

ERIC

"It's the End of the Road As We Know It"

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EXT. NELSON HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

In a continuation from the last episode, ERIC NELSON, 18, black, approaches the front door.

ERIC
I can't wait to tell Mom and Matt the good news!

He opens the door and finds his mother, RHONDA NELSON-JAMES, and stepfather, MATT JAMES, both 40's, sitting on the couch, facing the door.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Mom, Matt!

He looks at the couch and around the living room.

ERIC (CONT'D)
"The Cosby Show"?

MATT
Damn right.

ERIC
Well, I have news that'll cheer ya'll up.

RHONDA
Oh?

ERIC
Yeah! Now get this: I've been lying about going to school!

MATT
Uh huh.

ERIC
And living in the dorm!

RHONDA
Have you been smoking again?

ERIC
I'm high on life, Mom! In fact, all of those things led me to where I am now!

MATT
Are you serious? You've been hopping from house to house for years, with no real job and no education! You graduated early and haven't even taken advantage of that! How could you just piss everything away like that?

ERIC

I tried college, Matt, and it didn't work out! They kicked me out!

RHONDA

No they didn't, Eric! I checked with the board. You were only on academic probation! Meaning that you could've raised your grades this semester and gotten off of it! And you could've stayed in your dorm!

ERIC

Dang. It sure makes sneaking around less exciting. So wait, I was never kicked out of school?

RHONDA

Not then, anyway. Who knows about now.

MATT

Wait a minute, now, guys, Eric can still enroll for the upcoming semester.

ERIC

Yeah, but I don't wanna do that yet.

MATT

Oh god, what harebrained idea do you have now?

ERIC

Going to Illinois for a few months!

MATT

What the heck's down there?

ERIC

Training. Matt, I wanna join the Navy!

RHONDA

The Navy? Come on--

MATT

Wait, hold on!

He rises up.

MATT (CONT'D)

Eric, are you serious?

ERIC

Yeah, I gave it a lot of thought. I already know how to swim, I'll have a steady job, and I already know how boot camp is!

RHONDA

You do?

MATT

How?

ERIC

(sighs)

Remember, from the first season?

PARENTS

Oh yeah.

RHONDA

But what about Berniece? And school?

ERIC

We talked about it, Mom. We can get married right before I go to boot camp! And I can go to school online after that!

RHONDA

But I never heard you talk about this before! Are you sure you're not jumping into another...

MATT

Aw, shut up, Rhonda!

He hugs Eric.

MATT (CONT'D)

My boy is following in my footsteps!

RHONDA

I guess you got it all figured out then, son. As long as nobody in particular has influenced you.

ERIC

No, Mom, it's all me. But Matt is my dad. If he can do it, I can do it.

RHONDA

Okay then.

She hugs Eric.

MATT

Yeah, yeah!

He snatches Eric away.

MATT (CONT'D)

Now did you already enlist?

ERIC

Not yet, but...

MATT

Cool! The recruiting station's open right now! Let's go!

ERIC

Matt, that's alright. I was gonna go later today. Besides, I gotta make Berniece's graduation!

MATT

You'll have time to make it! I promise!

RHONDA

Let him take you, son. He's been waiting years for this.

ERIC

Fine. I'm gonna get my wallet out of my car.

Eric walks outside and to his car, which is parked on the side of the house. He goes in and out of it.

ERIC (CONT'D)

I'm finally gonna do it! I'm finally gonna make it!

He walks away from his car and onto the driveway, where Matt's car sits.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

RHONDA

I can't believe this is happening.

MATT

Yeah, our boys are finally growing up. But most importantly, I won!!

He ZOOMS upstairs. Rhonda frowns. Matt ZOOMS back down.

RHONDA
You're already ready?

MATT
All I had to do was fix my hair!

He KISSES her on the cheek, ZOOMS outside, and into his car.

MATT (CONT'D)
This is the happiest day of my life! Even better than marrying Rhonda! I can't wait!

He puts the car in reverse.

SFX: Loud THUMP!

Matt's car shakes. He brakes.

MATT (CONT'D)
Please tell me that was one of our pets.

EXT. RUNWAY - DAY

A jet lands on the runway. Exiting from the jet is a tall, heavy-set, white woman nicknamed "SACCHARINE". She wears a white fur coat and a white cowboy hat. She walks down the steps, as her assistants hand her a briefcase.

INT. PRISON - MOMENTS LATER

Saccharine hovers over a table, where prisoner GRETCHEN "GRETCH" JACKSON, white, sits.

GRETCH
So you're "Saccharine"? I heard about you.

SACCHARINE
Those were all rumors.

GRETCH
Who's complaining? That makes the deal sweeter!

SACCHARINE
Gretchen, I remember watching you and your brother in those talent shows. Ya'll can move like no other. And at Halfway House Records, we need backup dancers for our rappers.

GRETCH

(scoffs)

You mean "Fresh Bread", "Cold Soda", and "Frozen Pizza"? Those clowns couldn't even wrap a Christmas gift.

SACCHARINE

But with the right beat and music video, they'll sell lots of records! And remember, if you do this for me, I'll pay for you to get outta here!

GRETCH

So I'll get a house, money, all of that?

SACCHARINE

Whatever you want.

GRETCH

Can you take care of my in-laws' problems, too? Some thugs are trying to screw them out of their finances!

SACCHARINE

Please! I know a thing or two about that myself!

GRETCH

Alright, it's a deal!

They shake hands.

GRETCH (CONT'D)

I like what you guys are doing, anyway. Especially the way you manhandled that other rapper, "Neapolitan Sherbet".

SACCHARINE

I don't know what you're talking about.

EXT. BUILDING - DAY - FLASHBACK

Saccharine holds the legs of an unseen person out of a window.

SACCHARINE

Now once again, when are my days off?

The unseen person is a white female rapper nicknamed, "NEAPOLITAN SHERBET".

NEAPOLITAN SHERBET

Whenever you want, "Sacch"!

SACCHARINE

That's what I thought!

She lets go of her legs. It is revealed that the window is only a few inches from the ground. Neapolitan Sherbet falls to the ground.

NEAPOLITAN SHERBET

You know I hate being upside down!

SACCHARINE (O.C.)

Shut up!

END OF FLASHBACK

INT. TIMMY'S PLACE - LATER

Eric's brother, BILLY, 20's, sits at the bar, drinking a beer. His father, JUNIOR, 40's, approaches him.

JUNIOR

Hey, son, I heard you finally proposed to that girl.

BILLY

I did.

JUNIOR

Now I need you to rub some of that big "B" energy off onto me.

BILLY

No.

JUNIOR

Come on, son, I need your help in getting Cassie back. You're partly responsible, anyways!

BILLY

Dad, you're killin' my buzz.

JUNIOR

Fine, I'll buy you another drink.

BILLY

You can't just bribe me with drinks.

JUNIOR

Top shelf.

BILLY

Sit down.

Junior sits next to him.

BILLY (CONT'D)

If you learned anything about women, what is it?

JUNIOR

Is that a trick question?

BILLY

Fair enough. Women don't like being lied to.

JUNIOR

(sighs)

I wish I could just find another woman, but I don't want to. I want Cassie back.

BILLY

Then be honest with her. Tell her that right now. She's coming downstairs.

JUNIOR

What?

They both turn to the staircase that leads to the residence of the restaurant owner, TIMMY ROBERTS, 40's, white. Timmy follows CASSIE, 40's, black, down the stairs.

CASSIE

(to Timmy)

Thanks, baby.

She touches his shoulder. Junior jumps out of his seat and marches to them.

JUNIOR

Timmy! How could you?!

GINA RICHARDS, 20's, black, sits at her booth and watches them from afar.

GINA

I told Timmy to stop serving that liquid beef!

TIMMY

(to Junior and Cassie)

Uh, I gotta get to Dimmey's graduation!

Timmy exits.

CASSIE
Junior, what's your problem?

JUNIOR
You messin' around with Timmy, that's what!

CASSIE
He took me upstairs to use his bathroom!
The women's one is closed!

JUNIOR
Oh. I knew that.

CASSIE
You mean you know how it feels.

JUNIOR
But Cassie, I didn't do anything!

CASSIE
Neither did I!

JUNIOR
Okay. But now that I got you here, I really need to tell you something.

WADE, 40's, black, approaches them.

WADE
Hey, babe, ready to go?

CASSIE
Yeah.

They kiss on the lips.

CASSIE (CONT'D)
Maybe some other time, Junior.

She and Wade exit. Junior stands there with his mouth open. Gina approaches him and gives him a card.

GINA
If you can't close your mouth, use my lawyer. He's well-versed in the Timmy laws.

She exits.

JUNIOR
Just great.

Billy approaches him.

BILLY

Want even more great news, Dad? Look at your texts.

Both of them look at their phones.

JUNIOR

It's from your mother.

(reads)

"Junior, my husband might have killed our son"??

EXT. NELSON HOUSE - LATER

Rhonda and Matt circle around Eric, who lies on the ground unconscious.

MATT

Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god!

RHONDA

How did this happen, anyway?

MATT

I don't know!

Billy and Junior race to them.

BILLY

He's not moving!

MATT

Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god!

Billy puts his hand on Eric's chest.

BILLY

He's still alive!

JUNIOR

(to Rhonda)

The man you left me for ran over our son? I could've done that!

RHONDA

You left me, blockhead!

JUNIOR

Still wrapped up in that, huh?

BILLY

Guys! We gotta get him to the hospital!

RHONDA

Let me get my purse!

She exits.

MATT

Oh, I ain't never messed up like this before!

JUNIOR

Well, congratulations, Matt. You're finally a Nelson.

Billy nods in agreement.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME

An ANNOUNCER speaks.

ANNOUNCER (O.C.)

And now, ladies and gentlemen, for the final time, put your hands together for Whiskers Mouse!

WHISKERS MOUSE runs to the center of the living room and waves. The studio audience APPLAUDS.

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

Friskers Mouse!

FRISKERS MOUSE flies with his bowtie as a propeller and lands next to Whiskers. The audience APPLAUDS.

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

Eddie the Cat!

EDDIE THE CAT runs and stands in line with the mice. The audience APPLAUDS.

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

And the director, Bony Dog!

BONY DOG walks to them. The audience APPLAUDS. All four of them take a bow. Whiskers hands Eddie a bouquet of flowers. Eddie sniffs them. A large BUMBLE BEE emerges out of it.

EDDIE

AARRRGGHHH!!!

SFX: The bumble bee BUZZES!

The bumble bee chases him back and forth. The mice and Bony LAUGH, as does the audience.

WHISKERS

We still got it!

ANNOUNCER (O.C.)

With special guest, B.B.!

The bee and Eddie stop running. The bee takes a bow.

BONY

Four great seasons! Thanks, everybody!

EDDIE

Yeah!

FRISKERS

Hey, who's watching the door?

WHISKERS

Uh oh.

EXT. NELSON HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - SAME

Rhonda opens the front door and walks inside.

RHONDA

(gasps)

What the...?

INT. ELEANOR'S DORM ROOM - DAY

ELEANOR DUMBECK, 19, white, stands in the bathroom. She looks at a pregnancy test and puts it on the sink. She looks in the mirror.

ELEANOR

(sighs)

Okay, Eleanor. Let's do this.

(to herself)

Do what?

(replies)

Talk to the guys, silly!

(to herself)

Do you always talk to yourself when you're nervous?

(replies)

No, sometimes I pretend I'm Wonder Woman. It makes it easier.

(MORE)

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(to herself)

You're stalling, "Wonder Woman". Let's go.

She enters the room where her BOYFRIEND, 19, white; and brother-in-law (and Gretch's brother) JACOB, 20, sit. Next to Jacob is CHAZ TREPUR, black, who sleeps and SNORES.

JACOB

Okay, Eleanor, why do you have me here?

ELEANOR

(sighs)

Here goes. Jacob, Chaz...

(to her boyfriend)

Sweetie...

(to all)

There's no easy way to say this, but...

Her half-sister (and Jacob's wife), SHANA JONES, 20, biracial, runs into the room.

SHANA

Hey, guys! Billy just called! Eric's in the hospital and ain't wakin' up!

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

(in his usual booming voice)

Oh no! My roommate? We must get there!

He, Shana, and Jacob rapidly exit.

ELEANOR

(exhales)

Thank God! Chaz? Get up!

She shakes him.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Hmmph. Why start now?

She exits.

INT. SCHOOL - AUDITORIUM - LATER

Crowds of students wearing caps and gowns gather and CHATTER, including ARNOLD ALLEN and his nerdy friends EZEKIEL and BRADY, all 18, black.

BRADY
 (usual nasal voice)
 Great valedictorian speech, Arnold.

EZEKIEL
 (usual nasal voice)
 Even though I should've delivered it.

ARNOLD
 Thanks, Brady. Just a little somethin' I
 had saved from kindergarten.

ANNETTE ANDERSON, 18, black, who towers over the nerds,
 approaches Arnold.

ANNETTE
 I thought it sucked.

ARNOLD
 Hey, Annette, we graduated! You can't
 bother us no more!

EZEKIEL
 Yeah, that's right!

He stands behind Arnold.

ARNOLD
 Especially since I'm going to UW-Madison!

ANNETTE
 I don't get to say this much, but that's
 where you're wrong. I've been accepted
 there, too!

She grabs Arnold and pulls him close.

ANNETTE (CONT'D)
 (threateningly)
 We gon' have a good time!

ARNOLD
 (dryly)
 Great.

ANNETTE
 Later, geeks!

She exits.

BRADY
 Arnold, you already told us she was going
 there!

ARNOLD

No, you must've made a mistake.

BRADY

Arnold...

ARNOLD

Fine! I applied right after she did!
There's just something about that girl!

EZEKIEL

Please! She would go with me before
either of you!

BRADY

F.O.H.! That's straight cap, bruh!

The other two look at him puzzled.

BRADY (CONT'D)

That's what they say, right?

(pause)

I'm working on it! Anyway, she wouldn't
date nerds like us!

(low voice)

Besides, I asked her, and she said no.

The three CHUCKLE. Annette continues to walk. Her aunt,
BERNIECE WILLIAMS, 18, black, stops her.

BERNIECE

Annette, have you seen Eric?

ANNETTE

No, auntie.

She resumes walking. CONNIE McDOWELL, 18, white,
approaches Berniece.

CONNIE

Where's Eric?

BERNIECE

I'm sure he's around here somewhere.

CONNIE

Well, look who is here.

They point to a tall, black gentleman named RASHAD, 20.

BERNIECE

What's he doin' back here? He graduated
with Shana and them!

CONNIE

Who cares? Girl, he's still fine! And he's coming this way!

BERNIECE

Connie, I'm with Eric. I mean, we're still working things out.

CONNIE

Oh, I get it. A long-distance relationship! And he's really distant from you right now!

BERNIECE

Stop it.

CONNIE

Just talk to him! Do it for all of the girls who are stuck with their stupid boyfriends.

Her boyfriend, and Timmy's son, DENNIS ("DIMMEY"), 18, approaches them.

DIMMEY

What are ya'll talking about?

CONNIE

How cute you are, sweetie!

She pinches his cheeks.

DIMMEY

Uh huh.

Berniece meets Rashad halfway.

BERNIECE

Rashad, what are you doing here?

RASHAD

I was in the area, of course.

BERNIECE

So you just decided to crash our graduation?

RASHAD

(chuckles)

You got me.

BERNIECE

(smirks)

I do?

RASHAD

What?

BERNIECE

(quickly)

What?

RASHAD

I wanted to congratulate you, and seeing if after all your partying is done, would you wanna get something to eat tomorrow.

BERNIECE

That sounds good. Don't worry about Eric. I can pay for him.

RASHAD

Oh. I didn't know you were still with him. I thought he moved away. Sorry.

BERNIECE

But hey, friends can eat, right?

RASHAD

Sure. Just let me know, alright?

He exits. Berniece SIGHS.

SFX: Text CHIMES!

Berniece pulls out her phone, looks at it, and GASPS. She looks up to the heavens.

BERNIECE

Oh, come on! I didn't even make a move on him!

She runs away.

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

Junior and Billy race to the counter, where the CLERK sits.

JUNIOR

Wassup, doc? Is my son dead yet?

CLERK

Uh...

Matt and Rhonda hurry behind them.

MATT

Junior! Billy! What did ya'll find out?

BILLY

We just got here!

CLERK

Are you all here for the same person?

RHONDA

Yes, Eric Thomas Nelson!

JUNIOR

"Thomas"? Are you sure?

RHONDA

Will you be quiet?

JUNIOR

Excuse me for being upset! Matt hit our son!

MATT

I didn't mean to! I was backing out! I didn't even see him!

BILLY

How could you?

The family LAUGHS, then quickly STOPS.

MATT

Let's just wait over here.

CLERK

That would be best. Hmmph! People act more normal at my Chicago office!

MATT

Aw yeah, Chi-town in the house!

He throws up his fingers.

RHONDA

(sighs)

Matt, you're from Kenosha, Wisconsin.

MATT

Well, I lived in Illinois once.

RHONDA

Boot camp don't count!

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - LATER

The family sits in the waiting room with Berniece.

MATT

I can't believe it. If I wasn't so gung-
ho about sending Eric to the Navy, he'd
be fine right now. And heading to the
Navy.

RHONDA

No, it was me continuously nagging him
about college.

JUNIOR

I should've been a better father to him.
(to Billy)
Oh, and to you, too.

BILLY

I kept joking about his height and no sex
appeal.

They look at a WOMAN sitting next to Billy, reading a
magazine.

WOMAN

I'm here for somebody else! What?

BERNIECE

No, you guys, it's my fault. If I didn't
keep pressuring him into taking care of
me, he'd be fine right now.

JUNIOR

I can see that!

The family CLAMORS in agreement. A DOCTOR arrives.

DOCTOR

Mr. and Mrs. Nelson?

RHONDA

Yes?

DOCTOR

I got news for you.

SFX: Suspenseful music PLAYS, then ENDS.

LONG PAUSE.

MATT

Well?

DOCTOR

I was waiting for the right moment.
 (talks to an unseen person)
 Oh, right now?
 (to the family)
 Your son is fine.

Everyone SIGHS in relief.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

He's coming to right now. You guys can see him, but only a few at a time.

JUNIOR

Why don't Rhonda, Matt, and Billy go? We can wait out here.

MATT

Thanks, Junior.

The three of them follow the doctor.

MATT (CONT'D)

(seemingly to the camera)
 We'll be right back!

It appears that he is actually talking to Junior and Berniece.

BERNIECE

Okay.

He continues to exit.

INT. HOSPITAL - ERIC'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Matt, Rhonda, and Billy surround Eric, who lies in bed, wearing a wrap on his head.

ERIC

(moans)
 I can't believe it. What did I ever do to deserve this?

Billy lifts his hand, preparing to speak. Rhonda SLAPS his hand down.

MATT

Eric, I'm very sorry. You know I never meant to hurt you.

ERIC

I know, Matt. In a way, I'm glad you did.
I've been doing some thinking.

BILLY

Well, cut to the chase. You got Dad and
Berniece waiting out there.

ERIC

Really? Dang.

BILLY

Yeah, I know, but Dad insisted on coming
with me.

ERIC

That's not what I meant. Mom, can I talk
to you alone?

RHONDA

Okay. Guys?

Matt exits.

BILLY

I'm glad you're okay, bro.

He fists-bumps with Eric.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Who else would I get for my ring bearer?

Eric sneers at him.

RHONDA

Billy...

BILLY

Just kidding, Mom! He would also be
missing these jokes!

ERIC

(sarcastically)

Oh darn.

Billy catches up with Matt. They enter the waiting room.

JUNIOR

Alright! Eric's saving the best for last!
Pardon me!

He gets up.

BILLY
 (to Matt)
 Eric didn't seem too pleased about
 Berniece being here.

JUNIOR
 (in passing)
 It's just as well. She left a while ago.

MATT
 What?

Billy and Matt look at the empty space where Berniece sat.

INT. HOSPITAL - ERIC'S ROOM - SAME

ERIC
 Mom, I didn't wanna tell Matt this yet,
 but I don't know if I'm gonna do this
 Navy thing after all.

RHONDA
 Really?

ERIC
 Yeah, maybe I'm moving into this a little
 too fast.

RHONDA
 Have you talked with Berniece about this?

ERIC
 That's another thing. I'm not sure if I
 wanna marry her.

RHONDA
 Eric, you just woke up. You're probably
 not thinking straight.

ERIC
 But I spent all my life chasing things.
 When am I gonna just stop and think?

RHONDA
 Apparently, you have time right now.
 Look, whatever you decide, I'm with you.

ERIC
 Really?

RHONDA

Yeah, as long as you're alright, that's all that matters. And I'm sure Matt feels the same way.

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - SAME

Matt and Billy sit and look at their phones. Matt trembles and shoots out of his chair.

MATT

Where's Rhonda?! I'ma kill her!

BILLY

Matt!

He pulls Matt back down.

INT. HOSPITAL - ERIC'S ROOM - SAME

RHONDA

You get some rest, okay?

She kisses him. Junior barges in and slides to the floor.

JUNIOR

(bellows)

Wassup, gimpy??

RHONDA

Or try to.

She looks at Junior and shakes her head.

RHONDA (CONT'D)

(to Junior)

It's a hospital, ass.

She exits. Junior gets up.

JUNIOR

I'm glad you're alive, son.

ERIC

Thanks, Dad. Since I'm stuck in this bed, I guess I have to interact with you, huh?

JUNIOR

Yep.

ERIC

So how's life been treatin' you?

JUNIOR

Well, the one time I don't cheat, I get in trouble for cheating. Now my girl is gone with somebody else. Guess I had it coming, huh?

ERIC

No one deserves to get hurt, Dad. It just happens.

JUNIOR

You would know, son. Lay back down.

He prepares to exit.

ERIC

Dad, that doesn't change the fact that you're a screw-up.

PAUSE.

JUNIOR

So are you, son. So are you.

He slowly exits.

ERIC

What was with that wannabe-heartfelt moment? He really is a screw-up.

He lies back down.

ERIC (CONT'D)

(moans)

Oh, just pull the plug on this whole damn thing!

INT. HOSPITAL - WAITING ROOM - SAME

Rhonda and Matt sit.

RHONDA

You sure you're gonna be okay with Eric's decision?

MATT

Yeah, honey. Like you said, Eric's okay, so that's all that matters.

He looks at his phone.

MATT (CONT'D)

Oh my god! Look at this, honey!

Rhonda looks.

RHONDA

(reads)

"I'm single and horny in Milwaukee. Wanna see me naked?"

MATT

Aw, honey, that's just a pop-up!

Rhonda looks at his waist.

RHONDA

I can see that!

MATT

(mockingly)

Ha ha. Look at this email.

Rhonda GASPS.

RHONDA

Babe, it's from that literary agent! He wants your book!

MATT

Yeah!

They hug.

RHONDA

But which one?

MATT

The only one that I've been working on all this time! Jimmy, that black kid from Wisconsin!

RHONDA

He wants that one??

MATT

I know! I was really phoning it in with that one! But who cares? I'm finally making it! He wants to meet me out in L.A.!

RHONDA

L.A.? Hey, maybe I can accept that job offer at that university! They've been calling me like crazy!

MATT

Yeah! Then I can keep working on my stories!

RHONDA

But what about our house?

MATT

Rhonda, the kids are grown and gonna be gone! We could just sell the house!

RHONDA

Sell the house? But we have so many memories in it!

MATT

Yeah, and what about our friends and fam--
(pause)
How fast can you get packed?

Rhonda CLICKS HER TEETH.

MATT (CONT'D)

I'm kidding. But this is something to think about.

They sit and think.

INT. THA CHARTER - DAY

In a classroom, Jacob stands in front of his class of FEMALE STUDENTS, who dances to music PLAYING. His babies, J.J., J.R., and JENNIFER JACKSON, play in a playpen. Jacob SHUTS the music OFF.

JACOB

No, no! That's not what we rehearsed!

JAKEESHA, black, replies.

JAKEESHA

Come on, Mr. Jackson, we've been practicing for an hour!

JACOB

Fine, you guys need some motivation. Guess I better call John Dumbeck in here!

The students CLAMOR fretfully.

JAKEESHA

Hold on there, we'll get it!

Gretch enters the room.

GRETCH

'Sup, bro?

JACOB

Gretch! What are you doing here? And out?

GRETCH

Got a second for your favorite sister?

JACOB

(sighs)

Girls, take five. Actually, take one.
This won't take long.

(to Gretch)

What is it now?

GRETCH

I'm goin' to New York!

JACOB

Cool, you'll fit in with all of the other muggers there.

GRETCH

You don't get it! I signed with the guys who bailed me out! Halfway House Records!

JACOB

Halfway House Records? But you don't rap!

GRETCH

(smirks)

Neither do those guys over there. But they hired me as a dancer!

JACOB

Really? Dang!

GRETCH

We've only been talking about this since we were kids!

JACOB

I know!

GRETCH

You should come with me! I told Saccharine that I wouldn't sign unless you came!

JACOB

Wait, hold on, Gretch. I got Tha Charter to run. And me and Shana are finally on the good foot.

GRETCH

Doesn't Billy help run this school, too? He can find somebody to help him! And didn't you say that Shana has a deployment coming up?

JACOB

Yeah, but I don't know.

GRETCH

Jacob, it's what you've always dreamed of. Plus you can make sure I stay out of the streets, and instead work with some street people!

Jacob thinks. The babies talk to each other telepathically [*in italics*].

JENNIFER

Oh, man! With our parents gone, what's gonna happen to us?

JAKEESHA

Never mind that, Jennifer. Who's gonna teach our class?

Jennifer *GASPS*.

J.J.

(to Jakeesha)

You can hear us??

JAKEESHA

What can I say? I'm young at heart.

J.R.

So you know what I'm thinking, too?

JAKEESHA

Yeah, J.R., and you lucky you're just a baby!

J.R. *GULPS*.

INT. HOSPITAL - ERIC'S ROOM - LATER

Dimmey sits near Eric, who is in his bed.

ERIC

Sorry I couldn't make your graduation ceremony, Dimmey. Me getting run over kinda threw a wrench in everything.

DIMMEY

Hey, as long as you're okay, nothing else matters!

ERIC

Cool, man. You know you've been with me since day one?

DIMMEY

Yep! And I'll be with you even longer if I don't get accepted to Connie's school.

ERIC

What college is she going to?

DIMMEY

Only the top HBCU in the country! She wanted to feel more at home with her people.

ERIC

(rolls his eyes)

Uh huh.

DIMMEY

But if I don't get in, we're breaking up.

ERIC

(rolls his eyes)

Again, uh huh.

DIMMEY

No, really! I can't deal with a long-distance relationship! I got the letter right here!

He pulls out an envelope and begins opening it.

DIMMEY (CONT'D)

If I did get in, I'll work things out with Connie. If not, I'll go to school in town here.

He reads the letter.

DIMMEY (CONT'D)

Oh no! I gotta go!

ERIC

Alright.

Dimmey hurries to the door, then turns to the camera, breaking the "fourth wall".

DIMMEY

We'll be right back!

ERIC

(to Dimmey)

Hey, stop that!

EXT. WADE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Junior stands on the doorstep. Cassie opens the door and steps outside with him.

CASSIE

Junior, what are you doing here?

JUNIOR

I admit it. I've been following you and your guy friend around all day. Even ran a red light for you. And got a ticket. Then sped up to catch up with ya'll. And got another ticket. Court is next Tuesday.

CASSIE

Look, Junior, I haven't told you everything. Wade is kinda my ex-husband.

JUNIOR

That's all? You should've told me! I have plenty of exes! We can work it out! We can work through anything!

CASSIE

Actually, he's still my husband. We've been separated for years and never made it official.

JUNIOR

Oh. That'll do it.

CASSIE

I'm sorry.

JUNIOR

"I'm sorry"?

CASSIE

I know you're upset, Junior.

JUNIOR

Actually, I just never heard those words said to me. So you're here to get back with him?

CASSIE

Well, we do have kids together.

JUNIOR

So do me and my boys' mama! You don't see me tryin' to get back with her!

CASSIE

I'd rather not talk about this right now. You're on Wade's property, and he does own a gun.

JUNIOR

Okay, okay. But look, Cassie, I never felt this way about anybody since Lil' Suzy Doo.

(gloomily)

And Rhonda.

(regular voice)

I know we don't have kids together, but I don't think I'll find anybody else like you. Now, I want you to make a choice. Him or me.

CASSIE

You know you're saying this to me while I'm literally at his house, right?

JUNIOR

(sighs)

Yep.

PAUSE.

CASSIE

Can you give me a little time?

JUNIOR

Sure.

CASSIE

I'll give you an answer. I promise.

Cassie returns inside. Junior turns around and heads to his car, which is parked next to a hydrant. A COP stands near it and writes in his pad.

JUNIOR

Aw, come on!

COP

Didn't ya read the calendar? It's
officially "Crap on Willie Jr. Day"!

Junior frowns.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Berniece sits on the couch and watches TV. OFFICER YVETTE
TOWNSEND, 40's, black, enters.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Hey, shouldn't you be out partying?

BERNIECE

I just came from the hospital, where
Eric's at, and I'm not feeling up for it.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Oh, speaking of Eric, a guy who doesn't
look like Eric at all came by and asked
for you.

BERNIECE

(sighs)

Oh great.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Real good-looking, too. Methinks there's
trouble in paradise!

BERNIECE

No, and what's it to you, anyway?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Nothing. Just that what girls want as
teenagers is different from when they
become adults.

BERNIECE

You said it, not me. And what's wrong
with wanting to be loved, anyway?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

You know, before coming to Milwaukee, I
lived a troubled love life in Tennessee.
I thought my husband was horrible and
rude. It turned me off from all men for
so long.

BERNIECE

Yeah?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

But then I met your father, and I changed my mind.

BERNIECE

So I should go with the new guy?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

No! I'm saying that maybe instead of looking to be loved, it's better to learn how to love.

BERNIECE

Oh. Is that also the takeaway regarding your husband?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

(scoffs)

No! He really was horrible! See you later.

She prepares to exit.

BERNIECE

Speaking of that, can you and my daddy learn how to love a little quieter?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Your daddy and I haven't loved in years. We have a lot of steam to let off!

She exits.

BERNIECE

(frowns)

Ugh.

INT. HOSPITAL - ERIC'S ROOM - LATER

Eric sleeps in his bed. Shana, Eleanor and her boyfriend, and the ladies' father, JOHN DUMBECK, 40's, enter the room.

JOHN

Eric?

SHANA

Eric, it's us!

ELEANOR

(gasps)

Oh my god! We're too late! He's dead!

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

Aww! I'm gonna miss the few times we lived together, and how we scheduled our classes around "Dr. Phil"!

The four of them stare into space.

MONTAGE - ERIC AND THE DUMBECKS THROUGH THE YEARS

-- Slow-motion pictures of Eric interacting with the Dumbeck family play. Somber music PLAYS in the background.

-- The montage ends abruptly with Eric's voice in the present.

ERIC

I'm not dead, you morons!

BACK TO SCENE

ELEANOR

Eric, we're reminiscing. Work with us here!

ERIC

(sighs)

Go ahead.

All of them stare into space.

BACK TO MONTAGE

-- The montage continues for a while.

BACK TO SCENE

SHANA

(sniffles)

That was beautiful.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

Well, this explains why you're not at the office.

JOHN

Yeah, Eric, I'm glad you're not dead.

ERIC

Same goes for you!

JOHN

Oh yeah, that. The news reporters chalked it up to a case of mistaken identity.

SHANA

Just like I planned!

ERIC

And how does your girlfriend feel about that?

JOHN

Well, I had to end it with her. I told her that it wouldn't be fair to her if we started our relationship on a lie.

ERIC

That's noble of you.

JOHN

(gloomily)

Just like I told myself to go to hell and to lose her number.

ERIC

Ah. Well, serves you right for trying to tie me up in this.

JOHN

To be fair, my name was spelled, "Erik" with a "K", not a "C".

ELEANOR

But Dad, it still was a silly name.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

What, "Erik Coffey"?

ELEANOR

No, "Erik"!

Eric frowns at Eleanor.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

(to Eric)

But I still love ya!

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

Eleanor!

ELEANOR

(to her boyfriend)

Love me, love my fantasies.

JOHN

(dryly)

How great it is to be back home.

ERIC

Hey, how'd you pull that off, anyway?

SHANA

Well, sit back, Eric. It's a long story.

ERIC

No, wait, on second thoug--

SHANA

Here's how it went down...

INT. DUMBECK MANSION - DAY - FLASHBACK

The Dumbecks face the O'NEILS: JIM, wife ROBIN, and their children, DESHAUN and KATE.

JIM

Okay, we waited long enough! Hand over the property!

JOHN

No! This is property that we worked har--

Shana and Eleanor look at him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

--that we have. You'll have to take it over my dead body!

Enter the O'Neils' bodyguard, WALTER, a tall, buff guy.

WALTER

(deep voice)

That's my cue!

SHANA

Oh yeah? Well, we got thugs in high places, too! Saccharine?

Saccharine enters from the kitchen.

SACCHARINE

Do we have a problem here?

She steps up to Walter.

WALTER

No, do you have a problem?

SACCHARINE

Let's take this outside, then!

WALTER

Fine!

Walter heads outside.

SACCHARINE

(to the Dumbucks)

Don't worry. I'll handle him!

She follows Walter out.

SUPER: "TEN MINUTES LATER"

The families stand and wait.

JOHN

Forget this awkward silence! Let's check up on them!

The families look outside the door, GROAN, and turn back around.

SHANA

She's handling him, alright!

JOHN

Ugh! On my front lawn??

ROBIN

Our front lawn!

ELEANOR

For two big people, they sure are acrobatic! Can you do that, Shana?

SHANA

Shut up!

(pause)

And yes.

DESHAUN

You won't have to see any more of it, if you'll just leave! You signed the contract, and now ya gotta bounce!

He pulls out the contract.

ELEANOR

Let me see that.

DESHAUN

Sure!

He hands it to Eleanor, who RIPS it up.

ELEANOR

Ha!

KATE

(to Deshaun)

I told you to stop doin' that!

JIM

I knew I should've held on to it.

ROBIN

(to her family)

Don't worry, ya'll, we have a copy!

Officer Townsend, wearing her cop uniform, enters from downstairs, eating from a tub of popcorn.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

Hey, guys, you gotta adjust the focus in your movie theater.

SHANA

Which one?

John pulls Townsend over.

JOHN

(to the O'Neils)

Hey, you have a copy, we have a cop!

The O'Neils GASP.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

What's going on here?

JIM

Nothing, Officer! Just welcoming this family back to the neighborhood!

ROBIN
Yeah! See ya'll later!

JIM
And my car dealership is on the up and
up! No illegal parts there at all!
(to his family)
Come on!

They exit.

ROBIN (O.C.)
Walter, move your naked ass!

John SLAMS the door.

ELEANOR
We did it!

All CHEER.

JOHN
Luckily, they didn't know how incompetent
Officer Townsend is!

OFFICER TOWNSEND
That's right!

She and John SLAP HANDS. John hugs his family.

JOHN
Now let's go see about that film.

ELEANOR
Screw that! I wanna see some screwin'!

Eleanor heads to the front door. The rest of them look at
each other and hurry behind her.

INT. HOSPITAL - ERIC'S ROOM - BACK TO PRESENT DAY

ERIC
So everything's back to normal now.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND
Yeah, hopefully, with you, too!

ELEANOR
I don't know what we'd do if you weren't
here, Eric.

ERIC

Well, Eleanor, prepare to see me more often.

SHANA

What do you mean? What happened to the Navy?

ELEANOR

(gasps)

Something happened to the Navy?

She shakes Shana.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

What happened to the Navy, Shana?

SHANA

Eleanor!

Eleanor lets her go.

ELEANOR

(chuckles)

Oh yeah. You wouldn't know. That's why you asked!

ERIC

I don't think I'm gonna join the Navy after all.

SHANA

Guys, can me and Eric be alone for a moment?

ELEANOR

Shana, you're married! And Eric is gonna be married!

(to Eric)

Unless you're into that.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

(eyes open wide)

Yeah, Eric, are you?

Everybody looks at Eleanor's boyfriend confusingly.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

(CONT'D)

(to Eleanor)

Love me, love my fantasies!

JOHN

Let's step out.

John, Eleanor, and her boyfriend begin to exit.

ELEANOR
(to her boyfriend)
Yeah, 'cuz honey, I really have something
I need to tell you.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND
I have something I need to tell you, too.

ELEANOR
Your name?

Her boyfriend rolls his eyes.

ERIC
Since when have you been an advocate for
the Navy?

SHANA
Well, not everybody can be a Soldier.

She pops her collar.

SHANA (CONT'D)
Or Shana Jones-Jackson.

ERIC
Oh, so you're taking his name now?

SHANA
I don't know yet. By the way, I told
Jacob to come here with us, but he don't
really like you.

ERIC
Yeah, yeah. I still can't believe ya'll
ended up together.

SHANA
He's okay. Once you get to know him. Then
after that, you might tolerate him
anyway.

ERIC
Looks like you found someone. I wish I
did.

SHANA
Come on, what about Berniece?

ERIC

After the accident, I looked back on my life and wondered if any of this is meant to be. Going to the Navy, marrying Berniece, everything.

SHANA

Eric, that accident would take a lot out of anybody. But for as long as I've known you, you've never done anything without thinking it through. Don't let this one hiccup deter you from making life-long decisions.

ERIC

I just don't know.

SHANA

Eric, I believe in you. You can do it. You can do anything you want.

ERIC

You know, Shana, all this time, you've been by my side.

(pause)

I don't know if I'll ever find anyone like you.

(pause)

Maybe I have been wrong all these years.

SHANA

(gasps)

What are you saying?

ERIC

I think you know what I'm saying, Shana.

They both stare at each other.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

SUPER: "ONE WEEK LATER"

A church full of people sit and watch the REVEREND speak.

REVEREND

Ladies and gentlemen, this is a beautiful day. We have Eric's friends and family here...

He points to some of Eric's friends and family on one side of the room.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

...and we have Shana's friends and family here...

He points to the other side of the room, where some of Shana's friends and family are.

REVEREND (CONT'D)

..to share in this wonderful day. And now, the moment you've all been waiting for, I present to you...Mr. and Mrs. Peter McNair!

PETER McNAIR, white, and CYNTHIA McNAIR, Puerto Rican, wear a tux and wedding dress, respectively, and walk down the aisle. The congregation CHEERS and APPLAUDS. Their children, POLLY and PABLO, follow them and hug them. Matt, Rhonda, and Billy approach them, as do other people.

RHONDA

Congratulations, guys!

MATT

Yeah, sorry Eric couldn't make it! He's still recovering.

CYNTHIA

Hey, as long as Eric's alright, that's all that matters!

POLLY

Yeah! Mom and Dad are married again!

PABLO

This is the best day ever!

PETER

Followed by the best days of Cynthia's life! And I'm not gonna mess up this time! I'm gonna do everything for her! Cook, clean...you won't have to lift a finger, Cynthia!

MATT

Cook, clean? You haven't been around her long, have you, Peter?

Everyone CHUCKLES and exits.

INT. HOSPITAL - ERIC'S ROOM - LATER

Eric sits up in bed.

ERIC

I'm finally with the woman I love.

Berniece sits on the bed with him.

BERNIECE

Of course. Where else would we be?

ERIC

Even after all the stuff I put you through?

BERNIECE

Eric, you're okay. That's all that matters.

ERIC

But what about all of the other stuff, and...

BERNIECE

Like I said, Eric: you're okay, so that's all that matters!

ERIC

Right. And I'm gonna show you how okay I am, too!

He softly whispers in Berniece's ear. Berniece GASPS.

BERNIECE

(lustfully)

Damn, Eric!

They both GIGGLE, embrace, kiss and lay down.

THE END