

THE MILLENNIAL MAYOR

by
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TEASER

EXT. CHICAGO RIVER - DAY

The river flows with water taxis, tour boats, and kayaks. Pedestrians walk and cycle along the river front.

EXT. VETERAN'S PARK LEDGES - DAY

WILLA MENGISTU, late 20s, faces the river rehearsing.

WILLA

It's no longer the white man's oppressive force, but our rising up to create a greater good for the next generation.

Behind Willa, a CROWD listens to her every word. Some people sit on the grassy ledges. All are captivated.

WILLA (CONT'D)

We Americans have the right to raise our kids outside of society's stereotypes.

THOMAS ROSS, mid 60's, a retired white executive watches with interest.

WILLA (CONT'D)

We are called to action for our families and communities. Our responsibility...

THOMAS

You're not lazy.

Willa spins around. She is startled by the crowd.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You have what it takes to be mayor.

WILLA

Don't play games with me, white boy.

THOMAS

Stereotype? That's not who you are. I'll train and finance you. You'll be mayor in seven years. If you're interested, I'll be walking along the river.

She watches Thomas walk away. Curious.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. CHICAGO RIVER - DAY

Thomas walks down the sidewalk watching boaters. Willa catches up to him.

WILLA
You don't know me.

THOMAS
Not the first time I've heard you speak.

WILLA
Me not having a place to practice doesn't give you the right to...

THOMAS
Eavesdrop. Maybe not. But you need people to hear your message if you're going to run for mayor.

WILLA
Oh, you're a smart man that knows this.

Thomas stops and extends his hand.

THOMAS
Thomas, my name is Thomas Ross.

Willa stares at him.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
You'll need a campaign and \$80 million to run for office in Chicago. I'll provide both.

WILLA
Ah, old rich guy looking for a project.

THOMAS
Your against stereotypes, remember. Meet me tomorrow morning at 7 a.m. on the steps of the Art Institute.

WILLA
Ya know city folk sleep in Saturdays.

THOMAS
Not the successful.

Thomas walks around a corner. Willa is intrigued.

INT. MENGISTU APARTMENT - NIGHT

The dilapidated one bedroom unit is filled with junkyard furniture and hasn't seen a coat of paint in two decades.

VANESSA MENGISTU, mid 40s, Willa's mom, wears sweats and washes the dishes, while Willa dries.

MIKEY MENGISTU, mid 20s, Willa's brother, a hunky middle linebacker type, slumps on the couch playing video games.

VANESSA

Hm, hm, hmmm. Now baby girl, I still not comfortable with you meeting a white stranger at the crack of dawn.

WILLA

I've gotta do this mama. For me.

MIKEY

You've heard of human trafficking...

WILLA

He's not like that. He's like a brainiac or something.

VANESSA

I need to meet him. Stare in his beady little eyes. He'll fess up the truth.

WILLA

You're toying with me, both of youse.

Vanessa and Mikey laugh. Mikey hops off of the couch and grabs the dish towel from Willa. She is taken aback.

MIKEY

Early meet'n, you've got to get to bed.

VANESSA

Mikey will take ya. Giv'em a once over.

WILLA

Embarrass me, you mean.

VANESSA

Shush, now girl. Your brother's do'n your chores. Go pick out a nice outfit.

Willa hugs Vanessa.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. ART INSTITUTE STEPS - DAY

Willa and Mikey walk up the steps.

THOMAS (O.S.)
You won't need your muscle.

Mikey spots Thomas and walks over to him.

MIKEY
Careful what ya say stalker man.

WILLA
Chill, Mikey.

THOMAS
You'll learn how to turn complex ideas
into simple terms for oration.

MIKEY
She's not giving you any oral.

WILLA
Mikey, go home.

Mikey hesitates, but walks away.

Thomas escorts Willa to the bottom of the steps.

THOMAS
Your first step, get the audience's
attention.

Thomas moves Willa onto the first step.

WILLA
Okay, an attention getting device.

He moves them up another step.

THOMAS
Second, share a problem we all face.

Thomas gestures and Willa move up to the third step.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Share the background to the problem and
how we got there.

Willa steps on the fourth step.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Share your idea or the solution you have
for the problem we face.

They move up to the fifth step.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Tell them the benefits they get when your
idea gets implemented.

Willa nods. She gets it. She hops up to the next step.

WILLA

Tell them what I need from them to turn
the idea into action.

THOMAS

Then you...

WILLA

Summarize my points and challenge them to
take action now.

THOMAS

You're ready for your live practice
session.

WILLA

Wait, what?

Thomas moves down the steps and walks down the sidewalk.
Willa hustles to catch up.

Mikey moves out from behind the lion statue and follows
at a safe distance.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. SOUP KITCHEN - DAY

Chicagoans down on their luck pass by a single row of tables. Several VOLUNTEERS plop meat and vegetables on each plate. Once served, the people sit at round tables in the large room.

Thomas and Willa walk in. Thomas nods to the Volunteer wearing the white apron. The Volunteer waves back.

THOMAS

That's our signal.

WILLA

For what?

THOMAS

You know the steps to build a talk, but you need to learn how to relate to the people. Grab a plate, sit, and listen to the needs of the people. Go.

Mikey slips in the back unnoticed.

TABLE AREA

Six people eat at the old banged up round tables. Willa locks on the conversation, while nibbling her food.

BOB

Then they raised my taxes. I had a fixed income. Nothing left to cut. I was already on food stamps.

WILLA

That's terrible.

SARAH

The same with me, but I got a raise.

WILLA

Why are you still homeless?

SARAH

My drivers license expired and you can't renew it without proving your address.

WILLA

You couldn't use a friend's address?

BOB

The state requires two proofs of address including a utility bill in your name.

WILLA

So you couldn't renew.

SARAH

Nor could I rent without an address, drivers license, and two credit cards.

BOB

My cards were cancelled when I lost my address.

WILLA

What would make you feel better about your situation?

BOB

To be treated with dignity in spite of my circumstances.

Willa looks at Sarah.

SARAH

It sounds silly, but white linen table clothes covering these banged up tables would give me some dignity.

PLATFORM AREA

Thomas waves Willa over. She joins him.

THOMAS

It's time for your inspirational talk. Connect and give them hope.

WILLA

A talk, now? I need to compose...

THOMAS

You know the steps. Craft your talk as you go.

Thomas claps. Everyone turns toward the platform.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen. With us is a woman with your best interest at heart. She wants to make a difference with your help. Please welcome, Willa Mengistu.

The crowd applauds. Willa hesitates, then steps forward.

WILLA

Thank you. I learned that taxes squeezed several of you out of your homes.

Thomas nods his approval.

WILLA (CONT'D)

Which on a fixed income, hurts.

Bob nods his agreement.

WILLA (CONT'D)

Some lost their homes and were blocked from renting a new place. And worse...

Sarah nods.

WILLA (CONT'D)

Some were stripped of their dignity.

Mikey is captivated.

WILLA (CONT'D)

But I have an idea that will restore a little dignity. People will notice.

Thomas looks concerned.

WILLA (CONT'D)

They'll feel compelled to empower you.

Willa receives a standing OVATION.

SARAH

What are you gonna do?

The applause settles. Willa glances at Thomas, with his arms crossed and head shaking.

WILLA

Well, ah, first... I'll bring white linen table cloths.

The crowd APPLAUDS.

WILLA (CONT'D)

You deserve your dignity back!

The crowd shouts and CHEERS!

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

EXT. SOUP KITCHEN - LATER

The Volunteer locks the door and turns to Willa.

VOLUNTEER

Thank you so much. Our tables are 48"
round, so 60" table linens are perfect.

WILLA

Okay.

VOLUNTEER

You are gifted. Everyone believes you.

Thomas steps into the light.

THOMAS

Thank you again for letting Willa speak.

VOLUNTEER

You're welcome. Good night.

The volunteer walks away. Thomas heads the other way.

WILLA

Hey wait. Aren't you gonna give me a
place and time for tomorrow?

Thomas stops and faces Willa.

THOMAS

You made a promise so you'd feel good.
The people aren't there to be used.

WILLA

What you taught, worked. I need you.

THOMAS

You need integrity. Fulfill your
promise, then we'll talk.

Thomas walks away.

WILLA

I don't know how.

Willa is stunned. Mikey joins Willa and walks her home.

END OF TAG