

ERIC

"Back to Fool"

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INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

At Barack Obama High, groups of STUDENTS converse near their lockers.

FEMALE STUDENT 1

Oh my god, here he comes!

FEMALE STUDENT 2

It's Eric!

SFX: RECORD SCRATCH!

Students stop their conversations, and ERIC NELSON, 14, black, waltzes into the room in slow motion, donning a blue tee shirt and light blue jeans under an open white jacket. He stands at 5'3", and a burst of wind follows him and lifts his jacket.

MALE STUDENT 1

How is his jacket blowing? I don't feel any draft in here.

MALE STUDENT 2

It's Eric, man! He's a big deal.

MALE STUDENT 3

Must be. Look how slow he's walking.

Eric advances toward the two female students.

ERIC

How you doin', ladies? Glad y'all could make it to school. Don't mind me.

FEMALE STUDENT 2

Oh, Eric...Eric...

END OF FANTASY.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - SAME

Eric stares at the ceiling until his friend, DENNIS "DIMMEY" ROBERTS, 14, white, who dons a shirt-and-jeans outfit along with Eric, interrupts him.

DIMMEY

Eric! Eric!

ERIC

Huh? What?

DIMMEY

Pay attention!

They both turn their attention to the front where the PRINCIPAL PETERS, black, speaks.

PRINCIPAL PETERS

This concludes Freshman Orientation. See you next Tuesday. Yahoo.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY - LATER

The students exit the school. Eric and Dimmey walk and talk.

ERIC

I can't wait, Dimmey! High school: the apex of our teen years.

DIMMEY

We waited our whole lives for this.

ERIC

The fame, the girls...

SHANA JONES, 16, biracial, wearing a pink shirt and blue jeans, races to Eric's side. At 5'10", she towers over both of the boys.

SHANA

Did you mention me, Babycakes?

ERIC

No, I said, "girls".

SHANA

(laughs)

Very funny. So, you're finally at my school! Now, as an upperclassman, it is my job to protect you. And the best way is to take you to the Packers game. We can ride in my limo.

ERIC

No thanks.

SHANA

Is Sunday a bad day? My dad can have the game rescheduled.

ERIC

Shana, get outta here!

SHANA  
Fine. Later, Babycakes!

She walks away.

ERIC  
(calls out)  
And quit calling me "Babycakes"!

DIMMEY  
Give Shana a break. She just likes you.

ERIC  
Look, when it comes to women, I want  
someone like *that*:

Eric points to a GIRL, 14, black, wearing a red dress,  
laughing with a football player, wearing a letter jacket.

DIMMEY  
Even when she's interested in guys like  
that?

Dimmey points to the football player. The girl leaves the  
football player, then passes Eric and Dimmey.

GIRL  
Hey, Dimmey!

DIMMEY  
'Sup, Berniece?

ERIC  
You know her?

DIMMEY  
We had kindergarten together. You know,  
back when we were kids.

ERIC  
You gotta get me in there!

DIMMEY  
Why you want her? I'm pretty sure she's  
the one who ate all those crayons.

ERIC  
I don't care! She could be Mrs. Eric T.  
Nelson! We'll just have colorful  
children.

He looks upward.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I could see it now. 4.5 kids, a dog, a big house, and we both have full-time jobs.

DIMMEY

Alright, alright! Hold on!

(sighs)

You know, most kids our age just dream about the Jordans that's gonna drop.

ERIC

Oh, I already got 'em. They were the last size 9's, too.

DIMMEY

(gasps)

What?? Son of a---!

ERIC

Hey! You gonna help me or what?

DIMMEY

Hey, Berniece!

Berniece turns back around.

DIMMEY (CONT'D)

This is my friend, Eric.

BERNIECE

Hi!

ERIC

Uh...

BERNIECE

Nice to meet you!

ERIC

Uh...yeah, nice to meet me--I mean, you.

BERNIECE

I gotta go. See ya'll around.

She exits.

DIMMEY

Joe Smooth there.

ERIC

Whatever. I'll find a way to get her attention.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Eric's stepfather, MATT JAMES, 40's, black, opens a letter. He sits at the dining room table.

MATT

Dang. Another rejection letter. Add this to the pile.

He tosses the letter in one of two boxes on the table.

INSERT - FIRST BOX, WHICH READS:

"Job Rejections"

INSERT - SECOND BOX, WHICH READS:

"Book Rejections"

BACK TO SCENE

Matt's wife, RHONDA NELSON-JAMES, 40's, black, approaches the table and looks at the boxes.

RHONDA

Well, look at Mr. Positive here.

MATT

Just keeping things organized, honey.

RHONDA

You're gonna go crazy living like this. Why don't you take the job at my school?

MATT

I'm not trying to be no janitor, Rhonda.

RHONDA

You're the one who said you needed a job.

MATT

Well, yeah! My VA disability money can only take me so far! And I can't even file for bankruptcy!

RHONDA

That's because you filed it using a credit card!

MATT

I thought it would've been fitting for the situation.

RHONDA

Look, just consider taking the janitor job, at least until you get your book published.

She kisses Matt.

RHONDA (CONT'D)

That is to say, if and when you get interviewed and offered the job, consider taking it. Even though we haven't quite had the budget to hire anybody lately.

MATT

You're filling me up with more and more hope, honey.

RHONDA

Just don't give up. See you later.

Eric walks down the stairs. Rhonda exits the house.

ERIC

(calls out)

Have a good day at work, Mom.

He heads towards Matt.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Morning, Matt. How's it coming?

Matt GROANS.

ERIC (CONT'D)

That great, huh? Look, there's nothing wrong with being a janitor. Just don't do it at my school. I'd die.

MATT

It's not that. Writing's all I know. Even before I met your mother. I just gotta break through.

ERIC

So it doesn't seem impossible to you?

MATT

Eric, you'll learn this as you get older,  
but if you have the drive, you'll let  
nothing get in your way. Wake me up at  
noon.

Matt heads upstairs.

ERIC

Have the drive, huh?

INT. NELSON HOUSE - MATT AND RHONDA'S BEDROOM - LATER

Matt lies on his bed. His phone RINGS. He picks it up.

MATT

Hello?

MAN (O.C.)

Hi, is Matthew James there?

MATT

This is him.

MAN (O.C.)

Matt, this is John, the head janitor at  
McCarthy College. Your wife, Rhonda,  
forwarded your info to me.

MATT

(rolls eyes)

She did?

MAN/JOHN (O.C.)

Yep. Are you free today for a little  
talk?

MATT

Sure. I can come down right now. Thank  
you.

JOHN (O.C.)

Great, I'll be waiting for ya.

Both HANG UP the phone.

MATT

Okay, Matt. You're just going to an  
interview. You're not changing your  
career path.

He gets out of bed and heads to the bathroom.



EXT. NELSON HOUSE - LATER

Matt wears a shirt-and-tie outfit and walks out of the house.

MATT

I'm hard-working, I'm dependable, I give 110% -- I love using clichés.

(sighs)

I am the first one to show up for work. I am the last one to leave.

He walks to his parking space, which is empty.

MATT (CONT'D)

I am without a car.

(pause)

Oh, crap!

He runs back inside, grabs papers, and shuffles through them.

MATT (CONT'D)

I'm so stupid! "I'll pay the car note later! I'll pay the car note later!"

He dials on his cell phone.

MATT (CONT'D)

Hello? Yes, Officer. Matthew James. I'd like to report a missing car.

(pause)

Yes, I know this is Milwaukee. You know, that's not a very professional attitude.

(pause)

Again, I know this is Milwaukee! Look, can you help me or not?

(pause)

It was last parked outside my house.

(pause)

Has it been repo-ed, by any chance?

(pause)

No?

(aside)

Who would have my car, then?

EXT. CITY STREETS - SAME

Eric drives Matt's car and looks behind his shoulder. Dimmey is in the passenger seat.

DIMMEY

You really done it this time.

ERIC

Don't worry. All I have to do is pull up near the school bus where Berniece is, leave the car parked during the morning, and then get the car back home during lunch, when I'll wake up Matt!

DIMMEY

But what if Matt wakes up before noon?

ERIC

Not likely. Trust me, this will work. There's Berniece now.

Eric and Dimmey pull up to the school. Berniece stands near the curb with her friends.

ERIC (CONT'D)

What's up, ladies?

BERNIECE

Hey.

DIMMEY

Notice anything different? My guy here drives to school!

BERNIECE

Oh. Cool.

ERIC

(with a stutter)

Hey, Berniece.

BERNIECE

Uh, I said, "Hey."

DIMMEY

Come on, Eric, let's go to class.

Eric and Dimmey exit the car and walk into the building.

ERIC

She said hi to me. Twice!

DIMMEY

Uh huh.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

The school bell RINGS. Eric and Dimmey walk swiftly.

DIMMEY

Why are you in a hurry? I'm sure they'll have enough mock chicken legs left.

ERIC

No, don't you remember? I have one hour to get the car home and then get back here!

They exit outside to where they parked the car earlier. Instead, there is an empty space.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Uh, where the heck is it?

DIMMEY

Probably wherever vehicles that aren't school buses are.

He points to a sign.

INSERT - THE SIGN, WHICH READS:

"No Parking, Tow Away Zone"

BACK TO SCENE

ERIC

Well, that's not good.

DIMMEY

Come on, we gotta find out where Matt's car is!

ERIC

All right, let's go!

They begin to run, until Eric stops.

SFX: CAR BRAKES sound!

ERIC (CONT'D)

Oh, man!!

DIMMEY

Now what?

ERIC

Mock Chicken Leg Day was today??

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Matt speaks on the phone.

MATT

So you didn't take the car back to college with you?

(pause)

Okay, son, just making sure.

(pause)

Thanks, Billy. Bye.

He puts the phone down. BONY, the family dog, SCRATCHES the front door and MOANS.

MATT (CONT'D)

Alright, Bony, here I come!

MATT (CONT'D)

See, that's what you get for eating that taco off the floor!

Bony runs outside. Matt closes the door.

BONY

Yeah, but guess who'll have to clean up that taco?

He stands up, turns his head, and shouts.

BONY (CONT'D)

Okay, everybody, places! Where's Eddie?

The family cat, EDDIE, approaches him.

EDDIE

Right here.

BONY

What about Whiskers and Friskers?

They look around.

EDDIE

"The mice will play," indeed!

WHISKERS and FRISKERS MOUSE waltz in. They both wear fur coats, take them off, and toss them to the side. Whiskers dons a sports jacket. Friskers dons a green bow tie.

WHISKERS

Ain't no playing when it comes to our jobs!

FRISKERS

Yeah, the champs is here!

BONY

Alright, we don't have long, so places!

Bony runs away.

BONY (O.C.) (CONT'D)

And action!

Eddie runs (on all fours) and chases the mice through the backyard. Friskers spins his bow tie around until it operates as a propeller. Whiskers hops on Friskers' tail, and they fly through the air.

The mice land on a tree branch. Eddie runs to the tree and spots them. He DASHES away, then DASHES right back with an ax.

Eddie takes the ax and starts CHOPPING the tree, which then PLOPS down on Eddie. The mice remain on the branch, which stands in mid-air. The mice GIGGLE, then jump off.

The mice run, and Eddie chases after them.

BONY (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Cut!

Eddie and the mice BRAKE with their feet. The mice run in another direction. Matt's friend, and Dimmey's father, TIMMY, 40's, approaches Eddie and pets him.

TIMMY

Hey, Eddie, how ya doin'? Having fun with Bony?

Eddie, acting like a regular cat, rubs against Timmy's leg and PURRS. Timmy goes to the front door and enters the Nelson house.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

Matt, I came right away, what's up?

MATT

My car's missing!

TIMMY

What??

MATT

Yeah, I think somebody stole it!

TIMMY

Wow.

(chuckles)

That somebody might be doing you a favor.

Matt picks him up by the collar and tosses him outside.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

AAARRRGHHH!

He CRASHES into some trash cans.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

I was just trying to cheer you up!

Matt approaches him.

MATT

Less cheering up, more helping me. Come on!

Matt walks away. Timmy gets up, dusts himself off, and follows him.

TIMMY

You're lucky we ain't still in the Navy.  
I outranked your ass.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Eric swiftly walks with Dimmey, who is dressed in an oversized black sweater with a hat covering his eyes.

ERIC

Come on, Dimmey, we gotta get to the police station! They might know where the car is!

DIMMEY

I'm walking as fast as I can! I can't see over this hat!

ERIC

Stop complaining. Luckily, you stole that gear from the math teacher without her noticing.

DIMMEY

(sniffs)

Lucky? I never wanted to be this close to Mrs. Addison!

PRINCIPAL PETERS (O.C.)

Hold it!

Eric and Dimmey stop. Principal Peters approaches them.

PRINCIPAL PETERS (CONT'D)

What do we have here?

ERIC

My adult friend here is picking me up from school early. Here's a note from my dad!

Eric hands a slip to Peters.

PRINCIPAL PETERS

(reads aloud)

"Please excuse Eric Nelson from school early. He has a doctor appointment. Signed, Mr. Nelson." Your father calls himself, "Mr. Nelson"?

ERIC

Hey, he don't know you like that!

PRINCIPAL PETERS

I thought his last name was James. And why does your adult friend look like a boy named Dennis?

Peters snatches the hat off of Dimmey's head.

DIMMEY

Dennis is my twin brother. He was born four years after me.

PRINCIPAL PETERS

Back to class!

The kids run away.

PRINCIPAL PETERS (CONT'D)

And give Mrs. Addison back her clothes!

(sniffs)

And mothballs.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Eric walks in a circle. Shana approaches him.

SHANA

I called all around, Babycakes, but no sign of the car.

ERIC  
Okay, thanks, Shana.

SHANA  
I'm sure your stepfather is an understanding person. You stole his car to impress a girl. He won't kill you.

She nears closer to him.

SHANA (CONT'D)  
If I was your girl, you wouldn't need to impress me.

ERIC  
If you were my girl, I'd kill myself. Now impress me by getting outta here.

SHANA  
(smirks)  
Whatever.

She ruffles Eric's hair and sashays away. Eric resumes walking in a circle. Dimmey approaches him.

DIMMEY  
Any luck?

ERIC  
No.

DIMMEY  
Me neither. What do we do now?

Superhero-type music PLAYS in the background. Eric stares in the distance and smirks.

ERIC  
I might know a guy.

The music STOPS. A LONG PAUSE follows.

DIMMEY  
Are you gonna tell me who it is?

ERIC  
No, I said I might know a guy.

PAUSE.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Yeah, I got nothing.



DIMMEY

Come on, be serious. School's almost over.

ERIC

I know. We need to practice.

DIMMEY

Practice what?

ERIC

(sighs)

My confession to Matt, and your eulogy for me.

INT. POLICE STATION - LATER

Matt and Timmy enter the station. Behind a desk is a holding cell where GRETCHEN "GRETCH" JACKSON, 20's, white, a gruff-looking hoodlum, sits.

GRETCH

Welcome to the police station. I'm filling in for this lazy girl right here.

She points to OFFICER YVETTE TOWNSEND, 40's, black, pudgy, who sleeps at her desk. She mumbles in her sleep.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Fine, Tad, go on and date Henrietta Esser! I don't care!

GRETCH

How can I help you?

MATT

Any luck finding my car yet?

GRETCH

Oh yeah. It's been impounded.

MATT

(sighs)

Great. How much to get it back?

GRETCH

Nothing. It's sitting outside.

MATT

Oh! Thanks!

GRETCH

Yeah, don't say I never did nothin' for ya.

TIMMY

You just robbed my restaurant last week!

MATT

And me!

GRETCH

And I'm saving you from paying me more money! You're welcome!

MATT

(to Timmy)

Let's go.

EXT. POLICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Matt and Timmy look around the building.

MATT

I don't see it. Do you?

TIMMY

I'd know that eyesore if I saw it.

They both look at Matt's car parked on top of a hill. Matt points.

MATT

There it is!

Matt's finger slowly moves to the right.

MATT (CONT'D)

Hey! Come back!

The car rolls down the hill and CRASHES into a bush. Matt and Timmy race to it. Gretch walks past them.

GRETCH

I see you found it.

TIMMY

Gretch, what are you doing out?

GRETCH

Oh, the door was open.

MATT

Hey, how did my car get impounded,  
anyway?

GRETCH

It was illegally parked in front of a  
school!

MATT

What? But I didn't drive to a school!

Timmy's phone RINGS.

TIMMY

Hello?

(pause)

Uh huh. Thanks.

He hangs up.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

That was the principal. Apparently, my  
son tried to get out of school early  
today with one of his friends.

MATT

Did that friend happen to be a 5'3"  
eraser-head named Eric?

TIMMY

Hey, we have more in common than we  
thought, buddy.

Matt GRUNTS.

EXT. NELSON HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Eric walks down the street and approaches his house.

ERIC

Okay, here goes: "Matt, I needed to move  
your car because it was blocking the  
garbage cans."

He shakes his head.

ERIC (CONT'D)

"You wanted a new car, anyway, so I took  
it off your hands!"

He shakes his head.

ERIC (CONT'D)

"Are you sure Mom didn't borrow it?" No, that's ridiculous. He's gonna realize that her car isn't here. Otherwise, it would be right here next to his car.

He stops in his tracks.

SFX: BOING!

ERIC (CONT'D)

Huh? His car is here!

Matt steps outside.

MATT

That's right. Where else would it be?

ERIC

Exactly. Just making sure it's here. No reason why it shouldn't be here. You're here.

MATT

Yeah, I'm here. I couldn't go anywhere else today. We need to talk.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Eric sits on the couch. Matt paces back and forth.

MATT

What's going on in that head of yours? You're not even old enough to drive.

ERIC

(hesitates)

But I drove to school safely. I learned by watching you. You're such a great dad, Matt.

Matt sternly looks at Eric.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I'm sorry I made you miss your interview.

MATT

It's okay. I didn't really want that job anyway. I'm gonna keep trying to get my book published.

Rhonda enters the house.

RHONDA

Matt, what happened? I got that interview set up for you and everything!

ERIC

(stands up)

Mom, don't be mad. There's a perfectly good explanation for it. What had happened was--

MATT

(interrupts)

--I lost track of time. When the guy called, I rolled back over. I set my alarm to wake up, but it was for PM, not AM. Silly me, huh?

RHONDA

Well, don't be too hard on yourself, honey. There'll be other opportunities. Let me put my stuff up.

She goes into her room and SHUTS the door.

ERIC

Well, I learned a lesson today! This whole day felt like a punishment!

MATT

Nice try. We'll discuss your punishment later.

Eric SIGHS and plops back down on the couch. Matt exits to the kitchen. Rhonda returns to the living room.

RHONDA

Your stepfather really loves you to be covering up for you, boy.

ERIC

Uh, how did you know?

RHONDA

A mother knows. I overheard you guys, but a mother still knows.

ERIC

I just don't understand women, Mom.

RHONDA

I know, dear. I've been one all my life, and even I don't understand sometimes.

ERIC

But I tried to impress that girl, and she didn't even notice. And now I get punished by Matt. What a day.

Rhonda hugs him around his shoulders.

RHONDA

Awww. Who said that was your only punishment?

She exits.

ERIC

(sighs)

I really don't understand women.

THE END