

IMPOSTER

Written by

JACQUES MANJARREZ

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - LATE MORNING

Fade in.

A discussion session already in progress. Passionate students and an instructor gather around a central table, engaged in a fervent discussion regarding the reading material.

INSTRUCTOR

Arnold?

STUDENT 1

Yeah, so we've already established that Marx would like anime - we're beyond that, right? My question is, Eliza, my question is: would he LOVE it?

BILLIE JEAN sits at the edge of the table, quite inconspicuously. He's an average-looking college student with a reserved demeanor. He looks slightly frustrated.

STUDENT 2

We're - we're talking about dubs being the opiate of the masses here.

STUDENT 3

I don't think we can rush to that conclusion, if you look at page seventy-eight, paragraph six-

BILLIE JEAN flips through the book in front of him, looking for something to rejoin the conversation with.

STUDENT 4

Goku vs. Bourgeoise colonialism. Obvious outcome for some - but if you actually look at the reading, which-I-did...

BILLIE JEAN's head collapses atop his book while the class remains deeply engaged in the discourse.

STUDENT 1

So would he be the kind of the guy to cosplay for conventions, given that conventions are the ultimate method of inciting the worker to convene under the fascist regime of Sailor Moon? I'd like to read a passage if you don't mind that I think might summarize-

The class continues the discussion inaudibly. BILLIE JEAN's head jerks upward, face tense with a sudden epiphany.

INSTRUCTOR

Billie Jean? Billie Jean? Would you like to contribute to the discussion any thoughts you had regarding the Manifesto reading?

BILLIE JEAN abruptly stands from his seated position. The class is silent. He takes his chair, turns it one-hundred and eighty degrees, and places it against the table. Using it as a step, he climbs atop the table. Class gazing up at him, BILLIE JEAN spreads his arms outwards.

BILLIE JEAN

I AM IGNORANCE INCARNATE! YOUR PETTY WORDS ARE MEANINGLESS, FOR I AM... AN IDIOT!

BILLIE JEAN takes a deep breath before grabbing his bag and bolting out of the room. Once the door closes behind him, the class resumes their discussion.

INSTRUCTOR

I want to turn it back to Maud, because you had a relevant blog post regarding proletariat hentai.

A nearby student, MAUD, slyly places her laptop on the table.

MAUD

I invite you all to turn to page forty.

EXT. LECTURE HALL - SOON AFTER

BILLIE JEAN bursts through the exterior exit of the lecture hall. He runs through the halls and out to the field.

BILLIE JEAN

I'm an idiot. I'm an idiot. I'm an idiot. I'm an idiot.

BILLIE JEAN trips over a male student.

STUDENTS

I say - watch where you're going!

BILLIE JEAN

(shouting back)
I'm an idiot!

EXT. PARK - A FEW HOURS LATER

BILLIE JEAN sits on a park bench, staring into nothingness.

BILLIE JEAN (V.O.)

I feel that I am born anew, that I now see through a pair of fresh eyes. Certainly my old vision, in conjunction with my other senses, offered me a convenient lie. Now with reality having unveiled itself in all its treacherousness, I'm left with one simple question -

BILLIE JEAN

(aloud)

How the hell did I get this far?

JACKIE walks up to the sitting BILLIE JEAN. She's the same age as BILLY JEAN with a more aloof personality. She kicks him softly. His expressions jolts upwards to meet her gaze.

JACKIE

Where else would I find you but the "Wallowing in Angst" bench.

BILLIE JEAN

What are you here for?

JACKIE

Bio midterm.

JACKIE sits adjacent BILLIE. She's texting another friend as they talk.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Just talked to Ellen. She said she and a friend saw you high-tail it out of the reg screaming some inane horseshit. Then she says you Trubisky'd Gregory Weiss which, I don't know if you know, completely wrecks your chances of ever joining the polo club.

BILLIE JEAN

Does he run the polo club?

JACKIE

No, but his older brother heads the ranch down in Burnham which is often frequented by the polo club.

BILLIE JEAN

I don't think I belong here, at this school. I think I'm the admission's mistake.

JACKIE spares a glance to look at BILLIE JEAN, then returning to her phone.

JACKIE

Yeah, could be.

BILLIE JEAN is taken aback by her response.

BILLIE JEAN

Holy shit, lie to me or something!

JACKIE

Look, I don't pretend to know how the system works, okay? Who knows? Maybe when you were admitted, they mixed you up with another Billie Jean.

BILLIE JEAN

Another Billie Jean?

JACKIE

It's not totally inconceivable. Tons of parents are Michael Jackson fans. In fact, I distinctly remember back when I was applying, there was this online chat rooms for prospectives, and they had their own guy, also named Billie Jean.

BILLIE JEAN

B-i-l-l-i-e-

JACKIE

J-e-a-n, yeah. He kind of went dark after he was rejected.

BILLIE JEAN

Are you seriously saying that I might have stolen the admission slot from another kid with my name?

JACKIE

Obviously no. You'd have to be a total idiot to think that the admissions office could mess up that badly.

INT. BILLIE JEAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

BILLIE JEAN leans back ponderously into his chair. A dimly lit laptop sits atop a desk and casts a pale, white light into the otherwise pitch-dark room. A thunder clap is drowned out by the sound of rainfall striking the thin ceiling.

BILLIE JEAN
(under breath)
I don't need it... I don't need
it...

BILLIE JEAN leans forward to meet the laptop, and inputs "Billie Jean" into the search bar. Auto complete suggests "Billie Jean Michael Jackson". He adds "student". An article comes up about an accomplished student also named Billie Jean having received a regional award for academic achievement.

BILLIE JEAN (CONT'D)
(sighing)
Fuck.

Montage of BILLIE JEAN searching his better counterpart's social media. He discovers that he's a millionaire that founded his own start-up at eight and has since donated all his earnings to charities helping starving kids in third-world countries. His instagram is filled with photos of him with presidents, world leaders, and Gandhi. At the bottom of one such page is a link: contact me! Clicking it redirects to a phone number.

A thunderclap in the distance.

Cut to BILLIE JEAN holding a phone to his ear. He anxiously paces as it rings.

BETTER JEAN
(on line)
Hello?

Cut to apartment exterior, a phone is violently flung out of the window of BILLIE JEAN's room. Cut back to BILLIE JEAN's room, BILLIE is standing by the window looking distraught.

INT. ADMISSIONS OFFICES - NEXT DAY

BILLIE JEAN sits anxiously outside the office of the dean of admission, patting his thighs rhythmically. He sees a poster, reading: "trust young minds - they alone will build the future of tomorrow". An ASSISTANT approaches BILLIE JEAN.

ASSISTANT
She's ready for you.

INT. DEAN OF ADMISSION'S OFFICE - SHORTLY AFTER

The DEAN's office is outfitted to look friendly and inviting. Vibrant colors and posters line the walls of the office space. She, the DEAN, sits behind a small desk. BILLIE JEAN sits nervously across from her. They sit in silence for a bit before BILLIE JEAN starts speaking.

BILLIE JEAN

Okay, I'll say it. I think you screwed up. I don't know if it was you specifically, but definitely somebody here bet on the wrong horse.

DEAN

We don't admit equines, last I checked.

BILLIE JEAN

It's an anthology.

DEAN

Anthology?

BILLIE JEAN

Anthropology. Look: It's obvious I'm not fit to stay here. I get these pangs of guilt whenever I think about the multitude of people, leagues more talented than myself, that would be ecstatic to attend classes in my place, so I'll save you the rather late rejection notice and pack my things.

DEAN

You don't think very highly of yourself, do you? Quite a wild coincidence, being a self-deprecating idiot.

BILLIE JEAN looks confused. The DEAN leans forward.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Mr. Jean, we take great care in choosing who we admit here. Simply put, there is no room for administrative error. If you're here now, it's not because of some typo - It's because we see great potential in you as a student.

BILLIE JEAN's expression lights up.

BILLIE JEAN

Really?

DEAN

Absolutely. As I recall, we especially enjoyed your admissions essay. If I can just find it now...

The DEAN walks over to a filing cabinet across the room. BILLIE JEAN's gaze follows her. As she crosses, he notices a poster of Michael Jackson, prominently displayed next to the filing cabinet. His expression sinks as the DEAN riffles through the cabinet. She pulls out a paper and returns to her desk, BILLIE JEAN now looking more depressed than ever.

DEAN (CONT'D)

Here we go. Now you were a shortstop, weren't you? Very interesting...

BILLIE JEAN sighs.

EXT. PARK - A FEW HOURS LATER

BILLIE JEAN sulks through the park.

BILLIE JEAN (V.O.)

Half the world's population is of below average intelligence. "Really?", I used to think, "Exactly half?" (beat) If anything, it's reassuring that I got in. Means there's at least one other idiot to share this world with.

BILLIE JEAN makes his way to the familiar bench, where he finds a large group of students, silent and somber, crowded around it. He joins them. Michael Jackson's Billie Jean plays faintly overhead.

Fade out.

End.