and dropping it in her tote bag. She winks at Kyle.)

KYLE

No no, I'd love to hear more.

(He possessively pulls Luz closer.)

Didn't realize my Luz was such a wild child before we met.

NATALIE

Well in *that* case...

(She mimes fishing around in her bag, finding the key, and then unlocking her mouth.)

Did you know I was her first kiss?

LUZ

That's not exactly—

KYLE

What?

NATALIE

It was sophomore year of college and she told me she didn't wanna turn 20 without kissing someone. We were alone in my dorm room... so I / offered.

LUZ

(frantic, nervously laughing) I think that's enough reminiscing for one day, Natalie!

(more composed, to Kyle) We're actually getting close to your stop, baby.

KYLE

(Kyle glances up to see which stop they are at. He seems disappointed.)

Just when things were getting good, too. (to Natalie) Let's continue this later.

(The train stops. Kyle winks at Natalie, kisses Luz, and exits the train car.)

LUZ

(Luz smiles warmly at him. Her demeanor abruptly changes when he is gone.)

What the hell was that?

NATALIE

What are you talking about?

LUZ

Don't play dumb. Can't I have one relationship without you attempting to sabotage it?

NATALIE

It's not my fault you're with some guy who has no clue who you are. You're, like, a completely made-up person around him.

(She leans back in her seat, manspreading and absentmindedly looking around.)

LUZ

I am not.

You're acting like a child, Natalie—/

NATALIE

Stop calling me Natalie. You're not my mom, holy shit.

LUZ

Then lower your voice, *Nat*. We're in public.

(Beat.)

Kyle is good to me. He's kind and—/

NATALIE

Yeah, I'm sure he's real kind when he's not calling your best friend a lesbo.

(Beat.)

LUZ

I... I didn't think you heard that. I'm so sorry.

NATALIE

I'm not mad. Not at you.

I just wish you could be honest with yourself, just this once.

LUZ

What do you mean?

NATALIE

I mean...

(She exhales deeply.)

Why can't you just admit what we've both known since college? There's nothing wrong with being a les—/

LUZ

Nat!

(hushed, angry) First, I'm not a *lesbian*. I just like girls. It's not the same... *we're* not the same. *Second*, I'm not gonna just upend my entire life for the sake of being "honest," okay? I have plans for my life. Like... getting married and having a job and having kids and— /

NATALIE

And being miserable?

LUZ

(Luz sighs, exhausted.)

You're my best friend, Nat. And I love you more than anything, I really do. But at some point you have to grow up and face reality.

And even if you don't, I do.

NATALIE

The "reality" is that lackluster sex from Boyfriend Guy isn't gonna make you want pussy any less.

LUZ

(Luz is shocked. She looks around, nervous.)

Please lower your voice. Please.

NATALIE

(softly) He'll never know you like I do, Luz.

LUZ

Nat—/

NATALIE

You have to know that.

LUZ

Stop it, Nat. Please. You're not being fair.

NATALIE

Why are you so terrified of the truth, Luz? Why can't you just give yourself a chance to—/

LUZ

A chance to what? Fuck up my life like you did yours?

(There is a long pause. Both women are shocked.)

NATALIE

Wow.

Um... okay.

(She stands up, visibly hurt.)

I'm gonna go now.

LUZ

Nat, wait. I'm sorry. I didn't mean—/

NATALIE

Yeah, you did.

LUZ

(softly) I just want you to be safe.

NATALIE

You can't save me from who I am, Luz.

(She turns and walks away, exiting the train. Luz remains seated, dejected.)

SHIFT

(The lights go down, but not completely black. We see Luz change into LISA. Natalie returns to the stage, now NORA.)

SCENE 3: 1981

(Girlfriends, Lisa and Nora, are on a train. Lisa is standing while Nora is seated. Lisa wears a shirt that reads "GAY IS GOOD" and holds a sign reading "POWER TO THE PEOPLE." Nora is wearing all black, holding a sign reading "NO APOLOGIES, NO ASSIMILATION." They are on their way to a protest.)

LISA

So the plan is to march from the courthouse to City Hall. We're gonna catch all the officials before they head home for the day so they'll be forced to listen.

NORA

Mmmm.

LISA

I talked to Lee— she's another member of the queer union— and we think there's gonna be press coverage since it's the anniversary of Harvey Milk's death.

NORA

Yeah. I think it's gonna be great, babe.

(Nora is clearly not really present in the conversation.)

LISA

So press coverage means the speakers are more important than ever...

NORA

Sure.

LISA

And we really need some powerful voices up there. People who have a stake in this, you know?

NORA

Totally.

LISA

...babe.

Yeah...?

NORA

Will you speak today?

LISA

I already told you— /

NORA

I know! It's just—
I've been thinking a lot about when you spoke at Harvey's vigil a few years ago.

NORA

(Nora visibly tenses.)

Yeah.

LISA

I know. I know things were different. But just think: if we could channel that momentum—/

NORA

No.

LISA

Noraaaaa...

NORA

I said no, Lisa.

LISA

Remember when we hitchhiked to Frisco just to hear him speak? When we road tripped to Stonewall in '70? What happened to that passion, honey?

NORA

(Beat.)

Lisa, do you want me to be honest?

LISA

Always.

NORA

(She takes a deep breath.)

What's the point of all this? It's like—

Every time there's a chance for people like us to get ahead, this shit happens. Malcolm X. MLK. JFK. His fucking brother. Harvey Milk.

LISA

But—/

NORA

People are dying and I'm supposed to get on the City Hall stairs and talk about how it's worth something? Like this shit happens for a reason?

LISA

Nor—/

NORA

(Nora is not looking at Lisa.)

I know what this all means to you. I know how good it feels to have something to believe in, something to fight for. Believe me, I do.

LISA

So what's changed?

NORA

I grew up.

LISA

(Lisa bristles at this, but shakes it off.)

You're the one who taught me that some things are worth fighting for, Nora. Even when it's hard. Especially when it's hard. And I believed you. I believed *in* you.

(Beat.)

We have to believe a better world is possible, Nor. We have to.

NORA

And who's creating that world? City Council? The mayor? Congress? Fucking Reagan?

LISA

We have to start somewhere.

NORA

Not here.

LISA

Then where, Nora? If this is all so useless, what do you suggest?

NORA

Nothing. I'm done.

LISA

Excuse me?

NORA

None of this is working. How many strikes have we organized? How many marches? At what point do we say enough's enough?

You're so focused on fitting into this society, changing it from within. You want to be the first dyke in Congress like that'll make things any better. The whole damn thing is fucked, babe. Don't you get it?

(Nora sighs, resigned.)

I guess I'm just tired of pretending things can change.

LISA

You sound delusional, Nora. And I'm saying that with love.

NORA

I'm not—/

LISA

We can change things. People like us *have* changed things. We're Americans, just like everybody else.

Ever since Harvey died, you've acted like nothing he did mattered. He changed the world, babe. So can we.

NORA

And what did he get for all that, huh?

LISA

I—/

NORA

A couple of gunshots to the head. That's what he got.

(She sighs.)

We'll never be accepted. It took me far too long to realize that. When are you going to see what's right in front of you, babe? This society isn't *for* us.

LISA

(tearing up) What's right in front of me is the woman I love, telling me that we've wasted years of our lives. That's what I'm seeing.

NORA

Babe—/

LISA

So we just give up? We just let them win? We go back to how things were before and— and—
(softly) We go back home?

NORA

No.

(She takes Lisa's hand, smiling.)

We make a new home. Together.

LISA

(Lisa roughly snatches her hand away.)

No.

(choked up, growing upset) No no no no.

I'm not giving up. I can't. You know what my life was like before all this. Before I found the union. Before I found a family. Before I found you.

This is my home now – the movement. I don't have anything else.

I'm not going back, baby. I won't.

NORA

You can't keep running, Lisa.

(She gestures at the posters by their feet.)

All this? It's a distraction. It won't bring you peace. There are other things in your life that you /
can—

LISA

Other things, huh? Like what? Like you?

NORA

(Nora seems shocked and hurt, but shakes it off.)

You can't keep running.

LISA

I'm running? You just wanna leave whenever things get hard. Yeah, Nora, Harvey's dead! JFK is dead. MLK is dead. We have to let that rage *fuel* us— otherwise, what the hell did they die / for —

NORA

They didn't die *for* anything, Lisa! They were fucking killed! Harvey was shot in the goddamn skull. Is that what you want to happen to us?!

Or would you rather get all dressed up to go to a congressional banquet and beg them to see us as people? Let's invite them to *another* Town Hall so they can laugh in our fucking faces.

LISA

(cold, resigned) I'm not doing this with you.

NORA

What?

LISA

If you're not with me, get off the train and go home.

NORA

Lis—/

LISA

Well? Are you with me?

NORA

I'm always with you. I'm just not with (gesturing around) all this.

LISA

Then go.

NORA

Are you kidding me?

LISA

No. Leave.

NORA

This is a public train, Lisa. I'm not going anywhere.

(She stands up.)

We can talk this—/

LISA

Then I'll go. We've talked enough for today. I'll just walk the rest of the way.

NORA

Baby—/

LISA

And if you're so fucking jaded...

(She picks up Nora's sign and, with a bit of effort, rips it in half. She drops the pieces at Nora's feet.)

I'll just speak at City Hall myself. You can read about it in the paper.

And don't follow me.

(Nora seems dumbfounded. The train stops and Lisa exits. Nora looks like she is about to follow, but doesn't. She sits back down, head in hands.)

SHIFT

(The lights go down, but not completely black. Nora becomes NOEL.)

SCENE 4: 1961

(On a crowded train, Noel stands, holding a pole. She has a book in her free hand. The doors are about to close as Liliana (off-stage) runs frantically toward the train.)

LILIANA (O.S.)

Hold the door! Please!

(Noel sticks her arm out to hold the door and Liliana runs in, holding an overnight bag in one hand. She bumps into Noel, knocking the book to the ground.)

LILIANA

(out of breath) Oh! So sorry—

(She picks up the book and extends it to Noel, staring into her eyes.)

NOEL

No worries at all.

(Noel goes to take the book but Liliana doesn't let go. Beat.)

Um... can I...?

LILIANA

Oh! Of course.

(She releases the book.)

I'm just so frazzled today, sorry. Heading home for a holiday party and I don't know what I'd've done if I missed this train.

NOEL

Don't mention it.

LILIANA

I mean, my mother would flip her lid if I showed up late tonight.

(She checks her watch.)

Well, later than I already am. Bad enough I'm showing up stag.

NOEL

Oh? Can't imagine a girl like you would have any trouble finding a date.

LILIANA

Come again?

NOEL

I just mean— uh—

You're uh... quite beautiful, that's all. Any man would be lucky to—/

LILIANA

I'm alright, thank you!

NOEL

I'm so sorry; I didn't mean to offend.

LILIANA

No! I mean— I just—

(She sighs.)

I've more important concerns than searching for someone to make me a housewife.

NOEL

Likewise.

The name's Noel.

(Noel puts the book in her bag and then sticks a hand out to shake. Liliana accepts.)

LILIANA

Liliana. Pleased to meet you.

NOEL

The pleasure's all mine.

So uh... are you from around here?

LILIANA

Yes, actually. One less excuse for being late to this party. You?

NOEL

Yep, just a few stops up, actually.

LILIANA

(Beat.)

So uh— any Christmas plans?

NOEL

Um. No. I mean I don't celebrate.

I'm uh, Jewish.

LILIANA

Jewish?

NOEL

Yep.

LILIANA

And your name's—

NOEL

Noel. Yeah.

(Beat.)

Okay, that's not true. Frankly, I don't, uh, speak to the family very much these days. So no Christmas plans.

I'll be spending the evening with my dog, Luna.

LILIANA

Better than spending a weekend with everyone worried I'll die a spinster. I'm sure your Luna will be excellent company.

NOEL

I've spent my fair share of weekends as the spinster relative. Someone's gotta do it, you know?

LILIANA

(laughing) I'm sure some clueless neighbor boy will be invited to dinner and *somehow* end up seated beside me.

NOEL

Some years ago, I came home to *my* clueless neighbor boy in the sitting room with a bouquet of petunias. After lunch, I told my mother that the gesture was sweet but I much preferred violets.

(laughing) She gave up pretty soon after that.

LILIANA

(intrigued) Oh? I don't often come across other fans of violets... most of my girlfriends prefer roses or daisies.

NOEL

It really is a lovely flower.

LILIANA

The loveliest.

(There is a pause as the women contemplate each other. Noel glances up to see where they are.)

NOEL

Well it looks like my stop is coming up.

LILIANA

(disappointed) Oh.

NOEL

So...

LILIANA

So...?

NOEL

At the risk of being too brash, I'd love to take you out for a drink. I mean, if you don't mind being a bit later for that holiday party.

LILIANA

Well, um— I'm afraid—/

NOEL

(suddenly concerned, nervous) Oh! I'm so sorry. I must've misunderstood—/

LILIANA

You haven't!

(Beat.)

Um... I just— I really do need to make this event. It's very important to my family that we keep up appearances, as silly as it seems.

(The train begins to stop.)

NOEL

Well... this is me.

LILIANA

I suppose it is.

(She sticks out her hand again.)

Well, it has been a pleasure speaking with you.

NOEL

(tenderly) I've already told you— the pleasure's all mine.

(Noel gathers her things to leave. As she begins to walk away, Liliana speaks:)

LILIANA

Wait!

NOEL

(turning around) Yes?

LILIANA

How will we get back in touch? I wanna take you up on that drink.

NOEL

You said you live around here, no?

LILIANA

I do.

NOEL

Then I'm sure our paths will cross again.

(Noel exits the train, exiting stage. Liliana looks after her.)

BLACKOUT.

(There is the sound of the train pulling off.)

END.