

J-Rots

By

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Cast of Characters

<u>Tanya:</u>	17, not white, JROTC, Albert's girlfriend
<u>Albert:</u>	17, not white, not in JROTC, Tanya's boyfriend
<u>Jackson:</u>	16, not white, JROTC, Tanya and Albert's friend
<u>Security Guard:</u>	40-ish

Scene

Outside of Senn High School, Chicago, IL

Time

An afternoon in the late fall of 2004.

The front steps of Senn High School, in the Edgewater neighborhood of Chicago. TANYA, ALBERT, and JACKSON, all juniors at Senn, are hanging out after school. TANYA and JACKSON are dressed in their JROTC uniforms, ALBERT is not. Maybe JACKSON has his cell phone out, texting periodically.

ALBERT

C'mon, T. Why not?

TANYA

You know why not.

JACKSON

Cuz her Mama will hit her upside her head is why not....

TANYA

Tsk. It ain't even that, and you know it--

ALBERT

(moving close to TANYA)

Then what's the matter, baby?

TANYA

(not pushing ALBERT away, yet not quite comfortable in the embrace)

Because...

(a beat)

Look, I got a chem test tomorrow, an English paper due on Thursday, we gotta game this weekend, and J-rot stuff all through the week. My Mama may not care, but Sarge will make me run laps if I'm slackin'.

(SHE finally pushes ALBERT away a bit)

So get off my ass about goin' to Bootie's party when you know I can't.

ALBERT

So you just gonna let other people boss you around from now on, is that it.

JACKSON

Hey, A, it's not even like that. If you were J-rot, you'd know what it's--

ALBERT

Well I'm not, ok? So I don't have to worry about nobody telling me what to do! If I wanna party, I party. If I wanna skip, I skip. If I wanna say "fuck you, Sarge," I say "fuck you."

A moment. None of the THREE look at each other.

TANYA

You know I just don't wanna be in trouble no more, A. They almost sent me to Northside last year after I got suspended again.

(pause)

And J-rot's been good. I like Sarge. I even like how he pushes me. I don't even mind runnin' laps...

JACKSON

You know, A, you could still probably sign up with us. It really is fun. And the uniform's off the chain.

(smiling)

The ladies like the uniform, man.

TANYA

Shut up, Jackson.

ALBERT

Oh, you jealous now.

(moving closer to TANYA again, wrapping
HIS arms around HER, maybe kissing HER
neck)

Maybe I should go sign up, get myself a fly uniform, salute, and walk in time. Let everyone notice Albert all cleaned up and proper...huh? I should do that, maybe?

TANYA and ALBERT kiss. JACKSON
looks uncomfortable. A
moment. THEY finally stop kissing
and sit on the steps, leaning THEIR
heads against one another. Another
moment.

ALBERT

So, ah, look, there's something else I wanted to talk to you guys about.

JACKSON

Yeah?

ALBERT

So, I was talkin' to Sugar the other day and--

TANYA

Sugar?!

JACKSON

(almost to HIMSELF)

Oh, man.

TANYA

Why would you be talkin' to that fool? I thought we discussed this before. He is nothing but bad news!

JACKSON

Dude is in a bad way, man. You know what he does now.

ALBERT

C'mon. We've all known him since we was kids. We all grew up together. You know how he looked out for all of us at Swift. Nobody ever messed with Sugar and he made sure nobody ever messed with us. He still would. He just was asking me to do him a favor. He said he could pay me some money--

TANYA

What?!

ALBERT

Look, he just-- It's not even really anything. And then, you know, I thought we could all go to prom then. We could do it right. Get a limo and everything.

(looking at TANYA)

Maybe even get a hotel room for after...

A moment. TANYA stands up.

TANYA

(cold)

Yeah, I gotta go.

ALBERT

T, wait! I know what you're thinking. But he's not asking me to-- you know-- It's safe. It's fine. I just gotta go with some guys to meet some people. Just once. I just thought just this once--

TANYA

You thought what, Albert? That I would be ok with any shit having to do with Sugar? Man is bad news.

(upset)

You know I've been working. I been tryin'. I gotta keep my grades up if I wanna graduate. I gotta stay in J-rot if I want money to go to school. I'm not the same old Tanya. I may be able to do something if I stay focused. And you knew this change was comin'. You were supposed to change too, you know. Sarge says--

ALBERT

"Sarge, says. Sarge, says!" I am so sick of that. I don't give a fuck what Sarge says. You're thinkin' you're all that now, with a uniform, and a code, and I gotta be here and I gotta do this. You ain't nothin'. You're just a

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ALBERT (cont'd)
sucker. My cousin says you're just headed to a body bag in Iraq. A nothing.

TANYA
(tears in her eyes)
I have changed. And so have you Albert. You're just mean now. You're just cold. I'm nothin'? Fuck you. At least I'd die doing something! You'll just die here, and probably cuz you done Sugar a favor!

Tanya leaves. A moment.

ALBERT
Dammit.

JACKSON
(after a beat)
Man, you had to know she would be like that. She hates Sugar. Especially after what his brother did to her.

JACKSON notices some trash on the ground and picks it up. It is a flyer. HE looks at it, keeps it in HIS hands.

ALBERT
Man, I know. I just thought maybe I could just do it and get some money to do something nice. Have a little style for once. Shit, why'd I have to go say all that.

JACKSON
You could have a little style in this uniform--

ALBERT
Fuck, J, I don't want to hear about your stupid uniform again.

JACKSON
Man. I just thought. I mean.
(pause)
We've just always done everything together, man. You, and me, and T. And she's right, we were supposed to do this together. I don't get it man, where were you on the first day? You just disappeared.

ALBERT
I was no where. It was nothing. I just decided that whole thing wasn't for me.

JACKSON
But we had all decided. Stickin' together, remember.
(looking at the flyer.)
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