

ABBOTT ELEMENTARY

"TOKEN ECONOMY"

Written by

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INT. JANINE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Janine is mid-lesson sitting at the front of her 2nd grade class holding the book *IF YOU GIVE A MOUSE A COOKIE*.

JANINE
Can anyone tell me something about
the book we just read.

A student, EVAN, raises his hand. Janine nods at him.

EVAN
(shaking his head)
Never give a mouse a cookie.

JANINE
Great observation Evan! And a
cautionary one at that?

Janine hands Evan a JANINE BUCK, a dollar bill like paper.

Evan accepts that Janine buck enthusiastically. He notices the spot for the president is replaced with Janine giving a thumbs up.

EVAN
(awkwardly)
Thanks.

JANINE TALKING HEAD

JANINE
It's a fresh school year and I know
it can be kind of tough to find
that enthusiasm to get back into
learning.

ANGLE ON: B-roll of kids bored in other classrooms. A kid picks his nose.

JANINE (CONT'D)
That's why this year I'm starting
to hand out these bad boys.

Janine flashes the camera a Janine buck.

JANINE (CONT'D)
The kids get these for engaging
with the class and getting involved
with the material.

INT. JANINE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Two students, EMILY & OLIVER, compare two sets of numbers on the white board. 868 _ 887 and 432 _ 432

Oliver fills out the less than sign < to the first equation on the board. Janine hands him a Janine buck.

JANINE
Great job Oliver!

Emily draws a cat on the next equation.

JANINE (CONT'D)
Thanks for always coming up Emily.

Janine hesitantly hands Emily a Janine buck.

JANINE TALKING HEAD

She makes sure to hold up the bill right to the camera.

JANINE (CONT'D)
Can you... can you see that it's
me?

CLOSE UP: Janine's printed face on the Janine buck.

JANINE (CONT'D)
Fingers crossed this won't be the
last time you see a black woman on
American currency.

INT. JANINE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Janine stands by a wall displaying signs of the different things students can exchange Janine bucks for. Candy, small toys, lunch with the teacher, and an ice cream party.

JANINE
I wanted to offer things any kid
would want during a school day.

She holds up a half empty jar of sour straws.

JANINE (CONT'D)
Candy is usually the best seller
although my personal favorite is
lunch with the teacher.

- Shot of Janine eating lunch in her classroom all by herself. She brightens up at the sound of incoming students. They run past her classroom.

JANINE (CONT'D)

Arguably the most coveted prize is the ice cream party but that one won't come as easy. Each student needs 5 Janine bucks in order for the class to redeem it. Can't make it too easy. That's real money out of my pockets.

INT. JANINE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Emily stands by Janine's desk.

EMILY

I'd like to buy some candy please.

Janine pulls out the candy jar.

JANINE

You know Emily if you save up your money you could trade them in for that ice cream party. Or you could have lunch in here with me. Doesn't that sound fun I have all these games like Uno and Jenga.

EMILY

Don't make this weird lady.

Emily grabs the candy, leaves the Janine buck on the desk, and exits.

END COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

BARBARA sits at table by herself. She appears unwell as she sips her tea.

BARBARA

You're okay Barbara. Just relax,
enjoy the peace, and earl grey.

MELISSA enters on the phone.

MELISSA

(on phone)

No, you listen to me Mario! If that
pig can't find me truffles then
maybe it'll serve me better as a
porchetta.

BARBARA

Or just the earl grey will do.

MELISSA

(on phone)

Then why did you even get the
damn...

Melissa notices the camera pointed at her.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

(on phone)

I'll call you back.

MELISSA TALKING HEAD

MELISSA (CONT'D)

One of these days that camera is
going to get you in a hell of a lot
of trouble.

AS WE WERE

Melissa hangs up the phone and takes a seat next to Barbara.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Jesus Christ, what the hell
happened to you? You look worse
than my cousin Joey getting his
stomach ready for a colonoscopy.

BARBARA
I'm fine but thank you very much
for the flattering remark.

MELISSA
You definitely don't look fine to
me.

GREGORY enters the room and Jacob quickly follows after.

GREGORY
Jacob there are like eight teachers
at this school. It was bound to
happen sometime.

JACOB
I know but what are the odds that
we parked right next to each other
again!

BARBARA
People please, the school day has
just begun. Have we really
forgotten about our indoor voices?

GREGORY
What's going on with her?

JACOB
(to Barbara)
You don't look so good?

MELISSA
She's clearly coming down with
something but thinks ignoring it
will make it just go away.

Barbara rises from her seat and grips her tea cup.

BARBARA
I told you I'm fine. All I wanted
was to enjoy this tea with some
tranquility.

Janine enters the room very excited.

JANINE
You guys, great news!

BARBARA
Good lord.

Barbara dumps her tea in the sink and rubs her temples.

JANINE

Jeez.

MELISSA

Don't take it personal. She's on one with everyone today.

JACOB

From the looks of it, I'd say she's caught a fever or something.

JANINE

Shouldn't you take the day off? I mean what if your contagious?

BARBARA

I don't have a fever!

Suddenly, AVA enters the room. She appears especially dressed up.

AVA

Who has a fever?

Ava notices Barbara and covers up her face immediately.

AVA (CONT'D)

Oh no girl, you need to go. I got plans tonight and I can't have you spreading what ever you got up and down these halls.

(to the camera)

You know, for the children.

Ava gestures her hands in the air pushing Barbara towards the door.

BARBARA

But what about my class? Who's going to watch over them if I leave now.

AVA

If you don't get on out of here then you won't have a class to worry about.

Barbara stands outside the doorway.

BARBARA

But...

Ava shuts the door and turns to the others.

AVA
Eeny meeny miny moe you two.

Ava points at Gregory and Jacob.

AVA (CONT'D)
You'll be helping me out with those
kindergartners. Follow me.

JACOB
Woohoo! Parking buddies to the
rescue.

Jacob goes for a high five. Gregory leaves him hanging.

GREGORY
Don't ever call us that again.

Ava, Gregory, and Jacob exit.

JANINE
Wait but I didn't get to share my
good news.

MELISSA
I'll hear you out kid.

JANINE
Okay, so you remember how I told
you guys I wanted to set up a token
economy this year. Well I got it up
and running and the kids seem to
really enjoy...

Melissa's phone RINGS.

MELISSA
Hold that thought.
(answers phone)
Mario, I call you. You don't call
me. Capish.

Melissa exits on the phone.

INT. ABBOTT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Gregory and Jacob stand outside Barbara's classroom door.
They watch the kids from the hallway. KINDERGARTENERS sit on
a rainbow rug while playing with toys.

GREGORY

Look at them in there. Who even knows what they are even thinking about.

JACOB

C'mon it'll be much fun. When was the last time you got to teach about the easy stuff like shapes and colors.

GREGORY

It's not the teaching part I'm worried about. I just don't know how to talk to kids that young.

GREGORY TALKING HEAD

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Little kids can just be such a tough crowd. Like what are we even supposed to say to them?

(in a silly voice)

Hiya kids, it's me Mr. Eddie!

Gregory shakes his head.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

I'm a grown ass man. It's weird to be making voices like that.

AS WE WERE

JACOB

I'm up first so I'll let you know how it goes.

We stay with Gregory in the hall as Jacob enters the classroom. We hear him address the class from outside.

JACOB (CONT'D)

(in a silly voice)

Hiya kids, it's me Mr. Hill!

Gregory cringes. Barbara is seen peaking from a far in the hallway. She hides just as the camera catches her.

BARBARA TALKING HEAD

BARBARA

Those little kindergartners are the most well behaved group of children I have ever created.

(MORE)

BARBARA (CONT'D)

The fragility of that structure is about to be manhandled by a couple of bozo's. I don't think so.

We stay on Barbara's talking head.

AVA (O.S.)

Girl, are you still here?

Barbara runs off.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAYS - DAY

Janine walks passed Gregory's as he is mid-lesson. He halts the class and calls out to her by the door.

GREGORY

What's the good news?

She hurries back.

JANINE

My Janine Bucks are in.

GREGORY

Janine what's?

JANINE

My token economy? I told you guys about it like all last week.

GREGORY TALKING HEAD

GREGORY

The break-room is intended to be a place to take a break. Respectfully it's in the name.

AS WE WERE

Janine hands Gregory a Janine Buck.

JANINE

You can keep it to. Plenty more where that came from.

GREGORY

So what's the idea? You give kids fake money and wait til they reach the bank or...

JANINE

I give kids in classroom currency
for good behavior and they can buy
stuff like candy, a party, and
lunch in my classroom.

GREGORY

(excitedly)
With Jenga! That's a pretty tight
set up.

JANINE

Right! I just don't think it hits
the same nowadays.

GREGORY

That's a damn shame.

JANINE

Anyways I better get to class.
Thinking on making it rain.

Janine tosses some Janine Bucks in the air and walks off just
as Mr. Johnson, school janitor turns the corner.

She quickly turns around to pick up the mess.

JANINE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. JANINE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Janine wraps up a money counting lesson.

JANINE

Now before everyone rushes off can
I get some ways we can make a
dollar?

EVAN

A hundred pennies!

OLIVER

Four quarters!

EMILY

Going to work!

JANINE

All acceptable answers!

She hands out Janine Bucks just as the recess bell RINGS.

JANINE (CONT'D)

Alright guys great work! When we
come back we'll spend some time on
telling time.

The class remains seated as Oliver raises his hand.

OLIVER

Ms. Teagues we want to buy our ice
cream party?

JANINE

Oh? Does everybody have enough...

The entire class raises up their Janine Bucks. Each student
has more than enough. Janine remains perplexed.

JANINE TALKING HEAD

JANINE (CONT'D)

When I offered up the party, I
didn't think it would come so soon.
I admit I may have gone a tiny bit
overboard with handing these out.

- Shot of Janine throwing a handful of Janine Bucks in the
air while the kids catch them.

JANINE (CONT'D)

But hey guess that just means my
kids stay being the best and that
makes me proud.

AS WE WERE

The kids line up to hand Janine their money. Emily is last in
line.

EMILY

Just so you know.

Emily hands Janine a few extra bucks.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Pilctahio is my favorite.

She winks at Janine.

JANINE

I'll be sure to keep that in mind
Emily.

(to class)

I am so happy with you all. I'll
get everything set up before the
end of the school day.

The kids rush out to recess.

JANINE (CONT'D)

You've all earned it!

INT. BARBARA'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Kindergartners sit at tables while Jacob leads them through a
finger painting project.

JACOB

Now children we mustn't be afraid
of just letting it all out. Just
look at this.

He grabs a little girls paper and holds up a finger painting
of a flower.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Feel the passion in those petals.

The children sit quietly as they paint, unamused by Jacob's
enthusiasm.

Barbara knocks on the door and opens it.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Barbara?

She shushes him and reaches around her purse.

JACOB (CONT'D)

(quieter)

What are you doing here?

BARBARA

I think I left my...

She moves towards her desks and drops sunglasses from her purse.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Oh! There they are. It would be reckless of me to drive without protecting my eyes.

A student, Claire, raises her hand.

JACOB

Yes, Claire.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Claire.

Barbara mad dogs Jacob for responding.

CLAIRE

There weren't any sunglasses on the desk.

BARBARA

Of course they were because now I have them.

Jacob dogs Barbara.

JACOB

You know you can't be in here.

BARBARA

And you know nothing about being in this classroom. Trying to invoke some sort of artistic revolution.

JACOB

Who are we to tear down the creatives of our future.

(whispers)

Hitler started off as an artist you know.

BARBARA
Shame you weren't around to offer
your words of encouragement.

Two kindergartners, Peter & Tasha, eagerly rush to the desk
to show Barbara their finger paintings.

PETER
Look Mrs. Howard.

TASHA
We drew this for you.

The kids each give show her their drawings.

BARBARA
Wow these are really nice thank...

The classroom door begins to open. Jacob turns to the door
panicked while Barbara tosses the paintings at the kids and
ducks for cover under her desk.

Ava enters the room.

JACOB
Ava I swear I told her to leave
right away but she wouldn't listen
to me.

Ava removes ear buds from her ears.

AVA
Damn, the noise cancelation on
these things are crazy. Your mouth
just kept on moving and Nicki kept
on spittin.

Jacob turns to see Peter and Tasha by the desk but Barbara
has disappeared.

AVA (CONT'D)
Why are those two students not in
their seats.

PETER
Mrs. Howard is here.

JACOB
Mrs. Howard was here, Peter. She
had to go home remember?

TASHA
She's playing hide and seek.

JACOB

(to Ava)

They have a strong attachment with Mrs. Howard, it's best we just play along to help them cope.

Ava smiles at Jacob and removes her ear buds once more.

AVA

Yup, not a single word.

She puts the ear buds back in her ears and leaves the room. Barbara peaks out from under the desk.

JACOB

Is this what you wanted? For me to lie in front of children, teaching them lying?

BARBARA

Don't act as though you didn't confess your innocence when that door opened.

JACOB

It's time to go Barb.

BARBARA

Alright. Alright.

Barbara remains hunched by the desk.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

You mind giving this sweet old lady a hand?

JACOB

Oh, of course!

Jacob helps Barbara up.

BARBARA

(under breath)

Rat.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Melissa sits at the table looking at a regional map and circling all parks and hiking trails in the area.

Janine enters carrying grocery bags filled with ice cream party supplies. Melissa quickly covers up her map with school work.

JANINE

Whoa, what are you trying to hide?

MELISSA

If I answer that makes you an accomplice, do you really want that?

JANINE

Is that a map? Oh my god, Melissa is this... are you planning a hit?

MELISSA

Jesus Janine, what do you think I am.

JANINE

I don't know! You've been acting so shift with these mystery phone calls and now this map with scary red circles all over.

MELISSA

You really want to know?

JANINE

Honestly I'm a little scared now.

Melissa clears off the school works and shows Janine the map.

MELISSA

Truffles.

JANINE

Truffles?

MELISSA TALKING HEAD

MELISSA

My Nonna is throwing a big dinner and word in the family is she is making a truffle sauce. Pretty bold of the old bat when truffle sauce has always been my thing. If this truffle pig connect pulls through, Nonna won't know what hit her.

AS WE WERE

Janine stores the ice cream in the freezer while Melissa continues working on her map.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Since we are all about being nosey,
what's with all the goods?

JANINE

Well if you must know...

MELISSA

I really don't have to.

JANINE

My class has earned themselves an
ice cream party.

MELISSA

An ice cream party? The school year
hasn't even reached the first
quarter yet. How is that even
possible?

INT. JANINE'S CLASSROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Janine hands Melissa the stack of Janine Bucks her class
redeemed. Melissa flips through the bills.

JANINE

I told them that if everyone has 5
Janine Bucks then they could cash
them in for the party.

MELISSA

And everyone cashed in on this?

JANINE

Well yeah, your looking at the
evidence right there.

MELISSA

Actually what I'm looking at is
some pieces of paper with your face
on it and some with Mr. Johnsons.

JANINE

Isn't that so funny! I took a
photoshop class in college and...
Mr. Johnson!?

Melissa holds up two bills, one with Janine's face and the
other with Mr. Johnsons.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - DAY

Gregory opens the fridge to find all of Janine's ice cream.

GREGORY
(disappointed)
Man, I had a frozen pop-tart
somewhere back there.

Jacob enters the teachers lounge covered in paint.

GREGORY (CONT'D)
You really let them kids wild out
on the arts and crafts.

JACOB
Are you kidding? I wish those kids
did this to me. They were so calm
and orderly I questioned if they
were even really children under
those eyes.

GREGORY
Wait, your telling me those kids
didn't get all this mess on you?
Then how...

JACOB
I was trying to get some sort of
reaction and I guess I got a little
too carried away.
(beat)
Anyways hope your ready for a
snooze-fest cause your up.

Jacob paint covered hand goes to tap Gregory's shoulder and
stains his shirt.

GREGORY
I knew. I saw you walk up in here
looking like that and I just knew
it.

JACOB
I am so sorry!

Mr. Johnson enters the room.

MR. JOHNSON
 (to Jacob)
 Watch where you go and what you
 touch. Ain't making none of that
 mess my problem.

JACOB
 Copy.

INT. JANINE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Janine and Melissa count through the counterfeit Janine
 Bucks. They separate the bills into two piles, real and fake.

MELISSA
 They really tired to pull one on ya
 didn't they?

JANINE
 At least half of these are fake.
 This really freaking sucks.

JANINE TALKING HEAD

JANINE (CONT'D)
 Since I started teaching I've
 always wanted to be one of those
 teachers that gives their students
 parties. Especially at a school
 like Abbott. I mean just look
 around.

- Shot of low budget classrooms with minimal decor.

JANINE (CONT'D)
 There is no motivation to succeed
 when everything around you is so
 bare minimum. I guess I just wanted
 to offer more than that.

AS WE WERE

MELISSA
 You aren't as mad as I would
 expect.

JANINE
 Because I'm not even mad. I'm
 disappointed and quite frankly this
 hurts my feelings.

Janine appears to become emotional.

MELISSA
Are you going to cry?

JANINE
No.

Janine frowns.

JANINE (CONT'D)
Okay yeah, I think so.

MELISSA
Janine look. What you need to remember is that this job goes beyond reading a few books and solving some math problems.

JANINE
What am I supposed to do now? I already went and bought all the stupid ice cream.

MELISSA
These kids don't know any better. They just wanted ice cream and figured out a way to get it.
(beat)
I know this wasn't ideal but do what we do best and use this as an opportunity to teach them a valuable life lesson.

Melissa receives a phone call.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
I need to take this but don't forget everything I just said. I'm pretty sure there was something valuable in there.

Melissa answers the phone.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
(on phone)
I'm not going to keep doing this back and forth with you Mario. You either have the freaking pig or you don't.

INT. BARBARA'S CLASSROOM - DAY

The kindergarten class sits around Gregory as he reads *Biscuit Goes to School*.

GREGORY
(monotone)
Biscuit wants a snack. Woof, woof.

A few kids yawn and one of them falls forward, asleep.

GREGORY TALKING HEAD

GREGORY (CONT'D)
Want to know the golden rule to get
through to a a tough crowd?

AS WE WERE

Gregory closes the book.

GREGORY (CONT'D)
Y'all wanna watch a movie?

The kids cheer.

Gregory rises to sets up the projector. As he does so we see Barbara in a head scarf and sunglasses, peaking outside through a window. Greg notices something moving and Barbara ducks into the bushes.

EXT. OUTSIDE BARBARA'S CLASSROOM WINDOW

Barbara hides near some bushes and the window to her class.

BARBARA
Movies over Biscuit? Has the world
fallen to anarchy?

Melissa approaches talking on the phone. Barbara freezes.

MELISSA
You be where you need to be and
I'll be where I need to be, capish?

Melissa sense someone is around.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
Alright. Alright. I gotta go. I'm
not alone.

Melissa turns around and meets Barbara's shocked face from within the bushes.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
Barbara?! What the hell are you
doing in there?

BARBARA

Don't shout at me. The shame is already enough.

MELISSA

Spying on a class of children? The shame may never be enough.

Melissa helps Barbara out the bush and cleans shrubbery from her.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

You know I always figured we'd leave this sort of control freak behavior to Janine. What has gotten into you?

BARBARA

Nothing at all. Why do you ask?

Melissa gives Barbara a look as she pulls a twig and leaf out of her hair.

BARBARA (CONT'D)

Oh alright.

(beat)

I have done plenty in this lifetime. I found a husband, started a family, hell I even danced around Woodstock. Still nothing gives me the pride that teaching does. So when I can't do the thing I love doing most, it's hard for me to let go.

MELISSA

Everyone here knows the dedication you put into those little rug rats and we respect you for it. Believe me I more than anyone...

(beat)

Well actually maybe not as much as Janine, but still. The bottom line is we see all the hard work you put into this and we also see it when you need a break. I mean look at you.

BARBARA

You right. I'm better than this. I'm above being a Janine.

MELISSA TALKING HEAD

MELISSA

What I love most about my job is that everyday is different. Some days I'm just a second grade teacher and other I'm the staff's guidance counselor.

AS WE WERE

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Now, you better get out of here before someone get's the wrong idea. Sneaking around an elementary school not really the best look.

BARBARA

Right. Right.

Barbara adjusts her headscarf and sunglass.

INT. JANINE'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Janine arranges the ice cream party supplies neatly on a table in her classroom.

JANINE TALKING HEAD

JANINE

As devastated as I may feel right now, I know Melissa has a point.

- Shot of Janine's class as they enjoy recess on the playground.

JANINE (CONT'D)

My kids aren't a bunch of selfish little meanies who don't appreciate me.

- Shot of Janine looking over a wall of drawings her student's have given her.

JANINE (CONT'D)

They are good kids with good hearts. They just went about getting what they wanted the wrong way.

(beat)

(MORE)

JANINE (CONT'D)

And now it's up to me show them the right way.

AS WE WERE

Janine's second grade class enters the room oohing and awing the ice cream.

JANINE (CONT'D)

Okay guys settle in please. Quiet coyotes I have an announcement.

The kids sit in there seats and quiet down. Janine takes a deep breath.

JANINE (CONT'D)

I hope you all believe me when I tell you being your teacher is my favorite thing in the world. Everyday I try to think of different ways to make being here a fun time for you guys.

(beat)

I got all this ice cream today because I was so proud of you guys and I wanted to prove that learning can be rewarding.

Janine holds up the fake Mr. Johnson Buck. The children gasp.

JANINE (CONT'D)

But it's unfair to trick me into getting these rewards.

Emily raises her hand.

EMILY

Are you mad?

JANINE

Honestly you guys, I'm just a little bit hurt.

Oliver raises his hand.

OLIVER

Ms. Teagues, I'm sorry.

EVAN

Yeah, we just wanted ice cream. We didn't mean to hurt anybody.

JANINE

Wait Oliver? Evan? I know you guys earned more than enough Janine bucks.

OLIVER

Yeah but let's be real. It would have taken forever for everyone else to catch up.

JANINE

How did you guys even make these?

EVAN

Principle Coleman helped us.

JANINE

Ava?

AVA TALKING HEAD

AVA

What am I supposed to say when kids come asking me for help making fake money, no? Schools are meant to help this kids learn a thing or two.

AS WE WERE

Evan and Oliver rise from their desk and hug Janine.

EVAN

We're sorry Ms. Teagus

OLIVER

Please don't be hurt anymore.

JANINE

Thank you guys for being honest. That actually helps a lot.

JANINE TALKING HEAD

JANINE (CONT'D)

Probably the most important skill in a teacher is being able to be forgiving.

- Shot of Janine's class getting their bowls ready for ice cream.

JANINE (CONT'D)

Kids are going to make mistakes and
being mad at them change anything.
We expect honesty and respect thus
we should be able to give it right
back. It's only human.

AS WE WERE

The entire class raises their ice cream to Janine.

CLASS

Thank you Ms. Teagues!

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. BARBARA'S CLASSROOM - DAY

The kindergarten class sits around Jacob as he reads *Biscuit Goes to School*.

GREGORY TALKING HEAD

GREGORY

In the end, I'm glad someone was
able to give those kids the
performance they wanted.

AS WE WERE

JACOB

(enthusiastically)
Dogs don't go to school!
(like a dog)
Woof! Woof!

The kindergarteners laugh.