

ERIC

"Back to Fool"

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EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

It is the first day of school at Barack Obama High.  
Groups of STUDENTS are conversing 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,  
waltzes into the room in slow motion, donning a blue tee  
shirt and light blue jeans under an open white jacket,  
followed by a burst of wind that 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 here.

MALE STUDENT 3

He must be a big deal. 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 - DAY

Eric stares at the ceiling until DIMMEY, 14, 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 speaks.

PRINCIPAL

This concludes Freshman Orientation. See you next Tuesday.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING - DAY

The students exit the school. Dimmey and Eric 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, 14, wearing a pink shirt and blue jeans, races to Eric's side.

SHANA

Did you mention me, babycakes?

ERIC

No, I said, "girls".

SHANA

(laughs)

Very funny. I'll see you later.

She races away.

ERIC

(calling out to her)

And stop 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, wearing a red dress, laughing with a FOOTBALL PLAYER, 17 to 18, 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

Alright, alright, hold on. Hey, Berniece!

Berniece turns back around.

DIMMEY (CONT'D) (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

Way to play it cool.

ERIC

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

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

MATT JAMES, 30's, 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

RHONDA NELSON-JAMES, 30's, walks by the table.

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

At least until you get your book published.

She kisses Matt.

RHONDA (CONT'D)

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 wrong with being a janitor. Just don't do it at my school.

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 - DAY

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

MATT  
Hello?

MAN (V.O.)  
Hi, is Matt James there?

MATT  
This is him.

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

MATT  
(rolls eyes)  
She did?

MAN

Yep. Are you free today for a little talk?

MATT

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

MAN

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.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

Matt runs from side to side, shuffling papers in his hand.

MATT

I knew I should have paid that car note yesterday!

His cell phone RINGS.

SFX: RING! RING!

MATT (CONT'D)

Hello? Yes, Officer. Did you find my car yet? Well, any word of it being repo-ed? What?

(aside)

Who would have my car, then?

EXT. CITY STREETS

Eric drives a 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.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING

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

ERIC

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.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER THAT DAY

The school bell RINGS.

SFX: RING! RING!

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!

ERIC (CONT'D)

Oh, man!!

DIMMEY

Now what?

ERIC

Mock Chicken Leg Day was today??

INT. HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER THAT DAY

Eric walks in a circle. Shana approaches him.

SHANA

I looked all around the school building, 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 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.

He pauses.

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.

EXT. NELSON HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Eric marches 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 his car isn't here.

He stops in his tracks.

SFX: BOING!

ERIC (CONT'D)  
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  
(hesitating)  
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

(standing up)

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

MATT

(interrupting)

--I just 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.

SFX: DOOR SHUTS.

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, boy. For giving that cover-up for you.

ERIC

How did you know?

RHONDA

A mother knows. I overheard you guys before I came in, 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.

ERIC

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

RHONDA

(hugs him around his  
shoulders)

Awww. Who said that was your only  
punishment?

She exits.

ERIC

(sighs)

I just don't understand women.

THE END