

THE QUIET WORLD

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Based on: "The Quiet World" by Jeffrey McDaniel

FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

JEREMY (24) opens his eyes, and glances at the clock on his bedside table. It reads **7:58**. Sunlight seeps in through the curtains, lighting the sparsely decorated room. It is clean and organized, the walls and furniture white and shiny. JEREMY sits up, stretches, yawns accordingly, and places his feet on the white carpeted floor.

INT. DORM ROOM - SAME TIME

ELENA's feet touch down on a tan, tiled floor. ELENA (22) stands. Her room is like any other college dorm room: symmetrical in structure and comfortably messy. A heap of blankets and a comforter are crumpled on ALICE's bed. We hear a groan come from the pile of blankets.

ELENA smiles, crosses over to her roommate's bed and pulls back the covers to reveal ALICE (21).

ELENA

Come on, Alice. You gotta get up.

ALICE scrambles to sit, shushing ELENA. ELENA's eyes widen.

ELENA

Shit!

ELENA clamps her hands over her mouth. ALICE reaches for a marker on the bedside table, scrawling words onto the whiteboard above it. Word by word, we can read the message: **DON'T USE UP YOUR WORDS ON ME**

ELENA presses her lips together, studying the floor.

INT. KITCHENETTE - MOMENTS LATER

JEREMY spoons cereal into his mouth, sitting alone. On his wrist, we see faded blue tally marks. Morning light spills in through the window before him.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

We have maybe a fourth-story view. The city has a certain stillness to it this early in the morning. Layered with buildings and trees, it looks like any other moderately-sized city in New England.

REFLECTED IN THE WINDOW

We see JEREMY, still eating cereal by himself. He gives off strong troubled-artist vibes, with perfectly mussed hair, hipster glasses, ripped jeans, and a hoodie with the sleeves pushed up. He appears calm, coated in the white light of the window.

REFLECTED IN ELENA'S MIRROR - MOMENTS LATER

ELENA applies a nude lipstick, dark hair framing her face.

INT. BATHROOM - CONT.

ELENA leans over the sink, inspecting her lips for any imperfection. She wears a jacket with the NYU logo etched over the heart.

ALICE peers through the open doorway, wearing a backpack. ELENA looks over. ALICE waves a hand goodbye.

ELENA

See ya later.

ALICE immediately shushes her roommate, smiles sympathetically, and nods her goodbye. ALICE opens the door to leave.

INT. RECORD SHOP - MID-MORNING

The glass door closes with a jingle. JEREMY flicks the switch, and the shop saturates with a warm light. He flips the sign on the door from **Closed** to **Open**.

The indie record shop is small but cozy. Wooden cases line the walls, protruding into the room. Hundreds of CDs are organized within, LPs fringing the back wall. A cedar desk sits near the door, holding a cash register and assorted papers.

JEREMY takes his place behind the desk. He slides his navy backpack off his shoulder and sets it on the desk.

INT. LECTURE HALL - MID-MORNING

ELENA's colorful backpack is set onto a desk. ELENA nods politely to the student sitting next to her and takes a seat. She pulls out her laptop and pushes her backpack aside.

The hall mostly filled with sitting students, the PROFESSOR arrives. He writes "Social Mobility (p. 46)" in large letters on the chalkboard. Students rustle papers and textbook pages.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR

Save your questions for the third problem -- that's when it gets hard. You won't want to run out of words before then.

A few students laugh. ELENA smiles.

INT. RECORD SHOP - LATE MORNING

JEREMY smiles, handing a paper bag across the desk. A CUSTOMER takes it, politely returning JEREMY's smile. The CUSTOMER waves goodbye and exits the shop, JEREMY nodding his response.

The shop now empty, JEREMY raps his fingers on the desk. He quickly falls into a skillful rhythm.

INT. LECTURE HALL - LATE MORNING

ELENA allows her hand to fall onto her desk. She stares worriedly at the chalkboard. The PROFESSOR plugs numbers into an equation beneath large matrixes of numbers scrawled across multiple chalkboards.

ELENA

What's the difference between intergenerational and intragenerational mobility?

PROFESSOR

(Nods)

Intragenerational mobility uses the mover-stayer model --

The PROFESSOR continues to move his lips for a moment before realizing no sound is being made. He exhales sharply, turns, and squeezes more letters onto the chalkboard behind him. He begins to write **Intragenerational mobility is**

INT. CAFE - NOONISH

JEREMY's hand points to **Chicken Noodle Soup** on a menu. Twenty-five tally marks are on his wrist in blue pen.

The menu is placed under glass on the counter of an indie cafe. Behind the counter, the BARISTA smiles, hitting a few buttons on her cash register. The small digital screen displays **\$8.36**. JEREMY slides a ten dollar bill across the counter.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NOONISH

ELENA pushes her ticket into a subway turnstile. She makes her way through a sea of people, downstairs, past a sign reading **Broadway Lafayette**. She stands on a platform and waits.

INT. CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

JEREMY sits waiting at a wooden table, holding a mug. His outline is framed by a window, through which it appears to be misting.

ALEC (25) pats JEREMY's back while passing behind him. Dressed remarkably similar to JEREMY, ALEC plops into the seat across from his bandmate, holding a paper coffee cup. Both boys grin at each other.

ALEC
Practice tonight?

JEREMY
You gonna have enough words left?

Beneath the table, JEREMY tallies these words on his wrist with his blue pen.

ALEC
Eh, I don't give a shit. It'll be fine.

EXT. CAFE - CONT.

The cafe is stationed on a street with decent foot traffic, next to a boutique.

Through the window, we see the BARISTA approach JEREMY's table. She places a bowl of soup in front of JEREMY. JEREMY looks at her and nods thankfully.

REFLECTED IN THE SUBWAY WINDOW - SAME TIME

ELENA sits shoulder-to-shoulder in a crowded NYC subway car. WOMAN #1 on her right is reading a magazine. WOMAN #2, next to WOMAN #1, is on her smartphone, holding a designer purse. Other passengers mill about the car.

INT. CAFE - MOMENTS LATER

A silent moment passes between ALEC and JEREMY.

ALEC
Still saving your words?

JEREMY nods.

ALEC
(smiles sympathetically)
How long you gonna keep that up?

JEREMY shrugs.

ALEC
Even before the Quiet Bill passed,
long distance never worked.

JEREMY shrugs again. ALEC smirks, but nods his respect. He raises his coffee cup,

ALEC
I wish you the best, man.

JEREMY taps his mug against ALEC's cup.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - SAME TIME

ELENA's knees knock together uncomfortably in the crowded car.

Across the aisle, we see two people happily conversing using sign language. They flip from sign to sign so quickly, it looks like an art form.

A HOMELESS MAN enters the car through the connecting doors, carrying multiple plastic bags and a tin cup. The other travelers look away. He jingles the coins in his cup, slowly making his way through the car, looking at each passenger, and occasionally muttering for spare change.

A few coins are dropped into his cup.

HOMELESS MAN
Thank you...Thank you, I very much
appreciate --

The HOMELESS MAN's speech halts abruptly. He looks around with an expression of utter terror. Passengers shift uncomfortably. A few other passengers drop coins into his cup.

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN #1 (O.S.)
This is unreal.

WOMAN #1 looks up from her magazine. ELENA looks back at the stranger in surprise.

WOMAN #1
This is crazy, what they're doing,
limiting our words. Such an
arbitrary number, a hundred and
sixty-seven.

ELENA
Careful. You'll use them up.

The WOMAN looks back with despair. She nods, acknowledging the truth to ELENA's words.

WOMAN #2
(still looking at her phone)
He's just faking it anyways. Trying
to get more of our hard earned
cash.

ELENA and WOMAN #1 turn towards WOMAN #2. She doesn't acknowledge their glances.

WOMAN #2
I'm all for the Quiet Bill. How
else would we appease the mutes?

ELENA
(mutters)
And look into each others' eyes
more?

WOMAN #1 laughs.

INT. RECORD SHOP - AFTERNOON

JEREMY stands at his post behind the desk. He mutters to himself, scribbling on a piece of paper with a blue ballpoint pen.

INT. H&M - SAME TIME

ELENA's hands scan two items of clothing and remove the security tags. She puts them in a plastic bag reading **H&M**, and hands it to the customer across the counter.

ELENA
Thank you! And have --

The customer walks away, bag in hand. ELENA clamps her mouth shut.

INT. RECORD SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

A pen moves across a sheet of paper. We can hear JEREMY humming along. We see the words: "C#m - Being away from you"

INT. H&M - SAME TIME

ELENA re-folds sweaters on a display table with ease.

INT. RECORD SHOP - LATE AFTERNOON

JEREMY taps the desk rhythmically with his pencil. The record shop remains empty, the light from the window fading.

INT. H&M - SAME TIME

ELENA unlocks a dressing room for a customer.

INT. RECORD SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

JEREMY rests his head in his hands and exhales.

INT. H&M - SAME TIME

ELENA stands near a dressing room, watching two customers ruin her sweater display by tossing sweaters at each other.

EXT. RECORD SHOP - EVENING

JEREMY locks the store from the outside.

INT. H&M - SAME TIME

ELENA fixes her sweater display. She yawns.

INT. BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

JEREMY's hands reach for a guitar case in the corner of the room.

INT. H&M BREAKROOM - SAME TIME

ELENA eats a microwavable meal in the break room by herself. She skims the textbook propped up before her. A co-worker walks by.

ELENA

Joshua?

(he halts)

Do you know anything about
mathematical sociology?

(CONTINUED)

JOSHUA gives her a look that says "what the fuck do you think?"

ELENA
I can't do this!

JOSHUA
Shhh.

ELENA
I can't! I can't do this! I don't
know how to --

ELENA's mouth hangs open mid-sentence. JOSHUA stands frozen in his tracks, unsure what to do. ELENA curls up into herself, hugging her knees to her chest.

INT. BASEMENT - LATE EVENING

JEREMY, ALEC, and two other guys about the same age sit around a basement, taking a break from practice. All of them are trying to rock the same grungy hipster look to match their grungy hipster music. They pass around a cigarette.

JEREMY casually clutches his guitar across his lap. ALEC lounges behind a microphone. LYSANDER wears his guitar strap as loose as possible, holding his bass guitar at arm's length. ELLIOT leans against the wall behind his drum set.

ALEC
But yeah, it's coming together.

ELLIOT
Yo Lysander, you cool with that ending? I didn't mean to screw you up there.

LYSANDER nods.

ALEC
(to Elliot)
He's out of words.

LYSANDER laughs, shrugging. ALEC and ELLIOT laugh along. JEREMY smiles.

ELLIOT
And you, Jeremy? Still on that "saving words" thing?

JEREMY nods.

(CONTINUED)

ELLIOT
It's been, what, a solid month
since the damn bill passed?

ALEC
(nonchalantly)
Yeahhhh, I was talking to him about
it earlier.

ELLIOT
(to JEREMY)
It's cool, man, but you gotta use
your words for *something*. Like when
I run out of words, it's probably
time for me to shut up,
anyways. How much can you possibly
have to tell her?

JEREMY
Enough.

JEREMY adds a tally mark to his arm.

LYSANDER looks on, acting the "strong and silent"
type. ELLIOT and ALEC exchange glances. ELLIOT mutters a
comment

ELLIOT
No one's worth saving words --

ALEC busts out laughing. ELLIOT joins in, shrugging. In
spite of himself, LYSANDER laughs, too. JEREMY just smiles.

ALEC
Alright, let's roll the song again.

JEREMY plays a chord. ALEC opens his mouth to sing. The song
begins.

SPLIT SCREEN - INT./EXT. FOLLOWING ELENA AND JEREMY - NIGHT

The song continues to play.

ELENA waves goodbye to her co-worker and exits the H&M. She
walks down busy New York sidewalks, enters the subway
station. She moves through the turnstile, down the steps,
onto the platform. She waits. She boards. The fluorescent
lights are blinding.

JEREMY waves goodbye to his bandmates and exits ALEC's
house. He walks down empty sidewalks and crosses empty
streets lined by sleepy houses and apartment buildings. He
enters an apartment building, and climbs four flights of
stairs.

END SPLIT SCREEN - INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The music fades as JEREMY takes a seat at his desk chair. He holds the phone to his ear with his shoulder, using his right hand to count the blue tally marks on his left arm, mouthing the name of each number he counts off. The other end of the phone line stops ringing.

INT. SUBWAY CAR - SAME TIME

ELENA is the only person in a brightly lit subway car. She appears exhausted and slightly disheveled, taking her vibrating phone from her boot. We see that it's JEREMY calling. Unlocking her phone, ELENA holds it up to her ear and waits.

INT. BEDROOM

JEREMY
(proudly)
I only used fifty-nine today. I
saved the rest for you.

INT. SUBWAY CAR

ELENA smiles sadly, opening her mouth, but knowing she can't speak. Tears spill from her eyes. She wipes them from her pale cheeks with a brush of her hand.

INT. BEDROOM

We can hear ELENA's shaky breaths through the phone. With his own sad smile, JEREMY looks at the floor.

JEREMY
(whispers, counting each word
on his fingers)
I love you. I love you. I love you.

INT. SUBWAY CAR

JEREMY
(through the phone)
I love you. I love you. I love you.

ELENA laughs, shaking her head in disbelief of his kindness. As JEREMY continues to repeat these words, she mouths them once in return, smiling.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - CONT.

JEREMY continues to speak. The subway whizzes away to reveal ELENA standing on the platform. We watch her mount the stairs and exit the station onto

EXT. STREETS - CONT.

ELENA walks down brightly-lit sidewalks and crosses the streets that never sleep, still listening to JEREMY. The streets get increasingly more quiet as she reaches

INT. DORM BUILDING - CONT.

ELENA walks into a dorm lobby, exits an elevator, reaches her door. She jingles her keys, puts them in the lock, and enters.

INT. DORM ROOM - CONT.

The room is dark, except for the flickering street light filtering through the window. We can still hear JEREMY on the phone. ELENA smiles, approaching the bedside table and a sleeping ALICE.

ELENA searches the cluttered bedside table and reaches for a dry-erase marker. On the whiteboard, she scribbles, "We are going to be okay." ELENA grins, looking at her words, listening to JEREMY.

FADE OUT.

JEREMY (V.O.)

I love you. I.

We hear two more breaths from both ends of the phone line. We realize that JEREMY is out of words.