

THE WONDER YEARS

"Pilot"

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COLD OPEN

EXT. STREET - DUSK

We are close on the face of a 12-YR-OLD BLACK BOY riding his bike. We hear the VOICE of an ADULT MAN, narrating:

ADULT (V.O.)

It's weird to grow up in a time when your mom and dad have to give you "The Talk" about how to handle yourself if you're stopped by the police. Or when the race problems you thought the last president fixed come back under the new one. Or when there's a flu out of China that they say will kill a million people around the world...

We PULL BACK and see from the houses, cars, clothing, etc. that he's actually riding his bike through 1968 Montgomery, Alabama and not 2020.

ADULT (V.O.)

But it was 1968, and that's the state our country was in. Yep, even the flu part.

The voice belongs to ADULT DEAN, our narrator and guide. But back to 12-yr-old Dean on his bike. He has a baseball glove hanging from the handlebars as he rides on the sidewalk.

Music Cue: "Higher Ground" by Stevie Wonder

MONTAGE: ICONIC IMAGES FROM THE 60'S

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Now it was 1968, my first year of middle school. The age where you transfer from boy to man, or as the old folks used to say, "When a boy starts smelling himself." I was twelve and the previous summer's race riots caused the first wave of "white flight" to the suburbs.

The images shift to powerful, moving ones showing all perspectives of the nationwide riots during the "Long, Hot Summer of '67," ending with the riots in Birmingham.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

As a kid, I didn't understand all the implications of that.

(MORE)

ADULT DEAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I just knew that suddenly, there weren't any jars of mayonnaise on the shelves at the supermarket like there used to be when the white people still shopped there.

Dean turns his bike onto a neighborhood street. It's filled with an alternate image of Middle Class America. While the streets are lined with well-kept family homes with sedans in the driveways and nice lawns, there are also... BLACK GIRLS jumping rope on the sidewalk; BLACK TEEN BOYS doing wheelies on ten speed bicycles tricked out with dozens of reflectors, mirrors and flags; YOUNG BLACK KIDS buying candy from the "Candy Lady's" house...

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

But we had neighborhoods that were just as safe as the ones they were developing outside the city.

We see IMAGES of a few other black middle-class neighborhoods in Montgomery -- Redgecrest, Edgemont Heights...

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

With black-owned businesses and homes owned by teachers, doctors, lawyers... and a lot of funeral home directors. I always suspected that was because black people liked big cars and wearing white gloves.

We find Dean again, turning down his own street in Haardt Gardens. Suddenly, the street lights come on in the neighborhood and all the kids immediately and simultaneously start saying their goodbyes and heading to their respective homes. Dean speeds up, so as not to be late.

He pulls up to his house, but before he goes in, he remembers something. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out the eyeglasses he was supposed to be wearing. Suddenly, the images around him that were blurry are now clear -- including the image of TWO TEENAGERS in the back seat of a 1965 Mustang fastback, parked across the street. He looks closer and recognizes his sister KIM and her BOYFRIEND, making out like weasels. As any little brother would do, he sneaks up to get a better vantage point to spy. He's immediately busted by his sister.

KIM

Dean! You little sneak!

She grabs him through the rolled down passenger window.

DEAN

Ow! Let go! I'm gonna tell!

Dean and Kim tussle back and forth as he tries to free himself. Kim's boyfriend reaches across and tries to grab Dean, but Kim stops him.

KIM

(to boyfriend)

Don't put your hands on him!

He immediately backs off. Kim then pushes Dean herself, for good measure. They go back and forth again until Dean freezes.

DEAN

(pointing to car stereo)

Do you hear that? It's dad's song on the radio!

Kim stops and listens too.

Music Cue: "I Need You More," lyrics by Bill Patterson

DEAN (CONT'D)

I gotta go tell him!

He runs off.

KIM

(calling)

Make sure you tell him you're a little creep, too!

Dean rides his bike across the street and drops it in their front yard and then runs through the front door.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Inside, we see Dean's dad, BILL WILLIAMS, and his mom, LILLIAN WILLIAMS, in the den, watching television and still in their clothes from work. Lillian wears a sheath dress. Bill is dressed sharp and stylish, imagine Miles Davis meets Bernie Mac.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

My dad was a music professor by day and a funk musician by night. In other words, he was the baddest dude I knew.

Dean rushes in and frantically rushes to the radio.

LILLIAN
Dean, you know better than to come
into this house without speaking.

DEAN
(mile-a-minute)
I snuck up on Kim and DJ in the car
out front and we heard Dad's song
on the radio!

Bill and Lillian react.

LILLIAN
(excited)
Boy, stop talking and turn the
radio on!

He does as Lillian rises. Kim enters and joins them.

KIM
Did you hear it?

DEAN
(frustrated)
I can't find it!

LILLIAN
Hurry up, before it goes off!

Lillian, Dean and Kim all grab at the radio controls.

BILL
Shhh! Be cool.

They quiet down as Bill walks over from the couch.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
"Be cool" was his catch-all advice
for whatever the situation was.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Alabama State Troopers pull the family car over on the
highway. Bill turns to everyone in the car: "Be cool."

The barbecue grill catches fire during a backyard cookout and
sends flames twenty feet in the air. Everyone screams and
runs around. Bill, who's closest to the flames, emphatically
motions with his hands: "Everybody just be cool!"

Dean falls off of his bike and hurts his arm. When he gets up
we see that it's broken at a sickening ninety-degree angle.
As Dean starts to freak out, Bill (unfazed): "Hey, man. Be
cool."

END MONTAGE:

Bill calmly tunes to the right station and turns the volume up. Bill closes his eyes and hums along to his funk ballad. Kim tries to act like she's not that into it, but when Lillian grabs her to dance, it breaks through her teen defenses and she laughs. It's a nice family moment, then Bill realizes:

BILL

(to Kim)

You were in the car with your boyfriend?! You told us you were going to study with Pam!

KIM

(busted; deflects)

Dean was out after the street lights came on!

DEAN

Hey!

As Kim backpedals, Bill and Lillian scold her...

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

This certainly wasn't the first or last time emotions would run high in our house. But whether we were yelling or laughing, if you turned your head juuust right...

ANGLE ON Dean. He closes his eyes and keeps nodding his head to the song on the radio.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

...it all sounded like music.

As Dean smiles to the music, we:

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Bill sits at the breakfast table, reading the paper. Kim finishes breakfast while Lillian stands over her holding an SAT study guide.

LILLIAN (CALLING)
Dean! Hurry up or you'll miss the bus!

He enters, dressed for school, and pours a bowl of cereal.

LILLIAN (CONT'D)
(to Kim)
Okay, we'll tackle analogies next.

KIM
Why do they make this stupid test so hard?

BILL
Let me help you out. Here's an analogy. Our generations "Muddy Waters" is to your "Rolling Stones" what "Original" is to "Copy."

He chuckles at his own joke. Kim rolls her eyes.

LILLIAN
Your verbal score's important. You have to get at least a ten-fifty if you want to get into Auburn.

BILL
(looking up from paper)
Plenty of good black colleges out there too. She'd get into 'Bama State easy.
(to Kim)
Then we'd be on the same campus.

She looks like she'd rather die.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
Plenty of black folks like my dad didn't feel like we needed to mix with white people to be better off. But my dad put his money where his mouth was. He'd always hire the black businessman, black doctor, black accountant, black lawyer...
(MORE)

ADULT DEAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

He wouldn't even let us play the game "Operation" because we didn't need to work at that white man's hospital!

KIM

(to Bill and Lillian)

Does anybody care about what I want? Bobby Seale and H. Rap Brown didn't even finish college.

LILLIAN

You're going to college.

BILL

Yep. I'm sure the Revolution's gonna need a good accountant or dentist.

While Bill and Lillian aren't looking, a Polaroid picture slides out of Kim's notebook and onto the floor. Dean immediately grabs it before Kim can pick it up. His mouth drops when he sees the image.

INSERT SHOT: POLAROID

Kim is in a black leather jacket, black knee-high boots, a black skirt and sunglasses, holding a shotgun, imitating the Angela Davis photo. Before Dean can say anything, Kim covers his mouth and takes the picture away. Her eyes plead for him not to say anything. He obliges, being a good little brother.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Back then, there were a lot of things outside of my parents' control, including society's effect on me and my sister. So my mom focused on what she could control -- the "Three A's." Academics...

She pushes the SAT study guide in front of Kim's face.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Attitude...

LILLIAN

(to Kim)

Do you have it from here?

KIM

Yes.

LILLIAN
 (correcting)
 Yes what?

KIM
 Yes, ma'am.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
 And Appearances. Which is why she
 lined us up for an ashy elbows/lips
 and eye booger check every morning
 before we left the house.

On that, Lillian sees something on Dean's face, licks her
 finger and uses that to rub his face clean. He moves her hand
 away.

LILLIAN
 Boy, no child of mine is going out
 in public like that. Your lips are
 ashy like you've been working in
 the field somewhere.

KIM
 (laughs)
 She said you had slave lips!

LILLIAN
 And where are your glasses?

He reluctantly groans and pulls them out of his backpack and
 puts them on.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
 I hated that I had to wear glasses.
 How could one kid get all the
 family's recessive genes?

Dean pulls out a large baseball glove. Lillian notices it.

LILLIAN
 What did I tell you about going
 through Marty's things while he's
 "away?"

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
 "Away" was the word my mom used
 instead of "in Vietnam."
 (then)
 Baseball was everything to me back
 then. Not because I was any good,
 but because my big brother Marty
 played. And I wanted to be just
 like him.

DEAN

Coach Baine said I needed a bigger glove than the one I have.

BILL

I just bought you that other glove. Is Coach Baine gonna pay me for it?

LILLIAN

Bill, it's nice that he looks out for Dean.

BILL

Is that why he made you team mom? To look out for Dean?

LILLIAN

No, it's because we're used to working together.

BILL

Well, he's high saditty if you ask me.

LILLIAN

You sure this isn't about something else?

BILL

(defensive)
Nope.

DEAN

(nosy)
What else would it be about?

BILL

Stay out of grown folks' business.

LILLIAN

Stay out of grown folks' business.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

"Stay out of grown folks' business" was usually code for something about sex, money or the funny way dad's musician friends smelled after a band rehearsal.

Off screen, we hear the sound of the **school bus** rounding the corner. Dean takes his cue and rushes out the door, but not before Lillian rubs some last-minute lotion on his elbows.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS STOP - MOMENTS LATER

Dean high-tails it to the school bus stop at the corner of his street. He gets there just in time and joins the line of other kids from Haardt Gardens as they get on.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

It took Montgomery almost ten years after "Brown vs. Board" to desegregate the public schools, so we were the kids who were a part of the great busing experiment. I was actually okay with it. See, I quickly realized that white grown-ups LOVED me.

FANTASY SEQUENCE: White adults talking to Dean

WHITE TEACHER

Oh, you speak so well.

WHITE LUNCH LADY

You're so well-mannered.

WHITE MOTHER

You're so not going to rape my daughter.

BACK TO SCENE.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

Dean climbs on the bus and walks down the aisle.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Now that I think about it, pretty much all adults loved me. But other kids my age -- not so much.

No one pays attention to him, until he approaches his best friend TONY BAINE (12, Black, confident) who's saved him a seat.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Except Tony. My best friend. Coach Baine's son. He was much cooler than me, but it didn't matter. At least not to us.

TONY

S'up, Dean. Gimme some skin.

They slap palms as Dean excitedly takes his seat.

DEAN

You gotta tell me all about the party at Noddy's last night. Was it really a make-out party like we thought?

Some of the other boys around them eagerly listen in.

TONY

It's not cool to kiss and tell.

The boys all ad-lib, "Come on, man!", "No fair!", etc.

DEAN

Okay, but don't forget you were supposed to show me how to French kiss on a pillow.

Snickers from the others. Tony cuts Dean a look.

TONY

Shhhh!
(then sotto; excited)
I'll tell you later.

Dean smiles and they slap palms again. The bus comes to a halt at the next stop. Out the windows, we see a POORER NEIGHBORHOOD than Haardt Gardens. The bus door opens and OTHER BLACK KIDS start to get on.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

You know the girl that you see for the first time and everything slows down?

We see a 12-YR-OLD GIRL get on the bus, **wind blowing, slow motion...**

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

That was Lisa Allen. Everybody else had a crush on her. But here comes my crush...

Meet KEISA SHARP (12, Black). She wears a "Natural" (short afro), Chuck Taylors and a letterman jacket. She takes the seat across from Dean and Tony. Dean quickly takes his glasses off.

DEAN

(as cool as he can)
What's happening?

KEISA

Hi, Dean.

Dean stares at her as she goes about her business. Tony shakes his head and pulls Dean aside.

TONY

Tell her you want to start "going together." Don't be scared.

DEAN

I'm not scared.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

I was so scared.

DEAN

My plan is to stay best friends until she realizes she likes me.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Idiot.

While they're talking, A MANNISH BOY sitting next to Keisa tries to cop a feel. Other boys laugh.

KEISA

Hey! Stop it!

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Was this my opening? My chance to defend her honor and win her heart? My--

Too late. Keisa has already put the mannish boy in a headlock and looks like she's about to break his arm.

KEISA

You better give me my propers! Say you're sorry!

The boy yelps in pain and apologizes fervently. Tony turns to Dean.

TONY

Good luck with that one.

On Dean's intimidated look, we:

INT. DALRAIDA MIDDLE SCHOOL - LATER

Dean and Tony walk to class. As they do, a steady stream of WHITE STUDENTS walk past. Dean speaks to many of them.

DEAN

Hey, Chad./What's happening, Mark?/How's it going, Jimmy?

But most of the white kids are too self-conscious to speak back. Tony hits Dean on the arm.

TONY

Hey, Black Moses, mellow out.
You're trying too hard.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

But I was determined. I mean, we
all read the same comics, watched
the same three channels on TV,
hated the same broccoli... Why
couldn't we all be friends?

Dean and Tony stop at a water fountain by their lockers. We see one of the WHITE KIDS pause, hesitant to drink after them, and walk away. But then BRAD HARPER (12, White) steps up and happily drinks. Brad is the third member of their crew.

BRAD

Hey, fellas. What's happening?

TONY

Take a guess.

BRAD

(knowing)
Dean's still afraid to tell Keisa
he likes her?
(sarcastic)
Film at eleven.

DEAN

Shut up, Brad.

BRAD

I'm telling you, she already knows.

DEAN

How? Unless you blabbed.

BRAD

She can tell by the stupid way you
look at her.
(imitates Dean's look)
You look like a wet dream.

TONY

(laughs)
Such a wet dream.

DEAN

I do not look like a wet dream.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
 Okay, we clearly had no idea what
 that meant yet. Still a good burn.

The bell rings and everyone hurries to class...

INT. DALRAIDA MIDDLE SCHOOL - HOMEROOM - MOMENTS LATER

We follow Dean and Tony as they enter homeroom and sit at the front of the class, at Dean's urging. A few of the black kids we saw on the bus from the poorer neighborhood enter and sit in the very back. However, Keisa sits right behind Tony and Dean. Dean squints and self-consciously puts his glasses on.

KEISA
 (leans in; re: glasses)
 It's okay. My mom's making me wear
 these.

She shows him her legs. She's wearing pantyhose.

KEISA (CONT'D)
Pantyhose. Yuck.

DEAN
 (gulps; then covers)
 Yeah, yuck.

KEISA
 Anyway, your glasses don't look
 bad.

Dean smiles as this little bit of affirmation makes him float in his seat. There's then snickering in the back. One of the black students, MICHAEL THOMAS, is the loudest.

MICHAEL THOMAS
 Hey, Four Eyes, can you look to my
 house and tell me what's on the TV?

The other black kids laugh and Dean slinks down in his chair.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
 No one knew how old Michael Thomas
 was or what grade he was supposed
 to be in. Some people said he had a
 son at another school. Others said
 he had voted for JFK. Bullies back
 then benefitted from us not having
 Google to fact-check.

TONY
 (to Michael Thomas)
 Shut up, Free Lunch.

MICHAEL THOMAS
Yo mama's on free lunch.

The surrounding white students all laugh and "Ooooo" at this. This gets the attention of their white teacher, MRS. HODGES.

MRS. HODGES
What's all the fuss back there?

One of the white students who was just laughing immediately tattles.

FUTURE KAREN
Somebody said "Yo Mama" to somebody else.

Mrs. Hodges shakes her head and takes a deep sigh.

MRS. HODGES
That's something that the black students do, and the white students don't. "Yo mama this, Yo mama that." Now I've started to hear white students saying it too. That's not what their parents send them to school for.
(to the black students)
I'm not sure why some of your parents even send you here.

She catches herself. She then looks at Dean, Tony and Keisa.

MRS. HODGES (CONT'D)
The rest of you should be like these three. Their parents send them here to learn.

Dean, Tony and Keisa are so embarrassed, they want to crawl under their desks. Brad knows it's an uncomfortable moment for Dean and, thinking he's making it better, leans in:

BRAD
(whispers)
She's not racist.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
Was Mrs. Hodges racist? In my memory, she was. But she also gave some of us black students extra attention if she thought we had potential. Which may still have been racist. I don't know. It was complicated.

(MORE)

ADULT DEAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 And something 12-year-olds
 shouldn't have had to deal with.

We see Michael Thomas giving Dean the evil eye.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
 All I knew was, I wished there were
 some way I could help Michael see
 that we didn't have to give people
 like Hodges ammunition to use
 against us. To see that he and I
 were really on the same side. Maybe
 we could rap later...

INT. DALRAIDA MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAY - LATER

CLOSE ON Dean as Michael Thomas repeatedly punches him.

MICHAEL THOMAS
 You think you white, don't you? You
 talk white, you act white...
 (searching)
 ...you bring a lunchbox to school
 like you white.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
 That last one confuses me to this
 day.

The bell **rings**. Michael and his cohorts leave. As Dean picks himself up, he notices a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board.

INSERT SHOT: A flyer for a big Little League tournament.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
 I don't know if I was punch drunk
 from the beating or if it was
 Divine Intervention, but something
 told me to grab that flyer...

Dean pulls the flyer down. On his intrigued look, we PULL BACK to reveal that Michael Thomas had also pantsed him.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
 Not realizing I'd been pantsed was
 definitely from being punch drunk.

He doesn't realize it until a gaggle of OLDER GIRLS rounds the corner and laughs. As he struggles with his pants we:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD SIDEWALK - LATER THAT DAY

Dean and Tony walk through their neighborhood, holding their baseball gloves and a bat.

DEAN
Are we weird?

TONY
(defensive)
I'm not weird.

DEAN
I mean, like, do we belong?

TONY
I belong.
(then)
Belong where?

DEAN
Think about it, the black kids who don't live here look at us different and the white kids at school look at us different.

TONY
Who cares? As long as girls like us. Stop thinking so much.

DEAN
But it's not right.

TONY
And there's nothing you can do about it.

They suddenly stop when they walk by a small neighborhood school that's boarded up.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
The downside to desegregation was that our old neighborhood school had to close down because we all got bused away. This was the place where we first forged our friendship.

Dean and Tony walk up to the abandoned building and peer through the windows.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Whenever we walked by it, we stopped and looked through the windows at our old classrooms. It reminded us of simpler times. Before girls, before... middle school. Sure, it wasn't like going to middle school was the same as going off to a new land to make your way on your own... but at twelve, it might as well have been.

Their moment of reflection is interrupted by the flashing red and blue LIGHTS of a POLICE SIREN. Dean and Tony freeze in their tracks. They then hear a **voice** over the bullhorn:

POLICE OFFICER (O.S.)

You two, stop what you're doing and come here!

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Let's just say that if the problems between the police and the black community in the sixties was an epidemic, Alabama was patient zero.

They both walk towards the blinding bright lights of the car, careful to hold their hands up. They see a WHITE POLICE OFFICER.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

There were few things scarier to us than the angry face of a white police officer...

They reach the car and then make out the image of a BLACK POLICE OFFICER, his partner.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

And one of those things was the angry face of a black police officer.

Dean and Tony give each other worried looks.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Black officers couldn't arrest white folks, so when we ran afoul of a black officer, he might be very eager to assert the authority he wasn't given elsewhere.

BLACK OFFICER
Just what are you boys planning on
doing with that bat? Bust a window?

TONY
No.

BLACK OFFICER
No what?

DEAN
No, sir. We were on our way to
baseball practice.

BLACK OFFICER
Oh, yeah?

He and the White officer exchange skeptical looks.

BLACK OFFICER (CONT'D)
Who's the greatest baseball player
from Alabama?

DEAN TONY
Hank Aaron. Willie Mays.

Dean and Tony get nervous and start to argue.

DEAN (CONT'D)
Mays can do everything!

TONY
Except break Babe Ruth's record!

The officers start to laugh, breaking the tension.

BLACK OFFICER
I would've also taken Satchel
Paige.

WHITE OFFICER
Willie McCovey would've been right
too.

BLACK OFFICER
Alright, looks like y'all are
telling the truth. Go on, get to
practice.

Dean and Tony, relieved, head on.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
That was it! The baseball flyer at
school...

(MORE)

ADULT DEAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The fact that baseball had just saved us from landing on an Alabama chain gang... They were both signs from God. I knew what I had to do...

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD BASEBALL FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE ON: COACH BAINE.

COACH BAINE

You want us to enter that all-white tournament across town? Hell no.

PULL BACK to reveal Dean and Tony's NEIGHBORHOOD TEAM practicing as Dean shows the TOURNAMENT FLYER to Coach Baine.

DEAN

If we go to school together, why can't we play together too?

COACH BAINE

Do us both a favor, put this energy into learning to catch a fly ball.

Dean is frustrated. Then, Lillian approaches wearing jeans and a team t-shirt. She carries a clipboard and sewing tape.

LILLIAN

Hey guys.
(to Coach Baine)
I'm ready to take the team measurements for the jerseys.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

There was only one person who could help me convince Coach Baine. The same person who could convince you to eat okra. The person who could convince you to let a doctor stick a needle in your arm. The person who could convince you that the monster in your closet was a vegetarian...
Mama.

Dean makes a beeline to Lillian before Coach Baine can speak.

DEAN

Mama, tell Coach that it's a good idea for us to play in the tournament at Dalraida!

LILLIAN

With a bunch of white teams?

INT. WILLIAMS HOME - DEN - SAME TIME

Incense burns in a brass holder and there are two glasses of wine on the coffee table. Bill playfully dances with Lillian.

LILLIAN
What kind of present?

BILL
I don't know, maybe that pearl necklace I caught you staring at in Parisians?

LILLIAN
(giggles)
It was just one royalty check, Bill.
(teasing)
"Be cool."

BILL
There's gonna be more where that came from.

He dips her and they notice Dean watching. They stop dancing and straighten up a bit.

BILL (CONT'D)
(clears throat)
What do you need, son?

DEAN
I was just wondering if Mama told you about our neighborhood team playing the team from Dalraida for Opening Day?

Lillian looks like she wasn't ready to bring it up, but it's too late.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
My mom had given me the same "Don't rat me out" look my sister had given me earlier. I just never expected it from my mom. After all, she wasn't a girl.

BILL
What? That's an awful idea.

LILLIAN
I think it's a good thing, and I'm proud of Dean for trying.

She affectionately rubs Dean's head.

BILL

Why do our boys need to play their team for it to be good? It's the Barnstorming Negro Leagues all over again. Figures Baine would be okay with this.

DEAN

(nosy)
It figures how?

BILL

Stay out of grown folks' business.

LILLIAN

Stay out of grown folks' business.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

I didn't understand all the reasons why Mama's friendship with Coach Baine often caused conflicts. I just didn't want it to keep my plan from happening.

LILLIAN

For your information, Cliff had the same initial reaction as you but I talked him into it.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Cliff? Coach Baine had a first name?!

BILL

Of course he'd listen to you. You talk everyday at work. Now he's made sure he gets to talk to you after work too with this "team mom" thing.

LILLIAN

You should be happy I have a friend at work. Or would you rather me have to come home and complain to you all the time?

BILL

(something inaudible)

LILLIAN

What?

BILL

Nothing.

LILLIAN

I never say anything about your work friends.

BILL

If you have a problem with Booker, Charles or Lee, I'm all ears.

A beat.

LILLIAN

That's not fair and you know it.

BILL

Fine. You and Dean do whatever you want.

He storms out.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE - DEAN'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Dean sits on his bed, practicing the riff from "**Today**" by **Tom Scott** on his saxophone. We see Bill's shadow looming in the hallway.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

My dad insisted we each play an instrument. Every spring was the same thing -- you'd be practicing in your room at night and would see his looming shadow in the hallway, listening. If you played well, the shadow would give a satisfied nod and walk away. If you didn't play well, you saw the shadow shake his head and come into your room. That meant six more weeks of practice before your summer started. It was like Black Groundhog's Day.

Dean hits a couple of bad notes. We see Bill's shadow in the hall shake his head disapprovingly and walk into the room. He sits on the bed next to Dean, but not to talk music.

BILL

Now what's this "black and white teams playing together" plan of yours really about?

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

I wanted to tell him about Hodges and Michael Thomas and being accused of acting white and not knowing what acting black was, but... I realized it was more than that. What came out surprised me as much as it did him.

DEAN

(blurts out)

I feel different everywhere I go, no matter who I'm around. Everybody tells me not to worry about it, but that's because they get to be whoever they want to be. But I know I'll always be different.

Dean pulls out the baseball flyer from the school hallway.

DEAN (CONT'D)

So I thought if everybody I knew -- from the neighborhood, from school -- if we all played in a game where we all felt different, I'd finally feel the same as everybody else.

Bill takes this in.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

What's always stood out to me isn't what my dad said next. It's what he didn't say. He didn't say that I was over-simplifying race relations. He didn't use the example of what they did to his father in the Tuskegee Experiment to prove his point. He didn't say that's why he only goes to black doctors and why he doesn't like the idea of us needing white people. Instead, he let me dream.

BILL

Boy, let me see that glove. I bet it needs to be broken in some. You got any Vaseline?

He then takes Marty's glove and shows Dean the proper way to oil it and break it in. On this father/son moment, we:

EXT. SUBURBAN BASEBALL FIELD - WEEKS LATER

Dean's team lines up on the first base side of the field. The white neighborhood team lines up on the third base side. There are mostly white families in the stands. Lillian and Kim sit next to VIVIAN BAINE. MAYOR EARL JAMES finishes his Opening Day speech.

MAYOR JAMES

And finally, we need baseball
because baseball is where children
learn to steal second base, and not
someone's bike.

Applause. Dean and Brad exchange looks from their teams' respective sidelines.

BRAD

(mouths)
He's not racist.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

To be fair, the mayor said that
every year. It wasn't racist, just
corny.

The National Anthem plays and the boys all take their hats off and look at the flagpole in center field.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

When I saw all these teams,
different races, different
backgrounds, lined up, singing the
anthem of our one country, I
couldn't help but feel like
something special was gonna happen.

He then sees Keisa sitting in the stands. She waves.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Then I saw Keisa and felt like I
was gonna throw up. Why did I
invite her?! What was I thinking?!

The game starts and Dean nervously plays outfield. Then, to everyone's surprise, Bill shows up. He sits next to Lillian, Kim and Vivian. But it soon becomes clear that Bill wants to show up Coach Baine. We see a SERIES OF CUTS where every time Coach Baine tells Dean to do something, Bill shouts something different to him from the stands.

Music Cue: "Who's Gonna Take the Weight" by Kool and the Gang

In the outfield:

COACH BAINE
Dean, come in some!

BILL
Stay deep!

Confused, Dean misses a pop fly.

At the plate:

COACH BAINE
Back of the box, watch the curve!

BILL
Front of the box, look fastball!

Confused, Dean watches strike three.

At the plate later. Bill now stands at the fence by the dugout:

COACH BAINE
Hands up, weight back!

BILL
Uh... Weight back, hands up!

Strike three again! Lillian just rolls her eyes.

LILLIAN
Bill, sit down. You're being ridiculous.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
I had no idea what was going on between the parents, and I didn't know this had more to do with my dad's jealousy than anything. To me, my dad had swallowed his pride to come watch me play and I wasn't going to let him down.

Suddenly, a high pop fly is hit to Dean in right field. He's not wearing his glasses, so we see his BLURRY POV of the ball falling from the sky. It looks like he doesn't have a chance but at the last second, he sticks his glove out and makes the game winning catch!

Keisa stands up and cheers, even blowing him a kiss. But when he looks over to the stands for approval, we see that while he was making the catch, the situation between the parents was escalating and none of them saw the play. Bill and Coach Baine are facing each other on opposite sides of the fence.

COACH BAINE

Bill, stay in your seat and let me do my job!

BILL

Oh, so you don't like it when I cross the line but it's okay for you to do it?

COACH BAINE

What's that supposed to mean?

Lillian and Vivian walk to the fence to calm their husbands down. Lillian pulls Bill aside.

LILLIAN

What's wrong with you? You know better than to be out here--
 (looks around; then under her breath)
 --showing your ass in front of white folks!

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

That was a universal rule that cut across all classes of black people. But it was too late now.

BILL

Don't tell me, tell him. Since y'all talk so much anyway.

Coach Baine takes offense at this. He looks to Lillian to step in.

COACH BAINE

Lil...

BILL

(same)
 Lill...

VIVIAN

(to Coach Baine)
 I warned you about them.

Now Lillian looks to Coach Baine to step in.

LILLIAN

Cliff...

VIVIAN

(same)
 Cliff...

It's a bad look for both families and other white parents start to gather.

COACH BAINE
(to Bill)
You need to calm down!

BILL
Don't tell me to calm down!

WHITE DAD
(interrupting)
We're so sorry. We just heard what happened.

BILL
(defensive)
Heard about what?

WHITE DAD
That Dr. King... was just shot.

They react, stunned.

LILLIAN
What?! Where?

WHITE DAD
In Memphis. It's all on the radio.

COACH BAINE
Is he...

WHITE MOM
They rushed him to a hospital.

WHITE DAD
We saw that you all were upset
and... We...

Bill, Lillian, Coach Baine and Vivian exchange looks. Black and white alike, they're all speechless. After a beat of awkward silence, Dean approaches with the game ball, unaware of what's happened and still on cloud nine.

DEAN
Wasn't this a great game?!

Even more awkward silence. On the collective shock, we:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE - DEN - LATER THAT NIGHT

The Williams are together with the Baines, watching the images on the news in silence. They've put their issues aside. Bill brings Coach Baine a beer from the kitchen. They stand with Vivian and Kim, glued to the TV, waiting for any update on the news. Dean sits on the floor with his ball and Marty's glove, still in his baseball uniform. He looks around for Lillian and crosses to the back.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dean finds Lillian in the bedroom, folding laundry in silence.

DEAN

Mama, are you gonna come watch the news?

She doesn't acknowledge him, but instead keeps folding laundry. He crosses back out.

INT. WILLIAMS HOUSE - DEN - CONTINUOUS

When Dean returns, there's a gasp from everyone.

WALTER CRONKITE (ON T.V.)

...Dr. Martin Luther King, the apostle of non-violence in the Civil Rights Movement, has been shot to death in Memphis, Tennessee.

The adults all stare at the screen, speechless. Dean exits.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dean gently approaches Lillian.

DEAN

Dr. King is dead.

She stops folding the clothes and stares straight ahead in silence. Without acknowledging Dean, she continues folding.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

I'll never forget that look on my mother's face. I just couldn't understand what was so important about folding those clothes...

INT. WILLIAM'S HOUSE - DEN

Dean returns to the den. Kim has started to cry. Vivian hugs her. Bill and Coach Baine still watch the news in disbelief. Suddenly, a woman's loud **scream** is heard from the house next door. Bill, Coach Baine and Vivian immediately head out the front door.

WALTER KRONKITE (ON T.V.)
 ...and police report that the news
 of the murder has touched off
 sporadic acts of violence...

Kim gets up and crosses to her room. She passes by the family bookshelf. We see her reach for the SAT study book from earlier, but then change her mind and reach for Eldridge Cleaver's "Soul on Ice" instead. She goes into her room and closes the door. Dean looks around and everyone's gone. He exits outside to join the others.

EXT. WILLIAMS HOUSE - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

People in the neighborhood have come out onto their porches or yards, looking after each other and making sure everyone knows what's going on. We hear another **scream** from next door.

BILL
 (to Coach Baine)
 We better go check on Ms. Handy.

As they walk across the yard, Dean hears various comments from the neighbors: "I'm sick and tired of this..."; "Nothing but them ol' white folks..."; "How long are they gonna keep doing this to us?"

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)
 I didn't understand a lot of what
 was going on. Especially why when
 people get really upset about
 something bad, they resort to
 destroying their own things. I just
 had this feeling that I needed
 something... familiar.

Dean picks up his bike from the drive and heads down the street. He takes his glasses off as soon as he's away from the house and rides his bike. Sirens can be heard faintly in the distance.

EXT. OLD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Dean rides up and walks towards the playground. He stops when he sees Tony and Keisa sitting on the swing set, kissing (their way of dealing with the emotions of the day).

Music Cue: "Maybe Your Baby" by Stevie Wonder.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

I didn't know what felt worse --
that the things going on in the
grown-up world didn't make sense,
or that the things going on in my
world strangely did.

Dean, in tears, sees a rock on the sidewalk. He picks it up and throws it as hard as he can towards the window of his old school. We hear glass **shatter** offscreen (the music stops). He puts his glasses back on, symbolizing him accepting things the way they are. He gets on his bike and rides home before anyone sees him.

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

Everybody in my family remembers
that day. But for different
reasons.

(We hear a baby cooing in the background)

ADULT DEAN (V.O.)

(re: cooing)

That's my first grandbaby. She means the world to me. But I can't help but wonder what world I'm leaving behind for her. All the divisiveness, fear, anger, unrest, inequality... Then it dawned on me that those same things seemed so insurmountable when I was growing up too. But if I look back at those turbulent times and think of them as my Wonder Years, then there's hope that I can help my kids and their kids have their own Wonder Years now.

(As we hear him comfort the baby in the background, we...)

END OF PILOT