"REL"

"PILOT"

Written by

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COLD OPEN

FADE 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 ONE

SCENE 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 pedalyte.

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 ONE

SCENE 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 GREETS 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 ONE

SCENE C

INT. 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’mom 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 MEETING 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 ONE

SCENE 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
going 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 TWO

SCENE E

FADE 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 TWO**

**SCENE 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 TWO

SCENE G

EXT. 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. Not 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 TWO

SCENE 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 THREE

SCENE 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 THREE

SCENE K

INT. 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 THREE

SCENE I

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