

"REL"

"PILOT"

Written by

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COLD OPENFADE IN:INT. REL'S LIVING ROOM - MORNING
(REL)WE MEET LIL REL (AKA REL) IN A CLOSE-UP SEATED ON HIS COUCH TALKING ON THE PHONE. WE SLOWLY PULL OUT AS HE TALKS.

REL

And so that's what I'm saying, who would've thought my wife would be having an affair with my own barber? That's my hair confidante. Now, I knew something was up, because last week, I'm getting my haircut, and she came by and they made this weird eye contact, but I couldn't move my head because he was holding it. I was just able to move my eyes, but I saw it, cause luckily during haircuts, I keep my glasses on. So I confronted her and I was right. They not together but we separated. She took the kids to her family in Cleveland. I maybe could've fought on custody, but I seen friends do that and it just feels like they're treating their kids like furniture - which she also took by the way.

REVEAL THE APARTMENT: EMPTY EXCEPT A COUCH AND IKEA BOXES.

REL (CONT'D)

But I'm staying positive! I'm getting a fresh start rebuilding my life.

REL (CONT'D)

Except my WIFI ain't working which is why I called your customer service number. I need it fixed because me and my kids FaceTime every day since the separation. You know, technology really makes it easy to stay in contact with your family. With all the stuff we have today, there's no excuse to be a deadbeat dad. If you don't see your kids in 2018, then you *really* don't want to see your kids. And I only got one bar in this apartment, so I can't let my horrible phone service make it look like I abandoned my family.

REL UNPLUGS AND PLUGS BACK IN HIS ROUTER.

REL (CONT'D)

Okay, yep the green light is back on.

REL GETS ON HIS COMPUTER AND TRIES HIS WIFI.

REL (CONT'D)

Okay... And it's working. Man, I been terrified of any one in Chicago knowing about the barber, but who knew Singapore-based WIFI support could be a lowkey therapist. Aight. Yes I will stay on for a customer satisfaction survey. Thank you, Clarence!

END COLD OPEN

ACT ONESCENE A

FADE IN:

INT. REL'S APARTMENT - MORNING
(REL, TIFFANY, NAT, BRITTANY, JUDAH)

REL FINISHES PUTTING ON A TIE, IN HIS CHURCH SUIT. THERE'S A KNOCK AT THE DOOR AND TIFFANY ENTERS.

TIFFANY

I brought you a hangover care package.

TIFFANY EMPTIES THE CONTENTS OF THE BAG AS SHE TALKS.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

Advil. Some eggs, so you can get some cysteine in you, get those antioxidants flowing! And pedialyte.

REL

What? How'd you know I'm hungover?

TIFFANY

You butt-dialed me last night. All I heard was you crying, and an announcer voice say, "You are watching the Hallmark Channel." So I put two and two together. And the last thing I heard before your butt hung up was, "At least I still got you, Fireball."

TIFFANY GESTURES TO A BOTTLE OF FIREBALL ON THE COUNTER.

REL

Well I... Yeah. Thank you.

REL SIPS THE PEDIALYTE. TIFFANY SURVEYS HIS PLACE.

TIFFANY

No worries. I could never leave you down in the dumps... Because honestly what's it say about me if my best friend cries himself to sleep watching Hallmark and drinking alcohol designed for high schoolers.

REL

Look, Fireball tastes like Big Red Gum and I love Big Red.

TIFFANY

I can't believe all you've done in here is put up a finger painting of Michael Jordan. The kids made this?

TIFFANY POINTS TO A TERRIBLE FINGER PAINTING OF JORDAN.

REL

Nah, you know Dope Fiend Fred? He's trying to become a painter.

TIFFANY

This whole place has got a dope fiend aesthetic going on. I thought you were gonna build your new stuff last night?

REL

Well the Hallmark "Thanksgiving Christmas Love" marathon happened. But I woke up feeling great.

(MORE)

REL (CONT'D)

Sure this isn't ideal, but shibbity dobos, today is the beginning of a fresh start. Imma hit church with Nat to get out the house, then I'm gonna build this furniture, and turn this place into a bachelor pad, because I'm gonna get out there and start dating right away and find my new soulmate.

TIFFANY

New soulmate? That's a Disney princess ass goal. You shouldn't put your happiness in someone else's hands. I just focus on myself, and my career, and if I need love later on, I'll just buy a husband. That's what Oprah did. Stop with the rom-coms. Watch an action movie. See something explode.

REL

No, rom-coms are the best movies cause it feels good to picture yourself in them. I hate picturing myself in an action movie. Stuff blowing up around me, trying not to catch on fire, the flames making me all sweaty. I'm sorry, but I'm not afraid to say it: I love love. And I will find it again.

TIFFANY

Well, I hope you do, you and Shannon seemed so perfect together.

REL

Why in the hell would you say something like that right now?!

TIFFANY

Sorry! I just liked her... You sure you're ready though? 12 hours ago you were cry-talking to a glass bottle.

REL

No time to waste. You see, for the first thirty years of my life, I refused to eat pastrami because the word "pastrami" gave me the creeps. Then one day, I ate it by accident and loved it. But I'll never get back those thirty pastrami-less years. It taught me you gotta get out and try things. Somewhere right now, there's a woman I love as much as pastrami.

TIFFANY

I think you're the first person to learn a life lesson from a deli meat. But if you really are ready, I could set you up with my friend, Monica.

REL

Nahh, I'm good on Monica. But thanks.

TIFFANY

Why? She's cute, got a good ass job. Plus, she's got your favorite thing: glasses. Since middle school, all the dudes would be checking out butts and breasts. And then you'd be like, "Did you see those bi-focals though?"

REL

I know but... Look, I'm not interested in Monica. She wears loose boots.

TIFFANY

Loose boots?

REL

Her boots are way too wide for her ankle. Feet all sliding back and forth. As a nurse, I feel it's just unsafe. Also, who knows what falls in her feet when she walks around. Just a bunch of rain all in it, she could get trenchfoot in her own shoe.

TIFFANY

You won't date an awesome girl because of her boot's circumference?

REL

Her boots are unsanitary and reckless
and I can't trust her judgment.

NATHANIEL (AKA NAT) ENTERS IN A SUIT FOR CHURCH.

TIFFANY

Nat, your brother's insane. He refuses
to go out with my friend, Monica.

NAT

Monica Smith? Can't do that. She wears
loose boots. You could get a bunch of
rain all in it. Trash in the wind
could get in there, too. Besides, Rel
I wouldn't go out with anyone Tiffany
sets you up with, now that she 5-0.

TIFFANY

Imma tell you one last time, I'm not a
cop, I'm a 9-1-1 operator.

NAT

That's a professional snitch.

TIFFANY WALKS UP TO NAT.

TIFFANY

You call me a 'snitch' one more time,
Imma bust your face open, and when you
call 9-1-1 for an ambulance, Imma make
sure no one comes to help you.

NAT

(RATTLED)... Damn.

WE HEAR FACETIME RINGS, REL HEADS OVER TO HIS PHONE.

REL

It's my kids! Everyone quiet.

TIFFANY

I'm out. Breakfast at Milt's ends at 11 and I'm craving french toast. I can't have arguing with someone I barely respect get in the way of a food I deeply respect.

TIFFANY STARES NAT DOWN AS SHE EXITS. REL ANSWERS THE CALL.

REL

Hey! How are my babies?!

WE SEE JUDAH AND BRITTANY IN THEIR BEDROOM, LAUGHING.

JUDAH

Dad, why'd you send us a Cubs hat, 20 Capri Suns, and 12 rubber duckies?

THEY HOLD UP THE DUCKIES AND HATS. REL'S CONFUSED.

BRITTANY

And your note is really weird: "Dar Kids, I mass you. Lorve, Daddles."

NAT

Yo, did you black out and drunk-buy your kids gifts on Amazon Prime again?

REL COVERS THE PHONE AND FURIOUSLY SHUSHES NAT. REL LOOKS BACK AT THE CALL, ALL SMILES.

REL

Sorry, just talking to your Uncle Nat.

BRITTANY

Mom said he's a crack dealer.

NAT
(sadly to himself)

It was ecstasy.

REL TALKS TO HIS KIDS ON FACETIME.

REL

I sent you surprise gifts, because
you're the greatest kids in the world.

BRITTANY

We really miss you, Daddy.

REL

I know, but it's only been a week and
Cleveland is just five hours away.
Plus Mommy's family is really nice. We
can FaceTime anytime and I'll see you
soon for Judah's birthday. Nothing can
stand between us. Even if you lived on
the moon, I'd build a spaceship. You
are my everything and -

'DING DONG,' THE DOORBELL RINGS AT JUDAH AND BRITTANY'S.

JUDAH/BRITTANY

Another present!!!!

REL'S SPEECH IS CUT OFF AS THEY HANG UP TO GO GET IT.

NAT

Damn Rel. Next time you black out, I'd
love a Nespresso coffee machine.

REL

We should get going. Now remember at church, don't tell Dad about the barber. So far, I've only told you, Tiff, and Clarence in Singapore, but he's cool. I just can't have Chicago judging me while I go through this. In fact, I hope to take this to my grave.

NAT

...Well, about that. Know how Dad does that thing when he thinks you're lying, where he stares deep in your eyes, and he's not like physically hitting you, but you can feel his soul going into yours and strangling it?

REL

...Yeah.

NAT

So last night he said, "Something's fishy about Shannon and Rel." And I said, "Nothing's fishy." Then he stared so hard, and so I was like, "Shannon had sex with Rel's barber."

REL

You just lost yourself a Nespresso coffee machine!

AS WE...

CUT TO:

ACT ONESCENE B

INT. CHURCH - 30 MINUTES LATER
(REL, NAT, DAD, PASTOR)

REL WALKS NERVOUSLY INTO THE CHURCH WITH NAT. REL LOOKS AROUND, DOESN'T SEE DAD, AND STARTS TO RELAX WHEN HE HEARS...

DAD (O.S.)

Your wife and your barber!?!

NAT AND REL STARTLE AS THEIR DAD APPEARS FROM BEHIND.

REL

Where did you come from?

DAD

Been in the shadows. Darkness is the only place I feel at home now that I've learned the embarrassing news. All the money I spent on glasses for you as a kid, and this is what your life is? You might as well be blind.

REL

Look, Dad -

DAD

Don't you 'look Dad' me, you jive turkey!

A FEW CHURCHGOERS WALK BY.

REL

Just keep your voice down. And don't tell anyone.

DAD

Tell anyone!? Why would I do that? You think this makes me proud? You think I want to run around and let the whole world know I raised a son with no dick!? It is a dark, dark day, Rel. You should feel a lot of things. Pain that your life is ruined, and your family is gone, anger at the barber and your own shortcomings as a man, and most importantly, shame. Deep, dark, horrible shame. This is even worse than Nat being a crack dealer.

NAT

It was ecstasy.

DAD

Don't back talk me, sucka. Now if you'll excuse me, I'm gonna go sit far away from you both.

DAD EXITS.

REL

Look what you did! This separation is hard and I don't need it to be harder!

NAT

It's hard for me too! When I was in jail, I didn't have a wife and kids to look forward to.

(MORE)

NAT (CONT'D)

I had your wife and your kids to look forward to, and now they're gone!

OFF REL'S INCREDULOUS LOOK OF "THAT'S NOT THE SAME THING."

NAT (CONT'D)

Look, Dad isn't gonna tell nobody.

He's more embarrassed than you are.

THE PASTOR WALKS OVER AND GREET'S NAT AND REL.

PASTOR

Morning brothers. And Rel, I'm so sorry to hear about your separation.

REL

Thank you. But don't worry, I'm ready for a fresh start.

PASTOR

Wonderful! You're a strong man. Infidelity is always tough.

REL

Infidelity!? Where'd you hear that?

PASTOR

Well... I got my haircut yesterday.

REL NOTES THE PASTOR'S FRESH HAIRCUT.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

Folks were gossiping at the shop. Now Rel, as hard as this must be for you, everything is a part of God's plan.

REL

What type of plan is it for my wife to
have sex with my barber?

IT'S DEAFENINGLY SILENT AS THE PASTOR STARES BLANKLY AT REL.

PASTOR

Alright brothers. Enjoy the service.

THE PASTOR EXITS.

REL

Oh my god, this is bad.

NAT

You're probably fine, it can't have
spread too far. People just tend to
talk more openly to Pastors is all.

REL

(TRYING TO STAY CALM) Right. That's
right. Can't control the past. Gotta
look forward. A fresh start, just
getting a fresh start.

REL TAKES A BREATH TO RELAX HIS PRIDEFUL SELF, BUT IS VISIBLY
PANICKED. AS HE SCANS THE CHURCH, WE GO INTO REL'S POV...

HE SEES GUY #1, IN A FRESH HAIRCUT, LOOKING BACK AT REL AND
WHISPERING INTO ANOTHER CHURCHGOER'S EAR.

HE TURNS TO SEE GUY #2, IN A FRESH HAIRCUT, LOOKING AT HIM
AND WHISPERING INTO ANOTHER CHURCHGOER'S EAR.

HE TURNS TO SEE A PAINTING OF ST. PETER, WHO INEXPLICABLY HAS
A FRESH FADE, LOOKING AT HIM AND WHISPERING INTO JESUS' EAR.

OFF REL'S PANICKED FACE, WE...

CUT TO:

ACT ONESCENE CINT. BUS - HOURS LATER

(REL, NAT, DREADS, RIB CAGE, WHITE TEE, BUS DRIVER, BAD POSTURE MAN)

REL AND NAT ARE SEATED ON THE BUS.

REL

How's the church know already? Can't a man die with his secrets anymore?

NAT

Don't worry man. This will pass. Church gossip moves fast. Remember when everybody found out brother Marshall's daughter was a stripper and that's all anybody could talk about? Now you barely hear about it.

REL

That's because he died last year, man.

THE ROASTING TEENS (16), A TRIO WHO GO RESPECTIVELY BY DREADS, WHITE TEE, AND RIB CAGE ENTER THE BUS.

REL (CONT'D)

Ah man, it's those roasting teens.

THE ROASTING TEENS IMMEDIATELY TARGET THE BUS DRIVER.

DREADS

Aye White Tee, Rib Cage! Look at this dude's fat ass knuckles. Them things look like ten Jimmy Dean Sausages.

THE TEENS ALL LAUGH AND DAP EACH OTHER UP.

BUS DRIVER

(TIMID) Oh c'mon now. Don't nobody
care about how fat a knuckle is.

RIB CAGE

YOU DO!

BUS DRIVER

I just... I...

THE BUS DRIVER STARTS CRYING AS TEENS LAUGH, DAP EACH OTHER
UP, AND PROWL INTO THE BUS. THEY SPOT MAN WITH BAD POSTURE.

WHITE TEE

Aye! Aye check this dude out man, it's
the hunchback of the 34 south.

BAD POSTURE MAN

Yeah you right, I should be sitting up
straight. Thanks kids.

HE TRIES TO STRAIGHTEN UP, HOPING THEY'LL LEAVE HIM ALONE.

DREADS

Shut your Quasimodo ass up man! I only
want to hear you from afar, while you
ringing a bell in a clock tower.

WHITE TEE PLAYS CHURCH BELL TOWER SOUNDS ON HIS PHONE, WHILE
RIB CAGE SIMULATES RINGING THE BELL. THEY LAUGH AND PROWL
FURTHER, WHEN THEY GRAB EMPTY SEATS NEXT TO REL AND NAT.

REL

Dammit.

WHITE TEE

Aye! Aye yo why this dude hair look
like dirty carpet in a hotel lobby?!

THE TEENS ALL LAUGH AT REL'S HAIR. REL'S TOO PRIDEFUL TO GO DOWN MEEKLY AND FIRES BACK.

REL

Oh really? You gonna attack my hair?
You think you gonna get a job in
outfits like those? Where did you get
those clothes? A garage sale?

IT'S DEAD SILENT AS REL LOOKS AROUND FOR A LAUGH OF ANY KIND.

NAT

Garage sale?

RIB CAGE

Dude, with a haircut like that, the
only place they gonna allow you is the
inside of a vacuum bag with all the
other dirty carpet pieces!

THE TEENS ALL LAUGH AS REL LOOKS TO NAT FOR HELP.

NAT

Ok. Look. Watch it aight? I just did
some time, and I live in Harvey, okay.
In that neighborhood, when the snow
melts, they find bodies. So back off,
my brother's going through a lot. His
wife cheated with his barber, so he
hasn't had a chance to get his haircut
lately.

REL GIVES NAT A LOOK OF "HOW COULD YOU SAY THIS TO THEM?" THE TEENS IMMEDIATELY JUMP BACK IN, LAUGHING AS THEY TALK.

RIB CAGE

Aye. That barber gonna have sex with everyone you love. He gonna bang your friends, he's gonna bang your dad, he's even gonna bang your cat.

REL

I don't even have a cat, so you dumb!

DREADS

Well you know what's gon happen dawg? He's gonna buy you a cat...

RIB CAGE

...And wait for years until you and that cat form an emotional attachment...

WHITE TEE

... Until that cat is something you can't imagine living without...

DREADS

And *then*, he's gonna have sex with that cat!!!

THE ENTIRE BUS ERUPTS INTO LAUGHTER. EVEN THE BUS DRIVER WIPES HIS TEARS AND BEGINS TO LAUGH. REL STANDS UP.

REL

That's funny to y'all!? Huh!?
Bestiality?! You're all sick!

AND WE...

CUT TO:

ACT ONESCENE D

INT. FRANCES' BAR - LATER
(REL, TIFFANY, NAT, OLD LADY)

REL, TIFFANY, AND NAT EAT LUNCH AT FRANCES', THEIR CHICAGO SPORTS BAR HANG. REL HAS A PASTRAMI SANDWICH.

REL

I gotta do something about this. I spent my whole childhood being picked on, and now I'm in danger of becoming a laughingstock again. I don't want to be defined as the guy who's wife banged his barber. I deserve respect. I'm a nurse! I'm a father! And I can afford all types of pastrami! If I'm being honest, I want to walk into that barbershop, and give him the hands.

REL GESTURES WITH HIS FISTS AS HE SAYS THIS. NAT PERKS UP.

NAT

Look, I didn't want to say anything before, given I'm on parole and all, but yes that's exactly what you have to do. Playground rules. If you knock him out, everyone'll hear about it, and that'll nullify everything.

NAT BEGINS TO USE HIS HANDS AS SCALES TO WEIGH THE CONSEQUENCES OF EACH ACTION.

NAT (CONT'D)

Ass beating. Wife banging. Ass beating
wins every time.

REL

I know. It would honestly solve
everything.

TIFFANY

What? No. You are in your 30s.
You cannot live by playground rules.
Rel, you always do this. You're
letting your pride get in the way, and
biting off more than you can chew.
Sometimes you gotta make a stand, but
fighting Frank is childish and
desperate. Go home, build your
furniture, get that fresh start.

REL

I would love to, but I have a skeleton
in my closet, and that skeleton had
sex with my wife. I can't get a fresh
start if my name is decaying all over
town. Reputation means everything in
Chicago, and little things count. This
bar is only even popular because one
time Michael Jordan peed here on his
way to the finals.

TIFFANY

I'm telling you, just move on.
Remember when Lil Donkey blew up for his terrible mumble rapping? And everyone was saying how breaking up with him was the biggest mistake of my life? I didn't make it my focus, I moved on. I channeled my anger non-violently, by writing hate tweets.

NAT

Hate tweets? You would go be racist on the internet?

TIFFANY

No. I'd write hate tweets about him, but just private drafts for myself so people don't think I'm petty. Like this one. (READING OFF PHONE) "Lil Donkey I hate you, hope you die, and I hope your mama's coupons don't work at Foodtown." OR "Lil Donkey, I hope you get diarrhea on stage and everyone calls you Lil Dookie."

NAT

I think punching him in the face would be healthier than whatever that was.

REL

Look, I don't know about either option, but I gotta do something. I know this is gonna sound horrible, but honestly I wish the barber was married, so I could have sex with his wife, and then we'd be even.

NAT

Well, you know how those kids were saying he was gonna bang out everyone you love? Maybe we find someone he loves, and you hook up with her?

REL

That's beautiful. Moving on with a vengeance. Just need to figure out who the barber likes, and then I can overwhelm her with swag and money.

TIFFANY

Well, you blew your chance at that. Cause you know who the barber really likes and has been pursuing for months? Loose boots Monica.

REL

Wait, wait, wait. Tiffany, I was just being stupid earlier.

(MORE)

REL (CONT'D)

Just please set me up with Monica.
That whole loose boots thing was
mostly a joke.

NAT

No it wasn't. You told me on the way
to church, that people who wear loose
boots are a bunch of perverts who
don't belong in society.

REL

C'mon fam.

TIFFANY

Rel, I'm not going to set you up with
my friend, only for her to be used as
your revenge tool.

REL

I'm sorry. Look, just because I said
those things, doesn't mean that her
and I don't have a chance. Haven't you
ever seen "Love Don't Cost A Thing"?

TIFFANY

Please don't tell me the plot of some
terrible rom -

REL

In that movie! Christina Milian uses
Nick Cannon to fix her car in exchange
for dating her.

(MORE)

REL (CONT'D)

The whole relationship is a ruse. But somewhere in there, Christina falls for Nick. But he leaves her, not knowing her feelings were true. So Dru comes back and we think she's gonna go back to him, but she doesn't. She fights for Nick.

TIFFANY

What the hell are you talking about?

REL

Look, I don't know. Please set me up with Monica. You could even come with us, as like an informal set-up. And if I say anything about the boots, you can call off the whole thing. Please, let her be my Christina Milian.

TIFFANY

I'm sorry, I can't do that.

AN OLD WOMAN WALKS BY WITH A CANE.

OLD LADY

Oh Nurse Howery, great to see you.
I've been feeling so much better.

REL

That's great. But make sure you rest.

OLD LADY

I will. You the best nurse I ever had.

REL

I appreciate that ma'am.

SHE STARTS TO WALK OFF, BUT THEN TURNS BACK.

OLD LADY

Also, so sorry to hear about your wife getting it on with that barber. Keep ya head up baby.

REL

(FORCING A SMILE) Thank you.

OLD LADY EXITS. REL TURNS TO TIFFANY.

REL (CONT'D)

Do you see what's happening to me!?

TIFFANY

Okay, fine. I'll set it up as you, me, and Monica hanging out casually. And if y'all start really hitting it off, I'll bounce and let you transition it into a date. But, if it seems like you're being a jerk at all, I will very happily cockblock you. Deal?

REL

Yes! You're not going to regret this like I regret helping that lady with her hip.

AND WE....

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOSCENE EFADE IN:INT. LISA'S HIP FASHIONS - NEXT DAY
(REL, TIFFANY, NAT)REL AND TIFFANY WALK THROUGH THE STORE LOOKING AT CLOTHES.

REL

Thanks for the Monica set-up. I was on her Instagram, I forgot she truly is a ten with glasses... A blind dime.

TIFFANY

Ugh, why do guys always have to classify women like that?

REL

Trust me, ladies with frames love it.

TIFFANY

Doubtful, but just please don't say anything stupid about her boots.

REL

I won't. Loose boots is something I can get over. And if I can't, all I gotta do is not look down at her feet.

TIFFANY

Good... Well if you wear something from here, both of you are going to have to compromise. All these clothes look like Steve Harvey hand me downs.

TIFFANY GRABS A HORRIFYING BIG ASS ORANGE SUIT OFF THE SHELF.

REL

Don't make fun of the clothes. I got Nat this stickman job after he got out of jail. Trying to keep him on the right path. He's embracing it so far.

THEY SEE NAT USE HIS STICK TO GRAB A SHIRT FOR A CUSTOMER.

TIFFANY

I know stickmen exist so shops can keep nice stuff up high so dope fiends can't steal. But I don't even think dope fiends would wear any of this.

NAT HANDS A SHIRT OVER TO THE CUSTOMER WITH HIS STICK.

NAT

There ya go. Now you enjoy, it's not everyday you can get a shirt with real feathers on it at these prices.

THE CUSTOMER IS DUMBFOUNDED AS NAT WALKS TO REL AND TIFFANY.

NAT (CONT'D)

What up! Rel, I found you the perfect outfit for your date tonight.

NAT PULLS OUT A SOLID OUTFIT. REL AND TIFFANY ARE SURPRISED.

REL

Wow, thanks man.

NAT

And Tiffany, I got you something too.

NAT PULLS DOWN A HORRIBLE PURPLE VELVET SWEATER.

TIFFANY

I gotta run actually. Monica and I are
gettin food before we meet Rel.

NAT

It'll take two seconds to try it on.

TIFFANY

Look I was just trynna be polite about
your job, but that sweater looks like
the inside of a casket and I can't be
putting it on my body. Rel, I'll see
you later.

TIFFANY EXITS. NAT LOOKS AT THE SWEATER AND SHRUGS.

REL

I gotta do something about my hair.
Haven't been able to trust barbers.

NAT

I got the perfect thing. We sell this
amazing relaxer. I've seen dudes with
hair looking all raggedy like yours
does now. They put this relaxer in,
get that extra length and soft texture
looking mysterious and sexy.

REL

Mysterious and sexy... that sounds
exactly like who I am. Let's do it.

AND WE...

CUT TO:

ACT TWOSCENE F

INT. REL'S APARTMENT - LATER
(REL, NAT)

REL SITS WITH A TOWEL AROUND HIS HAIR. NAT CHECKS DIRECTIONS.

NAT

Okay, last step is to let it dry, and you'll have perfectly relaxed hair.

REL

Man I'm excited! Plenty of celebs get ladies with that unkempt look. Donald Glover, J. Cole, Cornel West. And the man who started it all: Buckwheat. I ain't never going to the barber again!

A TIMER GOES OFF. NAT STARTS TO UNDO THE TOWEL.

NAT

Alright. All done. Welcome to your new life as a mysteriously, sexy...

NAT PEEKS IN AT REL'S HAIR, AND LOOKS HORRIFIED.

REL

How's it looking man!?

NAT

It... looks... lemme check the box.

REL PULLS OFF THE TOWEL, HIS HAIR IS HORRIFICALLY SLICKED BACK AND DROOPY. HE LOOKS IN A MIRROR.

REL

What did you do!?! I look like Duke
Ellington. You Duke Ellington'd me!

NAT

So I realize I left the relaxer in for
fifty minutes when I should've left it
in for fifteen.

REL

How could you mess that up man!?

NAT

Fifteen and fifty sound the same!

REL

Sounds?! You were reading off a box!

NAT

I said it out loud in my head!

REL

I gotta meet Tiffany and Monica in
twenty! I'm just gonna wear a hat, and
if I hook up with Monica, hopefully
it's in a very dark place.

NAT

Just tell her you never take it off.
On my life, Elmer Fudd ain't never
take his hat off. And he good, man.

REL

He's a cartoon!

REL GLARES AT NAT AS REL EXITS AND WE...

CUT TO:

ACT TWOSCENE GEXT. NIGHTCLUB - LATER

(REL, TIFFANY, MONICA, BOUNCER, DREADS, RIB CAGE, WHITE TEE)

REL WAITS IN LINE WITH TIFFANY AND MONICA.

MONICA

Rel, I gotta say, I'm impressed at how well you're handling the separation.

REL

That's life, just gotta pick yourself up and keep going. Shibbity dobos.

MONICA

Shibbity what?

REL

Oh, shibbity dobos. It's something I made up when I was a kid. It means 'what can you do, so don't worry.' It's basically 'hakuna matata' but for a kid on the West Side of Chicago.

MONICA

Haha, I like that.

TIFFANY

Careful, he's been saying it since we were seven, and it gets stuck in your head. Then you say it to strangers, and they think you're insane.

THE GROUP LAUGHS. MONICA THEN NOTICES REL'S JORDANS.

MONICA

Rel, I love those Jordans.

REL

Thank you, I appreciate it.

REL LOOKS DOWN AT HER FEET AND WE PAN TO REVEAL HER LOOSE BOOTS AS REL TRIES NOT TO GRIMACE. TIFFANY NOTICES REL LOOKING AT MONICA'S FEET, AND GIVES HIM A "STOP IT" LOOK.

REL (CONT'D)

Well, I love your... glasses. Nice to be out with a blind dime.

MONICA

What's that one now?

REL

A blind dime is a beautiful woman with glasses.

MONICA

(EATING IT UP) Haha, thank you, Rel.

You a blind dime yourself.

REL GIVES TIFFANY A LOOK LIKE "I TOLD YOU." THEY REACH THE DOOR. REL HANDS THE BOUNCER HIS ID.

BOUNCER

I need you to take your hat off.

REL LOOKS HORRIFIED.

REL

What? I been here before. I worn a hat a whole bunch of times.

BOUNCER

Don't matter where you been before. No hats allowed in here now.

REL

Well, I ain't takin this hat off.

MONICA AND TIFFANY LOOK CONFUSED BY REL'S AGGRESSION.

TIFFANY

Rel, just take off the hat.

REL

Nahhh. Nah I don't think so. Look man, lemme speak to your manager.

BOUNCER

Bouncers don't have managers. My manager is me managing my own temper, so I don't stomp your ass into the ground. Now I'm going to ask you one more time, take your hat off.

REL

No!

BOUNCER

Then please step aside.

REL

Hah, clearly you don't know who you dealing with. Follow me, ladies.

REL STEPS FORWARD AND TRIES TO PUSH PAST THE BOUNCER. THE BOUNCER SNATCHES OFF REL'S HAT AND THROWS IT FAR AWAY.

REL (CONT'D)

Hey c'mon man!

REL PUTS HIS HAND ON THE BOUNCER'S ARM. THE BOUNCER STIFF ARMS REL, KNOCKING REL OVER AS REL LETS OUT A LOUD SCREAM.

TIFFANY AND MONICA LOOK ON, EMBARRASSED AS REL QUICKLY HOPS BACK UP AND DUSTS HIMSELF OFF AND WALKS AWAY FROM THE DOOR LIKE NOTHING HAPPENED. TIFFANY AND MONICA WALK TO HIM.

REL (CONT'D)

So y'all wanna try another spot?

TIFFANY AND MONICA STARE AT HIM, BAFFLED AND IRRITATED.

TIFFANY

No! Why wouldn't you just take your hat off!?

REL

Alright look... I didn't take my hat off because I was embarrassed about my haircut. Nat put in this horrible relaxer and made me look like an idiot, and I just really wanted this date to go well.

MONICA

Rel, I'm shocked you think I'm so superficial, I don't care about your hair. But I don't like guys who get in fights with bouncers for no reason.

You know, I think I'm gonna head home.

MONICA STARTS TO WALK AWAY. REL'S PANICKING.

REL

Monica, wait. Could you do me a solid
and tell people we hooked up?

MONICA

Excuse me!? I'm outta here.

MONICA WALKS OFF.

TIFFANY

Rel, why would you ask her that?!

REL

I mean you never know until you try.

TIFFANY

Rel, you asked a woman to lie to the
streets about having sex with you. You
should've known before you tried.

SHE EXITS AS THE ROASTING TEENS WALK BY, NOTICING REL'S HAIR.

DREADS

Oh my god. Y'all check out this Duke
Ellington lookin ass!

RIB CAGE

Aye we still gonna see you on the bus?
Or you gon start taking the A train!?

WHITE TEE SINGS "TAKE THE A TRAIN," WHILE THEY ALL PRETEND TO
BE TRAIN CARS. THEY LAUGH AND DAP EACH OTHER UP AS THEY EXIT.

REL

Damn... they had a surprising amount
of jazz knowledge.

AND WE...

CUT TO:

ACT TWOSCENE H

INT. REL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT
(REL, NAT)

REL AND NAT SEATED ON THE COUCH SURROUNDED BY IKEA BOXES.

NAT

I'm sorry I messed up your hair, but
you know, shibbity dobos.

REL

Don't try and shibbity dobos me!

REL STANDS UP AND STARTS PACING.

REL (CONT'D)

That's it. I should've done this from
the start. I'm gonna punch the barber
in his face. He's gonna get knocked
out so bad, he ain't even gonna
remember who he is. People gonna come
up like, "What's up Frank?" And he's
gonna be like, "Who?" And then I'll
remind him, and when I do, I'm gonna
knock his ass out again.

NAT

Again, I'm on parole, so I don't want
to say anything to implicate myself,
but...

NAT LOOKS AROUND NERVOUS, THEN GIVES A THUMBS UP.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREESCENE J

FADE IN:

INT. REL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT
(REL, NAT)

1980s METAL PLAYS. REL AND NAT STAND IN FRONT OF A LAPTOP, WATCHING A VIDEO, NODDING THEIR HEADS TO THE BEAT, FOCUSED.

NAT

Pumping you up, right?

REL

Yeah man, this is an incredible
montage of montages.

NAT

Yep. Karate Kid, Rocky, and Top Gun,
all the best montages in one montage.

REL SHADOW BOXES AROUND HIS PLACE. NAT CHECKS HIS WATCH.

NAT (CONT'D)

Barbershop is gonna close in thirty, I
think it's time Rel.

REL

Oh I'm excited. After I knock him out,
Imma take his clippers, and cut a bald
spot into the back of his head!

NAT

The LeBron!?

REL PRACTICE BOXES INTO NAT'S HANDS.

REL

Yep. The LeBron. Ooh I can't wait!

NAT

You got this, Rel. After tonight, when you walk down the street, people aren't gonna say that's the dude who's barber had sex with his wife, they're gonna say that's the dude who knocked out the barber because the barber had sex with his wife.

REL

Hell yeah they will!

NAT

You ready?

REL

Never been more ready for something in my life.

REL STARTS TO LEAVE AS NAT CHECKS HIS PHONE.

NAT

Oh snap, wait. Actually on Sundays, barbershop closes an hour later. So you should go in an hour.

REL

Oh okay. Well... I'll never be more ready for something in my life than in an hour from now!

AS WE...

CUT TO:

ACT THREESCENE KINT. FRANK'S BARBERSHOP - NIGHT

(REL, FRANK, DREADS, RIB CAGE, WHITE TEE)

REL STANDS OUTSIDE THE GLASS FRONT DOOR OF THE BARBERSHOP, HE TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND QUIETLY OPENS THE DOOR AND ENTERS. WE SEE FRANK, THE BARBER, SWEEPING UP HAIR, CLOSING UP.

FRANK DOESN'T NOTICE AS REL TAKES A FEW MORE STEPS IN. REL SEEMS CONFIDENT, BUT THEN WE PUSH IN TO REL'S POV:

- WE SEES FRANK'S BICEPS ARE MASSIVE. WITH EACH SWEEP OF THE BROOM, IT ALMOST APPEARS AS IF HE'S FLEXING THEM.

- ON THE WALL, WE SEE FRANK'S MEDALS FOR FIRST PLACE IN A JIU JITSU TOURNAMENT.

- WE NOW SEE FRANK'S SHIRT, WHICH HAS A DRAWING OF A TALL STRONG GUY, WHO LOOKS ALARMINGLY LIKE FRANK, STANDING WITH HIS FOOT ON THE CHEST OF A MUCH SMALLER GUY KNOCKED OUT ON THE GROUND, WHO LOOKS ALARMINGLY LIKE REL.

WE SNAP OUT OF REL'S POV TO SEE REL BLINKING, IS HE IMAGINING THIS SHIRT? NOPE. FRANK TURNS, SURPRISED TO SEE REL.

FRANK

Rel? It's great to see you man.

WE SEE REL CLENCH HIS FISTS, FULL OF DOUBT, AS FRANK WALKS OVER AND NOTICES REL'S HAIR SPILLING OUT THE SIDE OF HIS HAT.

FRANK (CONT'D)

How've you - Woah, the hell is this?

FRANK STARTS TO TOUCH REL'S HAIR, AND TAKES REL'S HAT OFF. HE SEES THE HORRIBLE DUKE ELLINGTON HAIR.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Oh nah. I'm closed right now but damn,

I can't have you out there looking

like a band leader in the 20s. You

want a fix?

REL

....Sure, yeah.

FRANK

Alright, come sit down.

REL SITS AS FRANK GETS CLIPPERS. WE SEE REL TRYING TO REGAIN HIS CONFIDENCE. HE MAKES TWO FISTS AND PRACTICE PUNCHES LOW TO HIMSELF, AND LOOKS AT THE COUNTER FOR SOME WEAPON OPTIONS.

BUT AS REL PERUSES THE COUNTER, HE SEES A PHOTO OF FRANK FLYING THROUGH THE AIR KICKING A MAN IN THE CHEST IN A JIU JITSU TOURNAMENT. IN THE PICTURE, FRANK SMILES DIRECTLY INTO CAMERA, SO IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S SMILING DIRECTLY TO REL'S FACE.

REL RELAXES HIS FISTS, AS FRANK PUTS THE APRON OVER HIM, AND GETS TO WORK ON REL'S HAIR. FRANK CUTS FOR A SECOND. A QUIET AWKWARD BEAT AS FRANK CUTS IN SILENCE.

FRANK (CONT'D)

So... we good?

REL

No, you ruined my family!

FRANK

Look, I'm sorry. But silver lining, if your wife's gonna cheat, she's gonna cheat. Coulda been some random guy you don't even know. If you think about it like that, aren't you glad it was me?

FRANK TAKES REL'S FACE AND TURNS HIM TO THE SIDE AS HE CUTS.

REL

What? No. No, I'm not glad at all.

It's worse. I can picture it and it's very vivid, because I know what you look like and how your hands feel.

(MORE)

REL (CONT'D)

On top of that, word got out, and the whole town's laughing at me. I honestly came here to fight you.

FRANK

I know. Barbers can see into people's souls. And look, I get you being mad at me and I'm sorry people are making fun of you. But you gotta understand, Shannon cheating, that was on you too.

REL

Excuse me?!

FRANK

Shannon told me how stubborn you could be. So set in your ways and routines. She said you were distant emotionally with her, but then she'd see you get emotional over some random romantic comedy. And that hurts Rel. It hurt her and it hurt me.

REL CONSIDERS, BUT CATCHES HIMSELF SOFTENING AND PUSHES BACK.

REL

How did it hurt you!? Look, I will not succumb to your barber psychology. I am here to punch you in the face. Also, how do people know? You been telling people?

FRANK

Dope Fiend Fred overheard me on the phone with Shannon, and he spread it.

REL

(SHAKING HIS HEAD) And I bought his damn painting.

FRANK

Look, Rel. You can punch me if you want. But is it *really* what you want?

REL

...I think so. You killed my marriage.

FRANK

Rel, Come on. Don't lie to keep up appearances in front of the one man who truly knows how much things had changed between you and Shannon. Look back at your marriage. Was it really what you both dreamed of?

WE SEE THAT HITS REL, HE'S REFLECTING AGAINST HIS WILL.

REL

I mean we did change a little over time, we got married at twenty-four and all. But that's life, you evolve and that's okay, but... I guess we didn't evolve together as much as we should have.

(MORE)

REL (CONT'D)

We started to argue a lot over the little things, which would eventually somehow spiral into being big things themselves.

FRANK

And how did that make y'all feel?

REL

Like, we resented each other in a way. Like it wasn't even about the stupid thing we were arguing about in the first place... I guess for so much of it, neither of us ever checked in to see if the other was happy.

FRANK

Yeah... Shannon said you hadn't laughed together in years.

WE SEE REL'S LOWER LIP START TO RELUCTANTLY TREMBLE.

REL

It'd been forever since our last real date. It felt like we were both trapped in something that simply wasn't true love. I tried to deny it, but I wanted to escape.

FRANK

Rel, she wanted you to be free, too.

REL STARTS TO FULLY POUR TEARS.

REL

I mean that perfect life we thought we had was never really there... I asked for the separation, because I knew it wasn't worth fighting for. I knew you were a symptom, not the problem. And I wasn't a perfect husband. I don't want to punch you, I want to punch myself for not recognizing our issues sooner. Honestly, I respect what she did with you. It was time for a fresh start.

FRANK FINISHES THE CUT.

FRANK

That's real big of you to say, Rel. Now, what you think of this fresh cut for that fresh start?

REL LOOKS IN THE MIRROR. HE LOOKS GREAT.

REL

Dope. Thank you, Frank. I'm sorry I came here to punch you in the face.

FRANK

All good. The male ego is a dangerous thing. If we could get past our egos, maybe we'd have peace on Earth, but that's a talk for our next cut.

REL STANDS UP AND LOOKS AT FRANK.

REL

Sounds good. Thank you, Frank.

REL AND FRANK HUG. IT'S A SWEET MOMENT, WHEN WE HEAR...

DREADS (O.C.)

You gonna have sex with him now too!?!

REL TURNS TO SEE THE ROASTING TEENS LOOKING THROUGH THE GLASS FRONT DOOR OF THE SHOP, LAUGHING.

REL

Damn, how're y'all everywhere!?!

THE TEENS WALK IN, LAUGHING.

DREADS

We everywhere we need to be dawg. I mean damn, we thought your life was sad before, but now you even sadder than those puppies Sarah McLaughlin be singing about.

THEY LAUGH AS RIB CAGE SINGS "IN THE ARMS OF AN ANGEL."

FRANK

Seymour, Lester, and Louise, actin' tough huh?

REL

Seymour, Lester, and Louise?

THE TEENS, FOR THE FIRST TIME, SEEM ON DEFENSE.

FRANK

Seymour, you cried every time I cut your hair until you were 12. Lester, you have a horrible dandruff problem.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

And Louise, you *also* have a horrible
dandruff problem. Now this man hugged
me. But forgiveness is real strength.

THE TEENS SEEM BEATEN. REL TAKES THE CHANCE TO ATTACK.

REL

Something y'all and your goofy ass
real names don't know nothing about!

FRANK

Apologize to Rel. Now!

THE TEENS HANG THEIR HANDS.

DREADS/RIB CAGE/WHITE TEE

Sorry./Yeah, sorry./Our bad.

THE TEENS TURN TO LEAVE. REL'S PUMPED, AND PILES ON.

REL

Yeah! That's right! Imma have sex with
all your Mamas too! And you're gonna
find me in the morning, drinking all
your apple juice too!

THE TEENS SHAKE THEIR HEADS AND EXIT. REL STANDS VICTORIOUS.

FRANK

I have had sex with their Moms.

REL

Damn, Frank. You have a problem.

FRANK

I know, I'm trying to get help.

AND WE...

CUT TO:

ACT THREESCENE 1

INT. REL'S APARTMENT - NIGHT
(REL, TIFFANY, NAT)

NAT AND REL FINISH SETTING UP AN END TABLE NEXT TO THE COUCH. THE APARTMENT IS NOW FULLY FURNISHED. THE IKEA BOXES FOLDED UP BY THE DOOR. REL SURVEYS THE PLACE.

REL

Yeahh. I'm back, baby!

THE APARTMENT LOOKS DOPE. REL'S GOT A FRESH CUT, A FRESH APARTMENT, AND A FRESH START. HE'S 'MOVED ON' FROM THE GUY IN THE VACANT 'COLD OPEN' APARTMENT.

REL (CONT'D)

Yo Nat, thanks for building this stuff
with me. I got you something.

REL REVEALS A NESPRESSO COFFEE MACHINE.

NAT

Oh nah! Thank you man! I'm about to be
so elegantly caffeinated.

TIFFANY ENTERS. SHE'S GOT AN ICY STARE. SHE GLARES AT REL AND GRABS A BEER FROM THE FRIDGE. REL WALKS OVER.

REL

I'm really sorry about tonight. I let
my ego and stubbornness get in the
way. And I gotta work on being less
like that, and I will. And I promise I
will apologize to Monica and tell her
this was not your fault at all.

TIFFANY

You better apologize to her, or don't expect me to be setting you up with anyone else ever again.

TIFFANY CROSSES AND SITS ON THE COUCH NEXT TO NAT, FEET UP ON THE COFFEE TABLE. SHE TAKES IN THE PLACE.

TIFFANY (CONT'D)

This looks pretty dope. Good job.

REL WALKS OVER AND SITS WITH THEM.

REL

What did you and Monica do afterwards?

A BEAT. TIFFANY TAKES A SIP OF BEER.

TIFFANY

We were heading over to Frances' but... And I really hate to admit this, but on the way there... Monica tripped in her loose boots and broke her ankle.

REL AND NAT TRY TO HOLD BACK LAUGHTER, BUT CAN'T HELP IT. TIFFANY SHOOTS THEM A FURIOUS LOOK, THEIR LAUGHING STOPS IMMEDIATELY.

REL

Sorry, yeah you right. Not funny at all.

AS WE...

FADE OUT:

END ACT THREE

TAG

SCENE M

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY
(REL, MONICA)

MONICA LAYS IN A HOSPITAL BED WITH HER FOOT IN A BOOT. REL
ENTERS IN HIS NURSE'S SCRUBS. SHE'S NOT HAPPY TO SEE HIM.

REL

Hey Monica, I just wanted to see how
you're feeling and say how sorry I am
about last night. I really like you
and I was a complete idiot. I'm sorry.

MONICA TAKES THIS IN AND SMILES.

MONICA

Thank you. Maybe when I'm better, we
can give it another shot. This broken
ankle just sucks. But I'm trying to
stay positive, shibbity dobos.

REL AND MONICA LAUGH.

MONICA (CONT'D)

It was just a freak accident.

REL TAKES IN 'FREAK ACCIDENT' AND NODS POLITELY.

REL

Yeah. Freak accident.

REL STARTS TO EXIT, BUT HE CAN'T RESIST.

REL (CONT'D)

I mean it wasn't a 'freak accident.'
You were wearing loose boots.

MONICA

What? What are you talking about?

REL

Your boots Monica. They're loose. You don't see the danger you put your ankles in everyday?

MONICA

I like my foot to breathe!

REL

Oh you like your foot to breathe? At what cost? Not only is it unsafe, a loose boot is gross, Monica. Your feet are probably floating around in rain water. I'm just saying as both a nurse and a concerned citizen, a boot is meant to hug the ankle.

REL PICKS UP HER BOOT. HE PEEKS INSIDE. HE LOOKS HORRIFIED.

MONICA

Rel, what the hell are you doing?

HE TURNS IT OVER. WATER AND A COUPLE LEAVES TRICKLE OUT. MONICA LOOKS AWAY SHEEPISHLY.

REL

If you ever get clean, hit me up. (A BEAT) Also, please don't tell Tiffany about this.

AS WE...

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW