Everybody Hates Chris

"Everyone Hates the Pilot"

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COLD OPEN

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

CHRIS, 13, and his brother Andrew aka "Drew", 10, are in separate beds sleeping. On the walls are posters of Rappers and Basketball players.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
1982. That was the year I turned thirteen. I thought being a teenager was going to be really cool.

2
EXT. MANHATTAN - NIGHT - FANTASY

A limo pulls up to a nightclub. Chris steps out wearing a fly outfit. He's with four GORGEOUS WOMEN. THE MANAGER, walks Chris past the LINE of PEOPLE waiting an into the club.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
I was going to have women, money, stay out late......

3
INT. THE CLUB - CONTINUOUS

The Party is Jumping. THE DJ waves to Chris as he goes to a VIP BOOTH, the Manager brings CHAMPAGNE.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
I thought it was going to be the bomb. I was wrong.

4
INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - RESUME

BAM! The fantasy ends as the door flies open and ROCHELLE, Chris' mom, clicks on a light. THE CLOCK reads 6:00 A.M.

ROCHELLE
Chris! Get in this bathroom and wipe the pee off the toilet seat!

5
CREDITS: RAPPER GRANDMASTER FLASH Performs "THE MESSAGE" OVER OPENING CREDIT SEQUENCE.
ACT ONE

5 EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS APT. - DAY

Chris' family is loading a moving van.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
When I turned thirteen my mother convinced my father to move us out of the projects. She always said project is just another word for experiment.

6 INT. LABORATORY - DAY

A WHITE RAT in a cage eats cheese.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
In the lab the government gives rats cheese.

7 EXT. PROJECTS - SAME

A YOUNG BLACK KID behind a gate eats cheese.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
And in the projects the government gives the people cheese.

8 EXT. BROOKLYN STREETS - DAY

Chris' father, JULIUS, drives the family through Brooklyn.

CHRIS
Dad, can we stop and get a burger?

JULIUS
You got some burger money?

ROCHELLE
Julius, the kids have to eat.

JULIUS
We get one combo meal. Drew gets the burger, Tonya gets the fries, Chris, you can have the drink.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
That's my father, Julius. He worked all the time to get money to move. (MORE)
ADULT CHRIS V.O. (cont'd)
I think he worked on every street
in Brooklyn.

ANGLE ON A DRY CLEANERS.

JULIUS
I used to work there.

ANGLE ON A TIRE REPAIR SHOP.

JULIUS
I used to work there too.

9
EXT. 606 VARICK ST. - DAY

Mom and the kids are carrying stuff into their new apartment.
NEIGHBORS watch. A THUG is spray painting "BED-STUY DO OR
DIE" on a building. Rochelle and the kids watch.

ROCHELLE
(to her kids)
If I ever catch one of you all
spray painting on a wall I will put
my foot so far up your behind
you'll have toes for teeth.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
That's my mother, Rochelle She had
a hundred recipes for whooping ass.

10
INT. HOUSE - QUICK CUTS

ROCHELLE
I'll slap the caps off your knees!

ANOTHER TIME -- ANOTHER OUTFIT

ROCHELLE
I'll knock you into last night!

11
OMITTED
INT. DINING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Chris brings in three bowls of oatmeal on a tray. Drew, 11 is standing by the table. He's clearly taller than Chris. Tonya, 10, sits playing with the sugar bowl.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
That's my younger brother Drew.
Everybody thought I was his little brother. My sister Tonya was the youngest so she never got blamed for anything.

Tonya knocks over the sugar bowl on purpose. Rochelle, in a robe and curlers, comes in on cue --

ROCHELLE
Chris, clean that mess up!

CHRIS
Tonya knocked it over.

ROCHELLE
Did I ask you that?

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Since I was the oldest, I had to be the responsible one. I was like the emergency adult.

EXT. FRONT PORCH – DAY

Dad is leaving for work. Chris stands at the door.

JULIUS
If you smell smoke and think the house is gonna catch fire, you get your brother and sister and get out of here.

EXT. FRONT PORCH – ANOTHER DAY -- ANOTHER UNIFORM

JULIUS
If you smell gas and think the house is gonna blow up, get your brother and sister and get out of here.
EXT. FRONT PORCH - ANOTHER DAY STILL - ANOTHER UNIFORM STILL

JULIUS
If you smell smoke, and your
brother catches on fire, I want you
to get your sister and get out of
here.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Fortunately the house never caught
fire.

INT. DINING ROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

The kids are still eating. Rochelle has toast and coffee.

CHRIS
Mom, how come Drew and Tonya get to
go to school in the neighborhood
and I have to go all the way to
Brooklyn Beach?

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Brooklyn Beach was a poor Italian
neighborhood on the other side of
Brooklyn. It was like Bed-Stuy
without the crackheads.

ROCHELLE
Because all the kids around here
your age are hoodlums. At least
those white kids have some sense.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
My mother thought anything
involving white people was better.

Julius comes in. He and Rochelle hug and kiss quickly. He
drops a NEW YORK PAPER on the table.

DREW
What's up, Dad.

They slap "five." Tonya is picking at her oatmeal.

TONYA
Hey daddy...

JULIUS
Hey baby! What's wrong with your
oatmeal?
TONYA
Chris made it too lumpy.

JULIUS
You don't have to eat it.

Julius snuggles with Tonya. Chris gathered the bowls up. There's some oatmeal left in Tonya's bowl.

JULIUS
I know you're not throwing that away. Eat that. That's thirty cent worth of oatmeal.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
My father always knew what everything cost.

17
INT. HOUSE - QUICK CUTS

JULIUS IS LOOKING AT A SPILT GLASS OF MILK.

JULIUS
That's forty nine cent, on the floor!

JULIUS LOOKS AT A HALF EATEN CHICKEN LEG IN THE TRASH.

JULIUS
That's a dollar and three cent, in the trash!

JULIUS LOOKS AT A TRAY OF BURNT BISCUITS.

JULIUS
That's two dollars, on fire!

18
INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Julius is eating and going through BILLS. Rochelle enters and starts to clear Julius's pate away. He opens one and finds a red notice.

JULIUS
Honey, did you see this?
ROCHELLE
(looking it over)
I paid this.

JULIUS
They say you only paid half.

ROCHELLE
I know.

JULIUS
I gave you all the money. How come you only paid half the bill?

ROCHELLE
I can’t believe you’re even asking me that.

JULIUS
I’m not trying to upset you. I’m just asking you a question.

ROCHELLE
No you’re not. You’re questioning my judgement. You’re either okay with the way I handle the bills or you’re not. If you want me to do it, let me do it.

JULIUS
You act like there’s a not a big red bill sitting on the table.

ROCHELLE
You know what? You do it.

JULIUS
Alright. I’ll do it.

ROCHELLE
(challenge)
Do it then.

She exits.

INT. STAIRWELL - LATER

Chris is coming down the stairs in clean white SNEAKERS.

ROCHELLE
Boy, you are not going to school in those sneakers.
ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Believe it or not, there was a time when you couldn’t wear sneakers everywhere.

CHRIS
How come? Everybody wears sneakers.

ROCHELLE
You look raggedy. You have an assembly today.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
My mother hated raggedy. She always said it’s better to be poor and neat than rich and raggedy. I think she said that because we were poor.

She produces a pair of SHINY BLACK LEATHER SCHOOL SHOES.

ROCHELLE
Here. . . wear Drew’s school shoes.

CHRIS
I hate these shoes. Everybody in school will make fun of me.

ROCHELLE
You’ve only been at the school a week. You don’t know everybody.

CHRIS
(sotto)
I’m the only black kid in the school. They know me.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY

20

The kids come outside. Rochelle follows. Chris has on the shoes.

DREW
How come he’s wearing my shoes?

ROCHELLE
Because you only have one pair of feet. Chris, don’t fool around after school. Get back here so you can let Drew and Tonya in.

CHRIS
You won’t be home?
ROCHELLE
I'm working today. You know the drill.

CHRIS
I know. Daddy's going to be asleep so don't wake him up until five o'clock.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
We had an arrangement; my father got to sleep, we got to eat.

Chris starts to go.

ROCHELLE
You got your bus pass?

Chris checks his pockets. Rochelle hands it to him.

ROCHELLE
Keep on. You lose this bus pass and you'll be walking to school.

(beat)
Here's two dollars for lunch.

He puts the money and the bus pass in his pocket.

EXT. VARICK ST. - DAY

The kids walk toward the school bus stop. Drew is clearly larger than Chris. Chris' shoes CLICK CLACK on the concrete.

ANGLE ON - KEISHA RIDENHOUR - 13, PRETTY, AS SHE COMES OUT OF A BUILDING.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
That's Keisha Ridenhour. At thirteen I didn't know a lot about sex, but I knew she had something to do with it.

Chris looks at his watch.

CHRIS
Seven forty. Gotta remember that.

KEISHA
(flornty)
Hey Drew.
DREW
What's up, Keisha...

CHRIS
You know her?

DREW
Yea...

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Drew was so cool that he got girls at ten that I couldn't get until I was thirty.

CHRIS
When y'all get home, don't ring the bell, don't knock on the door. Just wait. Okay?

TONYA
What if I have to go to the bathroom?

CHRIS
Go to the bathroom at school.

TONYA
That bathroom is nasty.

CHRIS
If you wake daddy up, he'll punch me in the face. If he does, I'm punching you in the face. And then he'll kill me and go to jail. You want daddy to go to jail?

TONYA
No.

CHRIS
Alright then.

They reach the school bus stop. Chris walks off.

22 EXT. BUS STOP - DAY 22 *

Chris comes running up. He is in front of ANOTHER SCHOOL.
ADULT CHRIS V.O.
That's Dolemite Junior High, the
school my mother wouldn't let me go
to. I didn't know what was so bad
about it.

GUNSHOTS and then PANIC are heard as Chris boards the bus.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Much like rock and roll, school
shootings were also invented by
blacks and stolen by whites.

23

INT. THE #26 BUS - DAY

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
My first bus was the twenty six.

Chris is the only kid on a BUS FULL OF ADULTS. All of them
are black. He reads the paper.

24

INT. THE #44 BUS - DAY

The PASSENGERS ARE MIXED RACE.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
My next bus was the forty four.

Chris is reads a HEADLINE about a "Chain Snatcher". There is
a PHOTO. Chris realizes it's THE MAN STANDING NEXT TO HIM. He*
snarfs a chain off a FEMALE RIDER and hops off the bus!

25

INT. THE #31 BUS - DAY

All of the passengers are WHITE.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
My last bus was the thirty one.
Because I was the only black person*
on the bus, I was always the last*
one anybody would sit next to.

A PREGNANT WHITE WOMAN looks around the full bus for an empty
seat. The only one is right by Chris. She opts to stand.

26

EXT. CORLEONE MIDDLE SCHOOL - DAY

Chris gets off in front of his school. Nothing but young
ITALIAN KIDS milling around.
ADULT CHRIS V.O.
I went to Corleone Middle school.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Chris walks past an ITALIAN PRIDE DISPLAY. EVERYONE is wearing SNEAKERS. Chris' school shoes CLICK CLACK LOUDLY as he walks. KIDS stare at him and SNICKER.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
My mother thought going to a white school meant I would get a better education and I would be safer.

A tough kid, CARUSO, smacks the books from the hands of a nerdy kid, GREG WULIGER.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
She was wrong on both counts --

Caruso comes toward Chris.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
That's Joey Caruso. Everybody was scared of him. And so was I.

He throws a shoulder into Chris. Chris' books go flying. Caruso STEPS ON CHRIS' SHOE as he walks by.

CARUSO
Nice shoes, Bojangles.

CHRIS
Bojangles? That's what your mother called me when I was tap dancing in her drawers last night.

A COLLECTIVE GASP from EVERY KID in the hallway. Caruso stops and turns. No one talks to him like that.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
I know you think I'm crazy, but if I let him get away with messing with me, he'd be doing it all year. I couldn't beat him, but he didn't know that, so I figured I might be able to "out black" him.

CARUSO
What?
CHRIS
(w/ bravado)
Did I stutter?

CARUSO
Do you know who I am?

CHRIS
Step on my shoe again and you gonna
find out who I am. I don't play
that. I'm from Bed-Stuy boy! I'll
bring half of Marcy up in here.
I'll beat your ass so bad you'll
need crutches in your sleep. I'll --

Caruso punches Chris hard in the chest, stopping the rant
immediately. Chris flies backward into DR. RAYMOND, 50, a
military type principal. Chris looks up to see Dr. Raymond.

RAYMOND
What's your name?

CHRIS
Chris.

RAYMOND
I'm Dr. Raymond, your new
principal. Now get off my feet.

Chris gets up. Caruso laughs. Raymond look him over.

RAYMOND
(to Caruso)
That's funny? That's not funny.
What's your name son?

CARUSO
Caruso.

RAYMOND
Fix yourself up next time you come
to my school.
(re: Chris)
See those shoes? They say
something. They say I'm a student.
I want to learn. I want to see more
of this.
(re: Caruso)
And less of that.
(to Chris)
Don't bump into me again.

Raymond heads off. Caruso scowls at Chris as he walks off.
CARUSO
This isn't over, nigger.

Chris is speechless.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Black people invented open heart surgery, peanut butter, and the perm, but still haven't come up with a good comeback for being called nigger.

Chris and Greg pick their books up.

GREG
You really from Bed-Stuy do or die?

CHRIS
Yea.

GREG
Cool. You ever been shot?

CHRIS
No. Not yet.

GREG
Wow. I'm Greg.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Greg Wuliger was a nice kid who couldn't fight. Just a big "ass kicking magnet." He wasn't my first choice for a friend, but you have to be friends with the people that want to be friends with you.

CHRIS
I'm Chris.

GREG
Cool shoes.

Greg has on an older pair just like them.

CHRIS
(re: Raymond)
If he's the new principal, what happened to the old one?
28 EXT. CORLEONE MIDDLE SCHOOL - THE PREVIOUS YEAR

The OLD PRINCIPAL is being dragged away by the POLICE, screaming out to

OLD PRINCIPAL
I didn’t touch her! I Don’t know what you’re talking about!! Ask anybody!! I Swear! Come on guys!!

29 OMITTED

30 INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Rochelle is dressed for work. Still angry from earlier, she SLAMS and BANGS things around the kitchen.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
As hard as my father worked, he never really had any expectations. He knew he wasn’t going on vacation, he knew he couldn’t afford a sports car, the only thing he ever asked for, at the end of the day, was to have the big piece of chicken.

She pulls a BIG PIECE OF CHICKEN from a PLASTIC CONTAINER and puts it on a plate with VEGETABLES and wraps it in plastic wrap. She puts it in the fridge.

31 INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Rochelle enters. Julius is going over bills.
ROCHELLE
What are you doing?

JULIUS
I'm paying the bills. It says forty dollars. I'm paying forty dollars.

Rochelle picks up the bills and looks them over.

ROCHELLE
See that's what I'm talking about.
You're doing it wrong.

She puts them in her purse and heads for the door.

JULIUS
Where are you going?

ROCHELLE
To work.

JULIUS
Is Chris going to be home in time to wake me up?

ROCHELLE
Can I see in the future?

JULIUS
What's wrong with you?

She walks out -- SLAMMMMM!!

32  EXT. PIZZA JOINT - DAY

Greg and Chris are walking past the KIDS HANGING OUT.

GREG
I'm going to get a hot dog.

CHRIS
I'm gonna get a slice of pizza.

Greg walks off. Chris takes his bus pass out of his pocket with his money. He turns around and there's Caruso. Caruso steps on Chris shoes and pushes Chris. His things go flying. CARUSO'S BOYS scoop up the cash and the bus pass in a flash. Chris gets up and bravely faces Caruso.

CHRIS
Give me back my bus pass, man.
CARUSO
You want it? Take it.

Chris steps up to Caruso.

CHRIS
I'm not scared of you.

On cue, Raymond comes walking out of the pizza joint. Caruso deftly steps away from Chris as if nothing is happening. Once Raymond is gone, Caruso brushes past Chris and gets right in his ear.

CARUSO
After school, Satchmo.

Chris turns and watches Caruso walk off.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. REALTY OFFICE - DAY

Rochelle is at her desk in a small Realty Office. A FEMALE CO-WORKER sits across from her. Rochelle is on the phone... Rochelle has half of her lunch on her desk, uneaten. He CO-WORKER eyes the un-eaten half of a sandwich.

ROCHELLE
(on the phone)
...Hello? No it is not okay if you put me on hold.. Hey!

CO-WORKER
I hate when they do that. Are you gonna eat the rest of that sandwich?

ROCHELLE
No girl, you can have it..

The co-worker grabs the sandwich up. She is so happy.

ROCHELLE
(into phone)
Hello? Hello? I swear!

She hangs up. Rochelle's manager, MR. CORLISS, black, 40-ish, comes over. He speaks softly to Rochelle

MR. CORLISS
Are you okay?

ROCHELLE
What?

MR. CORLISS
I overheard you on the phone. I'm just wondering if you're okay.

ROCHELLE
(defensive)
If you got something to say just say it.

MR. CORLISS
I was just wondering if you're okay.
ROCHELLE
I don't see you asking nobody else if they're okay. I'm on the phone for two minutes, all of sudden you wanna know am I okay. You act like I'm the only one around here making calls.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Because my dad always worked two jobs, my mother would threaten to quit a job for no reason at all.

ROCHELLE
My man works two jobs. I don't need this.

MR. CORLISS
I was just wondering if you were okay.

ROCHELLE
I'm fine. You happy?

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Can you believe she had only been there three days?

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

A GANG OF KIDS have gathered a short distance away. Caruso is in the center waiting for Chris, who's walking toward the crowd with Greg.

GREG
Are you crazy?

CHRIS
No. It's a school fight. All I have to do is get in the first punch and somebody will stop it.

Greg slides into the crowd. Chris and Caruso square up.

CIRCLE OF KIDS
(chant)
Fight... fight...

CARUSO
What you waiting for Cornbread?

POW!!! Chris throws a haymaker! He quickly turns to Greg.
CHRIS
This should be over any minute.

TIME PASSAGE FIGHT MONTAGE - CHRIS IS LOSING THE FIGHT AS: 35 *

STOCK: CLOUDS ROLL BY HIGH SPEED IN THE SKY

STOCK: A FLOWER GROWS THRU THE CONCRETE AND FULLY BLOOMS

A COP WALKS BY, SEES THE FIGHT, AND CONTINUES ON

CHRIS
Is somebody gonna stop this!?

CHRIS SEES HIS BUS

as it pulls up across the street. He tries to run for it but Caruso grabs him in a headlock.

CHRIS RAISES HIS FOOT HIGH

and stomps on Caruso's foot with all his might. Caruso SCREAMS and falls to the ground. Chris reaches into Caruso's shirt pocket, grabs his bus pass, and takes off after the bus with TWENTY KIDS CHASING HIM.

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS 36 *

Chris races after the bus...

CHRIS
WAITTTTTT!!!!!!!!!!

EXT. ONE BLOCK AWAY - SAME 37 *

The bus is at the next bus stop. SEVERAL PASSENGERS get on.

INT. BUS - SAME 38 *

The driver checks HIS MIRROR. He sees Chris running and the kids chasing him.
BUS DRIVER
(to Passengers)
Come on. Let's go. Hurry up.

The NEXT TO LAST PASSENGER gets on the bus.

PASSenger
(to Driver)
There's a kid trying to catch you.

BUS DRIVER
Yea.. I see him. Hurry up.

The LAST PASSENGER gets on and the doors start to close. Chris flies between them with the mob hot on his tail. They BANG THE DOORS as the bus pulls away. Chris flashes his bus pass. He sits next to a WHITE MAN. The White Man moves.

39 EXT. VARICK ST. - DAY

Chris comes running around the corner... He hears Tonya IN THE DISTANCE. He runs faster.

TONYA (O.S.)
DADDDDDYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYYY
CHRIS
Will you be quiet!? Now when we get inside, I don’t want to hear any noise. None. You understand?

She nods.

41
INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - LATER

Tonya comes out of the bathroom. Chris is waiting there with a large blanket and several pillows.

42
INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Chris covers the toilet with blankets and pillows to muffle the sound. He FLUSHES. You can barely hear it.

43
INT. LIVING ROOM - SHORT WHILE LATER

The kids are watching SILENT TELEVISION. Tonya starts to LAUGH OUT LOUD. Chris smashes a cushion over her face.

44
INT. PARENT’S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Chris peeks in. Dad is asleep in his uniform.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
My father slept in his uniform.
That way, when he woke up he would be ready to go.

Chris opens the door with a long SQUEAK. Dad fidgets. Chris freezes. Dad settles in. Chris tip toes across the room as quietly as he can. Dad GRUNT/SNORES, Chris freezes. Chris creeps to the closet, and goes inside. He finds a small SHOE SHINE KIT. He gets it and creeps out.

45
INT. BOY’S BEDROOM - MONTAGE

Chris tries to clean his shoes.

HE USES SOAP AND WATER FROM A BUCKET

HE USES SPRAY CLEANER (FORMULA 409)
HE USES SOS PADS.

Finally all of the dirt is gone but the shoes aren't shining.

Chris has his shoes in front of him, the polish, A CUP OF WATER, AND A WHITE BATH TOWEL. He takes the white towel, and scoops up a wad of polish... He gets to work on his shoes.

LATER

He picks up his school shoes. They're like new. He puts them in the closet. He picks up the once white towel. It's covered with BLACK SHOE POLISH. Chris takes the towel and shoves it deep in the bottom of a hamper. His stomach GROWLS.

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46

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Chris looks in the Fridge. He sees SOMETHING WRAPPED IN FOIL. He takes it out and unwraps it. There's one BIG PIECE OF CHICKEN on his father's plate.

47

INT. KITCHEN - SHORT WHILE LATER

Chris is eating the chicken. He looks at the clock. It's five o'clock. He finishes the chicken off.

48

INT. DAD'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dad is asleep. Chris creeps back in and puts the shoe polish back. Then he shakes Julius gently to wake him.

CHRIS
Dad.. Dad.. it's time to get up.

JULIUS
(groggy)
Is it five o'clock?

CHRIS
Yes.

JULIUS
Not four fifty-nine?

CHRIS
No. It's five.

Julius sits up. Yawns and stretches.
JULIUS

Good.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The PHONE RINGS. Chris picks up.

CHRIS

Hello.

INT. REALTY OFFICE - SAME

ROCHELLE

It's mom. Is your father up?

INTERCUT

CHRIS

Yep.

ROCHELLE

Good. Take his plate out of the refrigerator and put it in the oven.

CHRIS

What plate?

ROCHELLE

The one with the big piece of chicken.

Chris looks down at the chickenless plate and SCREAMS.

CHRIS

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Julius is at the table. HIS LARGE MAN HANDS are holding a teeny tiny chicken wing. He takes a little tiny bite.

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - SAME

Rochelle is trying to contain her anger.
ROCHELLE
Chris, haven't I ever told you -- DO NOT EAT THE BIG PIECE OF CHICKEN! How's your father supposed work two jobs on a chicken wing? Huh?

CHRIS
I was hungry.

ROCHELLE
Eat a cracker. Have a biscuit. You could eat anything. But if all we got in the house is big pieces of chicken, you find the smallest one and eat that. Your father gets the big piece of chicken. You understand?

CHRIS
Yea.

She notices his shoes.

ROCHELLE
Well at least you didn't mess up your school shoes. Give me some sugar.

She hugs and kisses Chris. Then pulls the hamper from the closet and heads to the door. Chris watches, very concerned.

ROCHELLE
Go to bed.

53
INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Rochelle walks past Julius without saying a word.

JULIUS
Rochelle...

ROCHELLE
What?

JULIUS
I wasn't trying to tell you what you do. I'm working hard to pay for this place...
ROCHELLE
Just because you make money doesn’t mean you know how to spend it. You have to know how to work the system.

JULIUS
What system?

ROCHELLE
The debt system. I run this house just like they run the country, on a deficit. Rent is due on the third and I pay that on the ninth with your check from the seventh. If you pay the whole light bill now, I’m not gonna have money for food, the rent will be late, and then you gotta work overtime. If I didn’t make sure we owe people money, we wouldn’t have any money at all.

JULIUS
Oh. Why didn’t you say that then?

ROCHELLE
Because you didn’t ask.

She starts to walk off. He grabs her gently by the arm.

JULIUS
Hey, I’m sorry. Okay.

ROCHELLE
(kidding)
Who told you to open the mail anyway?

54 INT. BOYS BEDROOM - LATER

Chris’ CLOCK reads 11:10 p.m. Drew is in bed asleep. Chris is staring at the ceiling. The door opens. Julius peeks in...

CHRIS
Dad..

JULIUS
Hey man, I thought you were asleep.

CHRIS
I’m sorry I ate the big piece of chicken.
JULIUS
That was eighty nine cent worth of chicken. You didn’t get enough to eat at lunch?

CHRIS
I was just still hungry.

JULIUS
Next time eat a little something extra at breakfast, okay?

CHRIS
Okay.

Julius gives Chris A DOLLAR.

JULIUS
Don’t go pulling this money out, somebody will try to rob you. And don’t tell you mother about this.
(beat)
Everything okay at school?

Chris considers his next words...

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
I didn’t tell him about the fight. because my dad went to school in the south during civil rights.

STOCK: KIDS BEING ESCORTED INTO SCHOOL BY TANKS, WHITE PEOPLE SCREAMING AT STUDENTS.

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
After hoses, tanks, and George Wallace

SHOT: JOEY CARUSO STARES MENACINGLY INTO CAMERA

INT. BOYS BEDROOM - RESUME

ADULT CHRIS V.O.
Somehow Joey Caruso didn’t compare.

CHRIS
(waits a beat)
It was okay.

JULIUS
Good. I’ll see you in the morning.
ADULT CHRIS V.O.
My father wasn't the type to say "I love you." He was one of four fathers on the block. "I'll see you in the morning" meant he was coming back. Coming back was his way of saying I love you.

Julius is almost gone. He turns back.

`JULIUS
Turn that clock off boy. You can't tell time when you sleep. That's two cents an hour.

Chris unplugs his clock. He closes his eyes to go to sleep.

ROCHELLE (O.S.)
Chris!! What the hell happened to my towel!!

Chris eyes pop open!

BLACK.

END OF ACT TWO