

ERIC

"A Very Special Eric"

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INT. NELSON HOUSE - MORNING

The Nelson family runs around the house. MATT moves swiftly from coffee pot to stove. RHONDA speed-walks from the basement to the living room with a basket of clothes. BILLY skips down the steps and meets her.

BILLY

Mom, are those my clothes?

RHONDA

(shoves the basket to him)

Yeah, here.

ERIC hurries from outdoors into the house with his dog, BONY on a leash.

ERIC

Alright, Bony, we're home.

Eric lets go of the leash. Bony sees the leash on the floor, picks it up with his teeth, and scurries the house with it. He runs in front of Billy, who trips over him and tosses the basket of clothes onto Rhonda.

RHONDA AND BILLY

Stupid dog.

ERIC

Where's breakfast?

MATT

In here!

The rest of the family rush to the kitchen.

MATT (CONT'D)

I made a sausage, egg, and cheese biscuit. How is it?

He hands the sandwiches to the family. They each take a bite.

RHONDA

Mmmm!

BILLY

The sausage has kick, but it doesn't overpower the rest of the sandwich. I like the way the Gouda marries the bread while not making it soggy. Makes me want more of this!

Rhonda and Eric stare at him.

ERIC

Yeah, I was gonna say, "The sandwich is good," Matt.

MATT

Thanks. Now, you guys get going.

RHONDA

Oh, Billy, I'm running late. Can you drop Eric off at school?

BILLY

But I'm not going in that direction!
Maybe you guys could use some help around here!

Rhonda looks to him in anger.

BILLY (CONT'D)

I mean, "Sure, Mom, I'll drop him off."
Let's go, shorty.

Billy and Eric walk out of the house.

RHONDA

And Eric, when you get back, it's your turn to clean off the coffee table!

ERIC

Flexin' your college vocab to Matt, huh?

BILLY

Whatever. You could use some bigger words in your vocabulary.

They enter Billy's car and pull off.

ERIC

Yeah, right. I'm happy with the way I am.

BILLY

Well, that makes one of us. Hey, did you ever finish working on your science project?

ERIC

Science project?

BILLY

Yeah, that you told me was due today, that you had me driving you around yesterday to get the materials?

ERIC
Oh, of course I did!

BILLY
Well, where is it?

ERIC
At school. I dropped it off early. Yeah.

BILLY
Yeah, that sounds like the truth.

ERIC
I am telling the truth. That's what
responsible men do.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Eric coughs really loud.

ERIC
Mrs. Donaldson, I'm not feeling good. Can
I go to the nurse?

MRS. DONALDSON walks over to Eric's desk.

MRS. DONALDSON
So this has nothing to do with your name
about to come up to present your science
project?

ARNOLD interjects.

ARNOLD
And with only five minutes left of class?

ERIC
Shut up, Arnold.
(gasps for air)
Must...stay...and present my...project!

MRS. DONALDSON
Oh, get out of here, Mr. Nelson!

ERIC
Thank you.

Eric exits the classroom.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

PRINCIPAL PETERS organizes some papers and carries them as he walks.

PRINCIPAL PETERS

Well, time to get these test results to the teachers. Let's hope it gives them some kind of motivation.

He walks out of his office.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Eric creeps slowly and looks around. He sees a fire alarm, quickly pulls it down, and runs away.

SFX: FIRE ALARM.

INT. ANOTHER CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

SHANA stands up in panic.

SHANA

FIRE!!!!

The classroom exclaims and runs out of the classroom.

SHANA (CONT'D)

I gotta save my Eric!

Shana and the kids run into Principal Peters, who drops his papers. He sighs and scoops up the papers.

INT. CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Shana carries Eric into the classroom and plops him into his seat next to Arnold.

SHANA

It was just an alarm, babycakes, but I got you here safely.

ERIC

Quit calling me, "babycakes".

He shifts in his seat.

ERIC (CONT'D)

And thanks for the lift.

Principal Peters enters the room and hands some papers to MR. DYKES, the teacher.

MR. DYKES

(looks at the papers)
I can't believe it! Class, I have the results from your tests here.

ERIC

What, the altitude test?

MR. DYKES

It's "aptitude test", and yes. It looks like one person in particular scored the highest in IQ and abiities.

ARNOLD

(stands up and smiles)
Again?

He sashays to the front of the class.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Well, I don't know what to say!

He pulls out some note cards.

MR. DYKES

Don't say anything, because Mr. Eric Nelson scored the highest.

ERIC

What? Yeah, right.

ARNOLD

Exactly! How can Eric score the highest on the--

(frowns at Eric)
--"altitude" test?

PRINCIPAL PETERS

It says it right here.

MR. DYKES

Yeah, Eric, didn't you get something in the mail?

ERIC

The mail?

ARNOLD

(sighs, then speaks to Eric)
Your denseness further supports my argument.

(MORE)

ARNOLD (CONT'D)

Whenever you score the highest, you get a big, brown envelope in the mail congratulating you.

SHANA

THE big, brown envelope?

ARNOLD

Yes.

SHANA

Man, I would love to get that.

ERIC

What's the big deal about this big, brown envelope and the test, anyway?

PRINCIPAL PETERS

It means you have very special gifts, Mr. Nelson. It will also open many doors for you.

ERIC

I've never had doors open for me before. Slammed, yeah.

Eric runs to the front of the class, snatches the note cards from Arnold, and pushes him aside.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Gimme those! I'll read his acceptance speech. "This is a great honor for me. I'm speechless. Actually, I'm not speechless! (Wait for laughter from class to subside.) I'd first like to thank the little people, especially Eric..."

Eric rolls his eyes. Arnold frowns at him.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - LATER THAT DAY

Matt walks into the kitchen. A WOMAN, mid 30's, wearing an apron over her outfit, gives him a travel mug.

WOMAN

Here's your coffee, Mr. James.

MATT

Thanks, uh...

WOMAN

Cynthia.

MATT

Right. Well, time to go job-searching.

He walks into the living room and is about to leave the house until Eric enters from outside.

ERIC

Hey, Matt, have you seen a big, brown envelope in the mail?

MATT

No, son. See you later.

Matt exits. Eric looks at the coffee table.

ERIC

Hey, the coffee table's clean now.

CYNTHIA

(entering the living room)
I cleaned it all up, Eric.

ERIC

Well, thank you. Something smells good!

CYNTHIA

It's your favorite for dinner. Chicken Parmesan!

Cynthia returns to the kitchen.

ERIC

I didn't know we had a maid. Oh well, she knows what I like!

Eric sits on the couch. Rhonda enters the house.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Mom, have you seen a big, brown envelope come in the mail?

RHONDA

No, why?

ERIC

I guess I'm supposed to get a certificate. The school told me that I got a high score on my attitude test.

RHONDA

Really? Oh, baby, that's great!

She hugs him.

RHONDA (CONT'D)

Call your brother. He might have seen it.

Eric pulls out his cell phone and dials it.

RHONDA (CONT'D)

What's that smell?

ERIC

Cynthia's making dinner.

RHONDA

Cynthia?

ERIC

Mmm hmm.

RHONDA

Oh. Matt must've hired her.

ERIC

(to Billy on the phone)

Billy, have you seen a big, brown envelope when you were here?

INTERCUT - NELSON HOUSE/BILLY'S DORM ROOM

BILLY

Oh, yeah, I did. But I thought it was junk mail, so I threw it out.

ERIC

What? Come on now, that was really important!

RHONDA

Let me talk to him.

She takes the phone from Eric.

RHONDA (CONT'D)

Billy, your brother got a high score on his aptitude test! He has at least one very special gift! So come home this weekend. We're gonna celebrate!

She hangs up.

INT. BILLY'S DORM ROOM - SAME

BILLY

Special gift? Hmmph. I'm the one who's in college.

His roommate, RON, chimes in.

RON

Yeah, aren't you supposed to be in class right now?

BILLY

Ron, do you mind?

RON

Yeah, I mind. This is my room, too, you're using my cell phone, and you're sitting on my bed.

Ron takes the phone from Billy and scoots him away.

BILLY

Some roommate. I gotta find what makes me special, too.

RON

As long as you find it somewhere else.

Ron tucks himself in and snores.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - THE NEXT DAY

Eric walks in one direction. Shana crosses his path.

SHANA

Hey, babycakes, where you going?

ERIC

I have to get to Math.

SHANA

You're not going to the students' lounge?

ERIC

The students' lounge?

SHANA

Oh boy, no one told you yet. It's the place where all the top students go. Now that you're one of the elite, you have access to it. Come on.

Eric and Shana walk to a door with ROCCO, a bouncer, 6'4", with muscles.

SHANA (CONT'D)
It's okay, Rocco, he's with me.

Rocco opens the door.

SFX: HARP STRINGS AND CHOIR SINGING.

The room is brightly lit. Other students are sitting while doing various activities.

ERIC
Wow, this is nice.

They walk past CHAZ, who is sleeping and snoring on a couch.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Chaz is a top student??

SHANA
He's the best motivational speaker in the school. You should hear him some time.
You hungry?

They sit at a table. A WAITER arrives.

WAITER
Today's special is filet mignon.

SHANA
Again?

She sighs.

SHANA (CONT'D)
Fine. Make it two, Hobbs.

Hobbs leaves.

ERIC
Normally, I wouldn't ask, but what about class?

SHANA
You get about three of these lounge passes a week. Here.

She hands the passes to Eric.

ERIC
We fill out these passes ourselves?

SHANA

One of the many benefits here!

Eric and Shana fill out the passes. Arnold approaches their table.

ARNOLD

Are you guys writing with the new Jensen pens? Those aren't even supposed to be out yet! Can I hold it?

ERIC

Uh, if I can pull myself away from it, yeah...

Eric hands it to Arnold.

ARNOLD

Wow. Eric, you're getting everything!

Arnold scoffs, throws the pen back to Eric, and walks away.

ERIC

I think I can get to like this!

INT. TIMMY'S PLACE - DAYS LATER

Rhonda, Matt, and Eric waltz into the restaurant. Billy walks behind them.

RHONDA

Make way, y'all! Our boy is a genius!

MATT

(turns to the bar area)
And to all the barflies, drinks are on me!

The patrons cheer. Matt walks up to the bartender, IKE.

IKE

Lower shelf stuff, dude?

MATT

All the way down to the floor.

The rest of the family walks to a booth and sits down.

BILLY

Eric's not a genius, guys.

ERIC

Oh yeah? Well, my latitude test proves you wrong! And how come I got A's on all of my exams this week?

BILLY

Because that test gave you motivation to study for your other tests and excel!

ERIC

Not fitting the narrative, Billy!

RHONDA

(to Billy)

Hey, what's the matter?

BILLY

Oh, nothing. It's just that I'm having a hard time trying to find what makes me special.

RHONDA

But you're already special.

BILLY

But at what, though? So I decided to go out for the school football team since, you know, I played a little bit as a kid.

FLASHBACK - EXT. - FOOTBALL GAME - DAY

The quarterback makes a pass. The ball passes the scoreboard.

INSERT - CLOCK COUNTING FROM 2:05 TO 2:00, HOME TEAM 21, AWAY TEAM 23

BACK TO THE FOOTBALL GAME

Billy catches the ball. The crowd cheers. He drops the ball. His TEAMMATE runs up to him.

TEAMMATE

Billy, what are you doing?! You just fumbled!

BILLY

Two-minute warning!

TEAMMATE

Not in college football, you idiot!

Players from both teams scramble and pile onto the football. The crowd boos. A player from the away team takes the ball.

ANNOUNCER

And with no time outs left for the home team, the away team can run out the clock!

BILLY

Oops.

BILLY (V.O.)

So after a little disagreement, me and the team mutually agreed to part ways.

Billy gets thrown out of the school locker room.

BILLY

AAARGH!

BACK TO PRESENT

TIMMY, the restaurant owner, approaches the table.

TIMMY

Oh, I've been there.

BILLY

Yeah. Then I decided to go into the corporate world.

FLASHBACK - EXT. - SMITH & SMITH LAWYER'S OFFICE

Billy, wearing a suit and tie, stands, looks at the building, and walks inside. There is a sign on the window.

INSERT - NOW HIRING

A hand appears and removes the sign.

MONTAGE - SIGNS BEING REMOVED

-- A NOW HIRING sign is removed from a bank.

-- A NOW HIRING sign is removed from a gym.

-- A NOW HIRING sign is removed from a coffee shop.

END MONTAGE

BILLY (V.O.)

But it wasn't as I expected it to be.

INT. BAKERY

A PLUMBER talks to a BAKER.

PLUMBER

The bathroom's fixed. You can take the
"Out of Order" sign down now.

BAKER

Thanks. Oh, Sign Remover!

Billy, with his suit jacket off, shirt unbuttoned, and tie draped around his neck, removes a "Now Hiring" sign from a window, and walks over to the bathroom. He removes the "Out of Order" sign from its door and sighs.

END OF FLASHBACK

BACK TO PRESENT

RHONDA

You don't have to impress us, Billy. We love you just the way you are. Now I know that may feel about as reassuring as me giving you your only Valentine's Day cards growing up, but it's the truth.

BILLY

Alright, whatever you say. Hey, are you gonna start sending me those cards again?

RHONDA

Don't push it, son.

Rhonda leaves the table.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAYS LATER

Mr. Dykes walks through the class and passes his students their papers.

MR. DYKES

Very mediocre work, class. I asked you guys to do a biography. This person did one on Frankenstein!

He hands a paper to DIMMEY.

DIMMEY

I know he's not a person. He's a monster!

ARNOLD

Actually, he was the doctor.

DIMMEY

(to Arnold)

Actually, shut up!

MR. DYKES

You should have taken your time with your project like Mr. Nelson here. He's the only one with an "A".

He hands Eric his paper. BERNIECE leans over to him.

BERNIECE

(mockingly)

Nice work, Mr. Nelson!

She mimics kissing sounds to him. Other students join in.

ERIC

Wow, that's the first time Berniece blew kisses my way.

SHANA

Never mind them, babycakes. They're just mad that they're not gifted like you. Now, if I can pull you away for a moment...

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Eric and Shana approach Arnold and other students who wear glasses, pocket protectors, and have freckles.

SHANA

We need someone to stand up to Jacob Jackson. He comes to rob us for our lunch money every day around this time.

ERIC

You guys are *waiting* out here for him?

ARNOLD

Well, we're nerds, but we're responsible nerds.

SHANA

And since you're smart but cooler than us, you can protect us from him!

JACOB JACKSON, 14, stocky build, approaches them.

JACOB

Sorry I'm late. My last beating went over. Hand over the money, guys.

ERIC

Leave them alone, Jacob.

JACOB

I don't think I was talking to you, Nelson.

ERIC

(walking up closer to Jacob)
Wanna get to them? You're gonna have to get through me first.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Eric, Shana, Arnold, and the other students are wedged in between the school lockers.

ERIC

So, Shana, when exactly do the benefits of being gifted kick in?

SHANA

Some people hate us 'cuz they ain't us. It's lonely at the top.

ERIC

Painful, too.

SHANA

Well, at least he didn't take our lunch money.

ARNOLD

He didn't take your lunch money?

Eric sighs.

EXT. NELSON HOUSE - LATER

Billy, clothes wet and holding remains of an umbrella, unlocks the front door while talking to his father, JUNIOR, on the phone.

BILLY

Dad, do you think that I'm special?

INT. JUNIOR'S HOUSE - SAME

JUNIOR

Yeah, sure. Listen, do you have any money I can borrow? I'm a little short, but not like Eric, though! Ha, ha.

SILENCE.

JUNIOR (CONT'D)

Hello? Hello?

INT. NELSON HOUSE - SAME

Billy walks inside the house.

BILLY

Guys, I'm home for the weekend! Eric, thanks for lending me your broken umbrella!

POLLY, 10, wearing a shirt, overalls, and a backwards cap, and her brother PABLO, 7, wearing a baseball jersey and jeans, look out the window.

POLLY

I don't think he's here.

PABLO

Yeah, his school doesn't let out yet.

BILLY

Thanks, uh...

Cynthia enters the living room from the kitchen.

CYNTHIA

Polly and Pablo, my kids. They're just waiting until I'm finished. I didn't want them here without you knowing who they are.

BILLY

But I don't even know who you--

CYNTHIA

(cutting him off)

Follow me. I want you to try something.

Billy follows Cynthia into the kitchen.

PABLO

Big sister, where does the thunder and lightning come from?

POLLY

The thunder is from the angels in heaven bowling and knocking down pins. And the lightning is from them celebrating!

PABLO

Well, where does the rain come from?

POLLY

They cry when they get splits.

PABLO

Oh. Science is weird.

INT. KITCHEN - SAME

Cynthia gives Billy a bowl of soup.

CYNTHIA

Try this. What do you think?

Billy tastes it.

BILLY

It's flavorful. Pretty awesome how the tomato soup holds the fort while letting the basil have just enough entrance to make its presence known. A-plus!

CYNTHIA

Wow, I'm flattered! What are you, a food critic or something?

BILLY

No.

CYNTHIA

Ever thought about being one?

BILLY

No, I'm still in school!

CYNTHIA

You can be a food critic on the side. Don't you watch those food shows? You go around and critique different cuisines. You can make a lot of money doing that.

BILLY

That's a good idea! I'll look into it.
Thank you, uh...

CYNTHIA

Cynthia! You know me!

Cynthia nudges Billy and walks away. Billy looks confused.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Shana and Arnold approach Eric at his desk.

SHANA

Babycakes, we need one more person for our chess tournament. Are you in?

ERIC

I'm not that great at chess.

ARNOLD

But with your high IQ, you can pick it up like that. Unless you're not as special as you think you are.

Eric frowns at Arnold. Principal Peters enters the classroom and talks to Mr. Dykes.

MR. DYKES

Class, there's been a little mix-up in the scores from the aptitude test.

SHANA

Mix-up? How?

MR. DYKES

Let's just say the person in school with the highest score is Erica Nielsen, not, well, you know...

ERIC

Erica Nielsen??

PRINCIPAL PETERS

I'm sorry for the confusion.

ERIC

But what did I get on my Altoona test?

PRINCIPAL PETERS

Yeah, we're gonna have to talk about that offline, son.

Principal Peters exits the room.

ERIC
But I don't understand.

ARNOLD
Well, duh!

ERIC
Why did I get that big, brown envelope,
then? I gotta get back home!

Eric runs out of the room.

MR. DYKES
Mr. Nelson, we still have class!

ERIC (V.O.)
There's no time!!

INT. NELSON HOUSE - SAME

WHISKERS and FRISKERS, two mice, walk through the room.
EDDIE, the cat, peeks behind a corner.

Friskers taps Whiskers' shoulder. They look behind them
and see Eddie. Eddie starts to chase them.

The mice run up the flight of stairs. Eddie begins his
climb up the stairs.

The mice roll a grand piano and push it down the stairs.
Eddie jumps in panic.

SFX: Eddie SHRIEKS.

The piano pushes Eddie into a wall.

SFX: CRASH!

The mice run to the piano and look for Eddie. They look
left and right. Eddie comes from inside the piano and
grabs them. He grins, then looks confused.

EDDIE
Line?

Bony, the director, calls out.

BONY (V.O.)
You're supposed to mew.

EDDIE

Oh yeah.

Bony walks towards the three.

BONY

Never mind, we have to break anyway.
Somebody's coming.

They all quickly leave the scene. Bony runs up to the front door.

SFX: KEY UNLOCKING A DOOR.

Bony barks at the door. Eric enters it.

ERIC

(petting Bony)

Hey, boy.

(calling out)

Is anybody home?

Rhonda, Matt, and Billy enter from various parts of the house.

MATT

What's up?

ERIC

Has anyone come across that big, brown envelope when they took out the garbage?

Cynthia enters from the kitchen.

CYNTHIA

Oh yeah. I heard you were looking for it.
I saw it near the edge of the Dumpster.
Here.

Cynthia hands Eric the envelope and leaves. Eric opens the envelope.

BILLY

It's a book.

Eric reads the title.

ERIC

"The Who You Know From The United States High Schools" book?

MATT

Hey, I heard about that! That's a big deal, son!

ERIC

Matt, it's a crock! They put everybody and their mama in here! This has nothing to do with my Autotune test results at all!

BILLY

Cool, that means Eric's still stupid!

RHONDA

Billy!

ERIC

No, that's alright! I wanna go back to being myself, anyway! Being a genius sucks!

Ron enters the house.

RON

Ready to head back to campus, Billy?

BILLY

(takes his car keys out)

Yeah, Ron. I'll see you guys next time.

Cynthia reenters the living room.

CYNTHIA

Don't forget the lunch I made for you.

She hands Billy a bag lunch and exits again.

RON

Who was that, your maid?

BILLY

I think she might be an angel.

RON

(looks puzzled)

Uh, I'll drive.

Ron takes the car keys from Billy and pats him on the shoulder. They both leave the house.

MATT

It's nice to have a maid around here. Good idea to hire her, Rhonda.

RHONDA

What? I didn't hire her. I thought you did!

MATT

Are you crazy? Does this look like I can afford to hire a maid?

Matt pulls out his cell phone and hands it to Rhonda, who looks at the screen.

RHONDA

Wow. I didn't know credit scores came in single digits.

MATT

Eric, you didn't hire her, did you?

ERIC

No way!

RHONDA

Well, who did then?

MATT

Cynthia, can you come here, please?

Cynthia reenters.

CYNTHIA

Yes?

MATT

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

Eric walks up to Cynthia but directs his attention to his parents.

ERIC

Cynthia does a great job, right?

MATT

Yeah, but...

ERIC

And the house is cleaner and more organized, right?

RHONDA

Right, but...

ERIC

Then it doesn't matter who hired her! Let's keep things like this!

MATT

Well, okay.

RHONDA

Uh, let's get out of here.

Rhonda and Matt exit.

ERIC

(walking into the kitchen)

So, Cynthia, what's for dinner?

Cynthia shifts her eyes back and forth, then follows Eric. Bony runs to the area where the broken piano was.

BONY

Okay, places, everyone! Take it from this part!

Eddie resumes grabbing Whiskers and Friskers from the piano.

BONY (V.O.)

And action!

Eddie grins evilly.

EDDIE

Now I got you, you stupid mice!

BONY (V.O.)

Cut! Eddie, you're supposed to say, "Meow!"

EDDIE

But is that what Eddie would *really* say at that moment?

Bony sighs.

BONY (V.O.)

Oh, just cue the iris!

IRIS PAUSES AT EDDIE'S HEAD, THEN CONTINUES OUT.

THE END