FRESH OFF THE BOAT

by

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Based on the memoir by Eddie Huang

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FADE IN:

INT. ROOM - DAY

Notorious B.I.G.'s “Big Poppa” PLAYS over a SERIES OF CLOSE UPS of someone putting on bling: thick gold bracelet... big-ass watch... gold neck chain... Orlando Magic baseball cap... brand new starter jacket...

CUT WIDE to REVEAL all the bling is on EDDIE HUANG (12). He strikes a pose, looking hard at his reflection in the mirror. He slides on pimp shades as our show title FADES UP: **Fresh Off The Boat.** Eddie pulls open a curtain and we realize...

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE - CONTINUOUS

...he's in the dressing room of a department store. He swaggers over to his mom, JESSICA HUANG (40) and younger brothers FREDDY (11) and GARY (9).

EDDIE
Yo, mom, what do you think? Fresh as hell, right?

JESSICA
Eddie, don’t say hell.

GARY
He also said ‘butthole’ in the car.

EDDIE
Shut up, Gary!

GARY
Mom, Eddie told me to shut up!

JESSICA
Eddie, don’t talk about holes!

FREDDY
(admiring Eddie’s outfit)
Nice bling, kid.

EDDIE
‘Preciate, son.

A security guard walks past, smiling big and waving at them. Freddy looks confused.

EDDIE
(explaining)
Security guards love us, yo. An Asian family in a department store? That’s like handing them a pillow and telling them to take a nap.

He turns to his Mom.

EDDIE
Please, Mom? Can I get this??

JESSICA
(hesitates, then)
How much is it?

She reaches to check a price tag dangling off his jacket.

EXT. DEPARTMENT STORE - MINUTES LATER

The Huang family walks out of the store. Eddie wears a shitty dinosaur t-shirt and dorky shorts, super bummed.

JESSICA
You think money falls from the sky like rain?! My wedding dress cost less than that! And my wedding dress was nice. Until your father's clumsy fingers got a hold of it.

EDDIE
You said I could have new clothes for when we move to Orlando!

JESSICA
Your dinosaur t-shirt is almost new! And Tyrannosaur is cool. That'll be fine, we're not made from money, what the hell!

GARY
Mom, don't say hell.

JESSICA
Oh shut up, Gary. And let go of me, Sweaty Hand.
(wiping her hand on her pants)
What you so nervous about?!

END COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

EXT./ESTAB. ORLANDO 1994 - MONTAGE

CHYRON: Orlando, 1994. B.I.G.'s “Big Poppa” PLAYS as we see white southern rednecks, Elian Gonzalez, Disney World tourists, the boy band explosion, millionaire athletes, all of which leads us to...

INT. DODGE CARAVAN - CONTINUOUS

...Eddie, sitting in the backseat, headphones on, staring out the car window at the passing Florida landscape*(the previous montage plays as if Eddie was seeing it out the window, so it connects to and gives context to our show)*.

B.I.G. still playing in his ears, Eddie looks over at his family. Gary is singing along to something we can’t hear. His dad, LOUIS HUANG (40), drives and also sings. Freddy is asleep, Jessica stares out the window and GRANDMA HUANG (60s, speaks no English) contentedly munches on a bag of Combos.

Eddie takes off his headphones and is instantly hit with the musical opposite of B.I.G. -- Ace of Base’s “The Sign”.

LOUIS/GARY
(singing along)
I saw the sign... and it opened up my eyes, I saw the sign!

EDDIE
Ahhh, stop, that music sucks!

JESSICA
Eddie, don’t say “music sucks” in front of Grandma. She loves music.

Grandma nods... to the beat. Louis turns down the radio.

LOUIS
Eddie, I know you’re not excited to leave your friends in D.C. but you’re gonna love Orlando. I’ve been there for six months setting up the restaurant and I’ve grown to love it like a daughter.

EDDIE
I don’t know why we have to move. Why couldn’t you keep going back and forth between Orlando and D.C.?

LOUIS
Because we're family. We belong together.

JESSICA
Your father's right.

LOUIS
Yes, see?

JESSICA
Which is why we left Chinatown in D.C., left the rest of our family and friends to come here...

LOUIS
Exactly! An exciting opportunity for us.

JESSICA
...left everything we know to come to a place where we know nothing and no one and where the humidity is not good for my hair...

LOUIS
Riiight, okay.

JESSICA
...and for what? So your father can own a cowboy restaurant.

LOUIS
It's called Cattleman's Ranch Steakhouse and it's beautiful. We designed each table to look like a wagon wheel.

JESSICA
(sighs, to herself)
I should've known. I saw that squirrel eat her babies on my wedding day. I knew it was a bad omen, but... I was already dressed.

EXT. CUL DE SAC - AFTERNOON

Surburban. The Dodge Caravan is parked next to a moving van and movers walk boxes into the house. Eddie and Freddy stand on the lawn, surveying their new neighborhood. A BAREFOOT KID on a sit-down lawnmower drives past them down the street.

EDDIE
Lotta white folks here. The opposite of our 'hood in D.C. The only white people we ever saw there were tourists who got lost.

EXT. CHINATOWN - WASHINGTON D.C. - FLASHBACK

All the buildings have only Chinese writing on them. Eddie and Freddy sit on the steps outside a townhouse. A WHITE TOURIST COUPLE walks by, big map unfolded in front of them, loaded down with cameras. They stop and turn to the boys.

WHITE TOURIST
(shouting, as if they don't speak English)
WHITE. HOUSE. WHITE! HOUSE!

Eddie and Freddy look at each other.

EXT. CUL DE SAC - BACK TO SCENE

Freddy looks around and points at something O.S.

FREDDY
That guy's not white.

EDDIE
That's the mailman. He's at work right now. He gets to go home.

FREDDY
(points)
What about--

EDDIE
Gardener.

FREDDY
That lady's--

EDDIE
The nanny.

FREDDY
Huh.

EDDIE
Yeah. It's the real.

Jessica walks up. The humidity is already affecting her hair in a negative way. *(This launches a runner where every time we see Jessica her hair is increasingly unmanageable.)*

JESSICA
You boys just gonna stand there or pick up a box and help?

EDDIE
How come you're not making Gary help?

JESSICA
He's growing, he needs to nap.

EDDIE
We're growing too!

JESSICA
He's growing more!

FREDDY
Mom, is there a Chinatown in Orlando?

JESSICA
(points at their house)
You're looking at it.

A pack of white women rollerblade up, all dressed in matching outfits (knee pads, helmets, etc). They are Deidre, Amanda, Samantha... aka the SOCCER MOM BALLERS (not only do they look similar, they also speak incredibly fast).

DEIDRE
Hi welcome to the neighborhood I'm Deidre that's Amanda that's Samantha that's Lisa that's Carol-Joan, welcome welcome welcome!

They all stare at Jessica, expectantly. She clearly has no idea what this woman just said.

JESSICA
Thank you, white woman, white woman and white woman. I'm Jessica.
(sotto, to Eddie & Freddy)
Boys, stay close. Mommy might be in a fight.

DEIDRE
Ohhh, I was expecting something more exotic but I love the name Jessica, I had a sorority sister with that name, she died in a riptide accident, we dedicated a section of the highway to her--

A black Corvette pulls into a driveway. MARVIN (60s) is driving, with a sexy much younger girl, HONEY (25), in the passenger seat. She wears a short tennis dress.

EDDIE
(admiring)
Piiiimp.

FREDDY
(shrugs)
I don't roll with girls in dresses. I like it when they look regular.

EDDIE
You zig when I zag, I respect that.

DEIDRE
(gossipy)
That's Marvin and his second wife Honey she used to be his dental hygienist but wound up cleaning more than teeth--

Marvin and Honey wave to the Huangs and the Ballers, who smile and wave back.

CAROL-JOAN
(through smile)
I heard she used to give handies to 'The Talking Heads'.

JESSICA
(confused)
I... are you all sisters?

DEIDRE
Anyhoo, we've got to motor, we go rollerblading every day if you'd like to join just give a holler!

They rollerblade off. Jessica turns to the boys.

JESSICA
The loudest one seems to be their queen.
(then)
If you ever date a woman like that, don't bring her home while I'm alive.

Louis walks out of the house and claps his hands together.

LOUIS
So, who's hungry??

EXT./ESTAB. CATTLEMAN'S RANCH STEAKHOUSE - EVENING

INT. CATTLEMAN'S RANCH STEAKHOUSE - SAME

Over the top "old west" décor. Lassos and old canteens. A proud Louis wheels Grandma in her wheelchair through, pointing out details as the rest of the family follows.

LOUIS
...and all the cactuses are planted in old spittoons! I wanted the waiters to wear boots with spurs, but it turns out those are right at Achilles level, so we had to go with black Reeboks...
(to overweight waitress)
Right, Nancy?

NANCY
(nods)
I got sliced up pretty bad.

EDDIE'S POV: dead bears mounted on the walls. A jackalope head. A 'The Best Oranges Come From Orlando!' poster.

EDDIE
Dude. Where the <u>hell</u> are we.

FREDDY
I don't think Shaq eats here.

EDDIE
I don't even think Scott Skiles eats here.

GARY
(confused)
Were there bears in the old west?

Grandma stares at the jackalope head.

GRANDMA HUANG
(in Chinese, subtitled)
You were too slow.

Jessica notices there aren't a lot of people there.

JESSICA
Where are all the customers?

LOUIS
Well, technically we're still in our 'soft opening'...

JESSICA
Louis there's hardly anyone here!
(pointing)
And that table's only drinking water.
(calling to table)
Why you bitches not drink beer?!

Louis pulls Jessica aside, into a sotto conversation.

LOUIS
The restaurant is doing well, okay?
(admitting)
But not as well as it could be.

JESSICA
Why didn't you tell me that??

LOUIS
Because I didn't want to give you another reason not to want to move here!

JESSICA
I should have married Oscar Wong! He has three rug cleaning stores!

LOUIS
Oscar Wong is crazy gay and I've done months of research, a steakhouse down here should be very successful! I just have to figure out why people aren't coming.

JESSICA
Maybe it's the food?

LOUIS
No, it's not the food, the food's perfect. Hector's a genius.

He gives a thumbs-up to HECTOR, who's working the grill in the kitchen. He's all Cholo-ed out, with a big neck tattoo of a serpent choking a mouse next to the word 'MUERTE'. Hector gives a sincerely enthusiastic thumbs-up back.

INT. HUANG KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Jessica packs lunch for the boys, who eat breakfast at the table. Her hair is not doing well. Eddie (wearing a Tupac t-shirt) looks bummed. Gary turns to Freddy.

GARY
Can I sit next to you on the bus?

FREDDY
Sure, if you want.

GARY
(immediately, to Eddie)
Me and Freddy are going to sit next to each other on our bus. You're on a different bus because you're at a different school, so I don't know who you'll sit next to. Definitely not Freddy though, he'll be next to me.

EDDIE
(second nature)
Shut up Gary, Mom it already sucks that we have to move in the middle of the school year but why do we have to start on a *Wednesday*? Why can't we wait until Monday?

JESSICA
Why wait? You need to go to school so you can go to college so you can make lots of money.

EDDIE
(sullen)
All you care about is money. You're all about the eggs.

JESSICA
What eggs? And why do all your t-shirts have black men on them? I don't ever understand you, Eddie.
(then)
Come on, you'll miss your buses.

She hands them their lunches and looks Eddie in the eye.

JESSICA
I want you all to be polite, respectful, and don't make waves.

EDDIE
Why're you only looking at me?

JESSICA
What? I'm not. I'm talking to all of you.

EDDIE
Dude, you were looking right at me.

Jessica forces herself to look at Gary, who looks so sweet. Jessica can't help but smile. She looks back at Eddie.

JESSICA
Okay, I was talking to you.

Eddie rolls his eyes and they start to exit as an excited Louis enters (he's in an undershirt, boxers and a hairnet).

LOUIS
Jessica, I figured it out!

EDDIE
Dad, how come we have to start school on a Wednesday--

LOUIS
(pushes them out)
That's a great question. Go to school.
(as the boys exit)
I was blow-drying my hair and I figured it out! I have an idea how the restaurant can attract bigger crowds.

JESSICA
(thrilled)
What?

LOUIS
A white face to greet the customers when they come in.

JESSICA
(less thrilled)
What?

LOUIS
I need to hire a white host! Instead of people coming in and seeing a Chinese face and saying "Huh? I thought this was old west steakhouse?", they see a white face instead and say, "Ahh. Hello, white friend, I am comfortable."

JESSICA
It's more like "Hello, white friend, I'm from the bank, and I need to talk to the owner of this place about how we made a huge mistake giving him money."

She walks off. He calls after her.

LOUIS
See, exactly, not welcoming! That's why no to your face and yes to the white face!

EXT./ESTAB. ABRAHAM LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL - MORNING

We hear a school bell RING as we hear:

MRS. UVEDA (V.O.)
Class, I'd like to introduce a new student.

INT. ABRAHAM LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - SAME

An uncomfortable Eddie stands next to the teacher, MRS. UVEDA (40s). EDDIE'S POV: a sea of white faces stare at him.

MRS. UVEDA
I know it's a little unorthodox, being a *Wednesday* and all, but I'd like you all to give a warm Abraham Lincoln Middle School welcome to...
(off paper, completely butchering it)
Huang... Yi... Ming.

EDDIE
(instantly)
Yeah, I'd like to be called Eddie.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ABRAHAM LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - LUNCH TIME

A rowdy cafeteria. Eddie stands in the entrance, the new kid, knowing no one. You remember that feeling? It's the worst feeling.

Eddie takes a deep breath and enters. He walks past tables of kids eating, talking, laughing (we also spot several kids eating 'Lunchables'). Eddie sits down at a table that's empty, save for one black nerdy kid (EDGAR).

EDDIE
'Sup. Cool if I sit?

EDGAR
No.

Eddie just stands there, unsure what to do.

EDGAR
Fine, sit if you want, but don't try to talk to me. I don't like kids. My best friend is a 40-year-old man.

Okay. Eddie sits. He takes his Tupperware container out of his bag when a blonde kid who looks like his name would be Brock calls to him from what is clearly the cool table.

PROBABLY BROCK
Yo. Yo, Chinese kid!

Eddie looks at Probably Brock and the table of jocks. Uh oh.

PROBABLY BROCK
You're in my homeroom. What's your name again, something Chinese?

EDDIE
My name's Eddie.

PROBABLY BROCK
Eddie.
(tense beat, then, re: Eddie's shirt)
You into Tupac?

EDDIE
(visibly relaxing)
Oh, yeah, man. He's sick.

PROBABLY BROCK
I bought 'Thug Life' the day it came out.

EDDIE
My cousin waited in line at Tower Records all night for that ish!

PROBABLY BROCK
Yo, come on, come sit with us.

EDDIE
(stunned)
Yeah? Ok man, cool.

EDGAR
(shaking his head)
A white dude and an Asian dude bonding over Tupac and I'm stuck over here in no man's land.

Eddie grabs his stuff and moves over to the new table, introducing himself to everyone.

EDDIE
'Sup, I'm Eddie. Hey dude, Eddie.

All the kids ad-lib greetings back. Eddie smiles. For the first time it seems like Orlando might not be that bad...

...and then he takes the top off the Tupperware container his Mom packed for him. Immediately, Probably Brock recoils.

PROBABLY BROCK
Uch, what's that??!

EDDIE
This? It's Chinese food my Mom--

But no one's listening. The kids all hold their noses, cover them with their shirts, etc.

POPULAR KIDS
Gross! / That stinks! / I'm gonna throw up! / It's worms! Ying Ming is eating worms!

PROBABLY BROCK
Dude, get outta here! Go!

Red-faced embarrassed, Eddie gets up and walks back over to Edgar's table. As he walks, he can hear the laughter start to spread through the cafeteria and get increasingly louder. Eddie sits down. Edgar leans towards him.

EDGAR
Look, I get it. I know what it's like to be different. It sucks. So I'm glad you're here.
(off Eddie's hope for compassion)
Because now there's somebody <u>more</u> different than me. So it sucks a little less. For me. Sit elsewhere, Thug Life.

Eddie picks up his stuff and slumps off.

<u>END OF ACT ONE</u>

ACT TWO

EXT. CUL DE SAC - DAY

The white women rollerblade down the street (one has a small dog on a leash). In the middle of the pack is Jessica, struggling not to fall and break her neck.

DEIDRE
...I can't believe Jake slept with Brittany, he knew Palmer Woodward was using her as part of a plot to destroy him and help Amanda take controlling interest of 'Melrose Place', right Jessica?

JESSICA
(no idea what she said)
Yes, all of those white people sound like they're making mistakes.
(then, relieved)
Oh, the school bus is here! I better see how my boys' day was!

We see the school bus has pulled up at the end of the street. The doors open and Eddie storms off.

DEIDRE
Okay sugar bye see you tomorrow!

The Ballers blade off as Eddie approaches.

JESSICA
How was--

EDDIE
They said my lunch smelled!

JESSICA
(confused)
Smelled delicious?

EDDIE
No, they said it stank, Mom! They wouldn't even let me sit in the cafeteria, I had to eat behind the gym where the janitor smokes!

JESSICA
(beat, then)
Well, they just don't know, that's all. It takes time to get used to something different.

As she talks, the same Barefoot Kid we saw earlier drives his sit-down lawnmower down the street past them. She notices.

EDDIE
I hate it here! I want to go back to D.C.

JESSICA
(she does too, but can't say that)
Eddie, that's not possible. We're here now and we all have to make the best of it. Like I'm doing with these neighborhood women. You think I like pretending Lisa isn't carrying a baggie of dogshit in her hand? No, I don't. We all see it in there, rolling around. But I'm trying. And you have to try too.

EDDIE
You're never on my side!

Eddie storms off into the house. Another bus pulls up and Freddy and Gary get off. Freddy walks up, holding hands with a cute 11-year-old girl, KIM.

FREDDY
This is my girlfriend, Kim.

KIM
Hi, Mrs. Huang!

FREDDY
I'm gonna walk her home, okay?

KIM
Bye, Mrs. Huang!

They walk off, leaving just Gary and Jessica standing there.

GARY
I have so much to tell you.

INT. CATTLEMAN'S RANCH STEAKHOUSE - EVENING

Louis looks at a resume as he interviews MITCH (white, 30s).

LOUIS
So, Mitch, where are you from?

MITCH
Here in Orlando. Born and raised.

LOUIS
I love Orlando! I have a baseball hat that says 'Orlando' on it. Each letter is a different color.

MITCH
My aunt has that same hat!

Jessica enters. Louis is surprised.

LOUIS
Jessica, what're you doing here?

JESSICA
I knew you were interviewing whites today.

LOUIS
I know, you think it's a bad idea--

JESSICA
I changed my mind.
(off his look)
I went rollerblading with Samantha and Alabama and they talked about things I didn't understand and a place called Melrose I didn't know, and I realized, white people have their own secret code. So maybe you're right, maybe it couldn't hurt to hire one.

LOUIS
(smiling)
Okay, good--

JESSICA
But it has to be the right one.
(turns to Mitch)
We weren't born on Friday.

MITCH
Excuse me?

JESSICA
I know you think, oh, they just moved here, they don't know what's going on... but we know what's going on. I know.

MITCH
(intimidated)
I'm sure you do.

JESSICA
You think you can come in here and just do whatever you want and eat food for free and waste napkins...

LOUIS
Take it easy.

JESSICA
I don't like his eyebrows and he has a tricky forehead.
(then, to Mitch)
How many girls have you gotten pregnant?

LOUIS
Oh my god.

JESSICA
I'm trying to see how responsible he is. If he's running around, getting girls pregnant, how is he going to make sure the register's even at the end of the night?

MITCH
I've never gotten any girls pregnant!

JESSICA
(even more wary)
I have three young boys, are we going to have a problem?

EXT./ESTAB. CUL DE SAC - NIGHT

INT. MARVIN & HONEY'S HOUSE - SAME

Marvin and the Huangs (minus Grandma) sit at the table. The boys stare at Honey (who's wearing inappropriately tight pants) as she sets food on the table. Jessica tries her best not to look at the pants but can't help but steal glances.

MARVIN
We're so happy you could join us for dinner.

LOUIS
Thank you for inviting us.

HONEY
Believe me, I know how it feels to be new in the neighborhood!
(into the distance)
(MORE)

HONEY (cont'd)
The other women staring at you. You tell yourself that they're just jealous but... I don't know. Sometimes that's just something we tell ourselves.

JESSICA
(beat)
I love your pants. Are they comfortable? Or is it tough to have that fabric pressed right up against your machine?

LOUIS
(bright, changing the subject)
So, how long have you two been married?

MARVIN
Four months.

LOUIS
(instantly grave)
The number four is bad luck. It means death.

JESSICA
(still on the pants)
I mean, maybe my triangle's more sensitive because three people have come out of it--

HONEY
Are you sure Grandma Huang didn't want to join us for dinner?

LOUIS
Oh no, thank you, she's fine. Her favorite show is on tonight and she didn't want to miss it.

INT. HUANG LIVING ROOM - SAME

Grandma sits in front of the TV, munching on Combos, watching JOAN RIVERS sell clothing on QVC.

JOAN RIVERS (FROM TV)
...if you're headed to a party or holiday gathering, you're sure to sparkle like the diva you are in this cape style pullover top...

Grandma laughs heartily, as if this were a hilarious joke.

INT. MARVIN & HONEY'S HOUSE - BACK TO SCENE

Honey sets a bowl of grey and a bowl of orange on the table.

FREDDY
(sotto)
What is it?

EDDIE
Looks like grey mush and orange crap.

GARY
I'm not eating it.

Honey spoons out grey and orange dollops on the boys' plates.

LOUIS
So, yes, we're excited to be here and for the future of Cattleman's Ranch. Do you know Mitch, by any chance? White fella...
(that's all he knows)
...white face... and arms and hands... and body?

Marvin spreads the grey stuff on a piece of bread. The boys watch him intently, as if studying an animal in the wild.

MARVIN
'Fraid not, sorry.

Eddie picks up a piece of bread and starts spreading grey stuff on it. Freddy and Gary look on in disbelief. Eddie winks at Honey, who smiles back. He takes a bite and starts gagging. He jumps up from the table and spits it out.

JESSICA
(mortified)
Eddie!

EDDIE
Ugh! What <u>is</u> that??

HONEY
(flustered)
It's tuna fish!
(points at orange bowl)
And that's mac 'n cheese.

Eddie aggressively wipes his tongue with his napkin as Gary shovels spoonfuls of mac 'n cheese into his mouth.

GARY
(mouth full)
This is really good.

INT. HUANG KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

Eddie and Freddy are finishing breakfast. Jessica enters, carrying a sick tray (thermometer, ice pack, gatorade, etc.).

JESSICA
Well, Gary's not going to school today. Apparently he's "lactose intolerant". His body is rejecting white culture, which I'm kind of proud of. Good job, Gary.

EDDIE
(bummed)
I should've gone orange crap instead of grey mush.

JESSICA
Hurry up, you'll miss your buses.

She hands them Tupperware container lunches again.

EDDIE
Mom, no, I don't want Chinese food lunch! I want white people food.

JESSICA
You had "white people food" last night and almost threw up! Gary's insides are dying! And I don't understand what the problem is, everyone loves Chinese food.

EDDIE
Orange chicken from Panda Express, not tomatoes and eggs and rice! Have my back for once, Mom!

JESSICA
The kids at your school will get used to it.

She hands him his lunch. Eddie's not happy about it.

EXT. CUL DE SAC - CONTINUOUS

The boys walk out of the house, towards the bus stop. Eddie tosses his lunch in a neighbor's trashcan.

FREDDY
What’re you doing? You’re not gonna have any lunch to eat.

EDDIE
I’ll be fine. Kids at your school don’t tease you about your lunch?

FREDDY
No, not yet.

EDDIE
They will. People here suck.

FREDDY
Totally.

They walk past a KID, who waves.

KID
Hey, Freddy.

FREDDY
Hey, what’s up?

Another kid calls at them from the bus stop.

ANOTHER KID
Hey, Freddy! Coming to my birthday party next weekend?

FREDDY
Hey George, I'll be there.

They arrive at the bus stop to find a smiling Kim waiting.

KIM
Hey boo. Got you a soda.

She hands Freddy a 7-Up. Eddie just stares at his brother.

EDDIE
I hate your guts.

INT. CATTLEMAN'S RANCH STEAKHOUSE - DAY

A smiling Louis enters, to find Mitch working the host stand.

LOUIS
Mitch, hey! How’s the lunch...

Louis looks around the dining area and his smile fades.

LOUIS
...crowd.
(beat)
Huh. Hasn't gotten any bigger.

MITCH
I think we have to give it time, y'know, for the word to spread.

LOUIS
That could take months. I need your caucasian features to work now. You don't know what it's like, sitting across the table from your wife, her staring at you, sweating you. "How's it going?" "How's it going?" "How's it going?" It's going, okay??

MITCH
(beat)
And you sure there's not another reason people aren't coming? Like maybe the food?

LOUIS
No, it's not the food, the food is perfect.

He looks over towards the kitchen and gives Hector another thumbs-up. This time Hector wears an undershirt and whatever tattoo he has across his chest is COMPLETELY BLURRED OUT. Hector gives another genuinely enthusiastic thumbs-up back.

INT. HUANG DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The Huangs (minus Freddy) and Mitch eat dinner. Gary is pale and has only saltines in front of him. Grandma is in the other room, watching QVC. Eddie shovels food in his mouth.

JESSICA
(beat, staring at Louis)
How's it going?

LOUIS
(almost overlapped)
It's going, yeah!
(then, to Mitch)
How about live jazz in the bar on Tuesday nights? Live music always attracts a crowd...
(losing steam)
...eh, jazz sucks.

Louis gets distracted by the TV Grandma's watching in the next room (it's a local commercial, where a Cal Worthington-type guy is walking on stilts through a car dealership).

GARY
(weak)
Where's Freddy?

JESSICA
He's having dinner at his girlfriend's house. She's Irish.

LOUIS
(proud)
He gets that from me. I've dabbled in Irish. Stuck a toe in.

Jessica notices Eddie wolfing down food.

JESSICA
Eddie, why're you eating so much?

EDDIE
(as he chews)
I'm hungry.

GARY
(turns away)
I... I can't even look at that.

JESSICA
Didn't you eat your lunch today?

EDDIE
Yeah, but I'm still hungry.

JESSICA
Oh, okay. How'd you like my *xiaolongbao*?

EDDIE
It was really good.

JESSICA
Liar! I didn't make *xiaolongbao*!

EDDIE
Okay, fine, I threw my lunch away!

JESSICA
I can't believe you, Eddie! It's good food I make, you love my food!

EDDIE
I do but you don't understand, it's different out there! It's not like how it is in here! Right, Mitch?

MITCH
(confessing, terrified)
We were both sixteen and it was an accident! It would've been babies having babies!

EDDIE
I need white people lunch! That gets me a seat at the table! And once you're at the table you get to change the rules. Represent, like NAS says. I'm not trying to eat with the janitor for the rest of my life, I got big plans. First, get a seat at the table. Second, meet Shaq. Third, change the game.

Everyone stares at Eddie.

LOUIS
Damnit, that was beautiful.

JESSICA
(sighs, relenting)
What's "white people" lunch?

EXT. WINN-DIXIE GROCERY STORE - NIGHT

It's huge, glowing in the darkness, all fluorescent lights and mus-ak. Other-worldly. Jessica and Eddie stand outside the entrance, squinting, shielding their eyes from the light.

JESSICA
I've never seen a store like this.

EDDIE
This is where Lunchables live.

SHOT FROM BEHIND: they look like two humans about to enter the spaceship from 'Close Encounters'.

JESSICA
If we get separated yell "rape" and I'll find you.

The automatic doors slide open as we come to the...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. WINN-DIXIE GROCERY STORE - SAME

It's even more overwhelming on the inside. Rows and rows and rows of food. Jessica and Eddie cautiously enter.

EDDIE
Whoa. This is different from all the little Taiwanese markets we went to in D.C.

JESSICA
(nervous for some reason)
Yes. It is. Beautiful and terrifying like Sydney from "Melrose Place".
(off his look)
I found out it's a TV show. I'm trying to assimilate.

They walk down an enormous aisle. A STORE EMPLOYEE appears out of nowhere, shoving a tray of dixie cups in their faces.

STORE EMPLOYEE
(too friendly/aggressive)
Try our new almond milk??

JESSICA
(startled)
No!!

They continue on, past the cleansers, cereals, fruits...

JESSICA
Look at all the kinds of apples. Who needs this many apples?

ANOTHER STORE EMPLOYEE pops up, clutching a tray of cheese cubes with toothpicks in them.

STORE EMPLOYEE #2
Goat gouda sample??

JESSICA
Back off!

They turn into the Lunchables aisle. Eddie's face lights up. Rows and rows of Lunchables boxes, as far as the eye can see.

EDDIE
Wow. Look at them, Mom.

He takes one off the shelf and stares at it in wonderment.

EDDIE
Everything fits perfectly inside the box. They're awesome.

He starts grabbing boxes of microwavable Pizza Lunchables. YET ANOTHER STORE EMPLOYEE springs up, holding a tray of see-through plastic cups with a single tortilla chip in each.

STORE EMPLOYEE #3
Fiesta tortilla chip!?

JESSICA
YOU ALL NEED TO GO HOME!

INT. CATTLEMAN'S RANCH STEAKHOUSE - NEXT MORNING

A commercial shoot is setting up (camera, cables, mics, etc). Louis walks through, making sure all is well.

LOUIS
(to various people)
How you doing? Everything alright? You good, Nancy?

NANCY
Can I have Saturday off? I play in a racquetball league.

LOUIS
Nope! Hey, Joe, no margaritas until after the shoot, okay? Ha ha, okay...

He approaches Mitch, who's dressed in an old-timey cowboy outfit, holding a lasso. Mitch looks very uncomfortable as he reads over some script pages.

LOUIS
Hey, Mr. Cattleman! How are we feeling, all ready to go?

MITCH
(re: pages)
I don't feel comfortable saying any of these words or doing any of this.

LOUIS
Mitch. It's just a local commercial. You're Mr. Cattleman and this is your ranch slash steakhouse. People will see it and love it and they'll come to the restaurant and you'll be famous!

MITCH
I'm not real comfortable with that. I owe like, four people money.

JESSICA (O.S.)
What is all this, Louis??

Jessica walks through the restaurant, looking at all the equipment, crew, etc.

LOUIS
We're shooting a commercial.

JESSICA
A commercial? What... why didn't you tell me?!

LOUIS
Because I knew you'd say it was dumb to waste money on a--

JESSICA
(blurting it out)
I hate it here! I hate Orlando!

Louis looks like he's been personally insulted.

LOUIS
But it's *Orlando*.

MITCH
(extremely uncomfortable)
I'll just... go... somewhere else.

Mitch scurries off.

JESSICA
I miss our family and friends in Washington D.C.! Eddie was right, it's different here and I don't understand it! The rolling women, the grocery stores where people hold food and yell... and Eddie's having a hard time at school and Gary's lactose intolerant and Freddy's... well, Freddy's fine... but all you care about is this stupid restaurant! Which was the whole reason I agreed to move here, because you said it was doing well but it's not! And look at my hair! MY HAIR IS TERRIBLE!

LOUIS
I'm trying to fix it! This is a great opportunity for our family!

JESSICA
We don't belong here, Louis! Let's just go home.

LOUIS
(thrown)
Is that what you really want?

Jessica nods. A beat, as they just stare at each other. A crew member signals him.

LOUIS
Well, maybe you and the boys should go then. But I can't finish discussing it right now because the donkey is ready for blocking.

He walks off. Jessica watches him go, upset. A beat, then Nancy approaches.

NANCY
Mrs. Huang, can I have--

JESSICA
(still sad about Louis)
No, Nancy. Saturdays are our busiest day. Are you a racquetball player or a waitress?

INT. ABRAHAM LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - LUNCH TIME

Eddie swaggers in, carrying his Pizza Lunchables. He confidently strides past Probably Brock and the others. He stops by a table where a kid is also eating a Lunchable.

EDDIE
(casual)
Oh cool, you got turkey and cheese? I got pizza.

He coolly keeps moving through the cafeteria to a microwave on a table, a few kids waiting to use it. Eddie gets in line **(we see Edgar get in line behind Eddie, who doesn't notice).** But the kids in front of him are taking forever to heat up their lunches for some reason.

In a SERIES OF CLOSE-UPS we see: the wall clock ticking away... the microwave clock slowly counting down... lunches rotating... Eddie shifting in place, impatient...

Finally, it's his turn and he's getting ready to pop open the microwave door when suddenly, out of nowhere, Edgar grabs him by the shirt and throws him to the ground.

EDGAR
(yelling)
Chinks get to the back!!

Eddie looks up, dumbfounded. The place goes quiet. Edgar looks around, happy at the reaction he's gotten, happy that he's no longer at the bottom of the food chain. CLOSE ON: Eddie's face. Wu-Tang Clan's "Protect Ya Neck" starts to PLAY as we CUT TO:

A MONTAGE -- of moments from the pilot that've pissed him off (the teasing, the teacher butchering his name, gagging on the tuna fish, his shitty dinosaur t-shirt from the Cold Open)...

BACK TO SCENE: And something goes off in Eddie. He's had enough. He jumps up from the floor.

EDDIE
You wanna go?? Let's go!

He grabs Edgar's arm, throws it in the microwave and SLAMS the door on it as hard as he can. Edgar slumps to the floor, crying. Eddie yells at the whole cafeteria:

EDDIE
(quoting Wu-Tang)
Turn the other cheek and I'll break your f***ing chin!

EXT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Eddie sits on a bench, head down. Through the closed door of the Principal's office, we (and Eddie) can hear everything.

PRINCIPAL HUNTER (O.S.)
...then, he grabbed Edgar's arm and slammed it in the microwave oven...

INTERCUT: between Eddie listening:

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - SAME

And PRINCIPAL HUNTER (50s), talking to Louis and Jessica.

PRINCIPAL HUNTER
...spraining it. And that's apparently when he yelled out a cuss word, a bad one.
(grave)
(MORE)

PRINCIPAL HUNTER (cont'd)
This is a very serious offense, Mr. and Mrs. Huang.

JESSICA
Yes, it is. We're very upset--

Eddie, listening, braces himself.

JESSICA
--that you didn't do anything to defend Eddie.

PRINCIPAL HUNTER
Excuse me?

Louis jumps in. *(Throughout the following, he and Jessica go back and forth, totally in sync with one another.)*

LOUIS
He was hit first! That boy called our son a chink, what're you gonna do about that?!

Eddie sits there, stunned.

JESSICA
How come that boy's parents aren't here, how come he's not in trouble, why'd you only bring Eddie in here?

LOUIS
You say sticks hurt your bones more than words, but that's not true!

JESSICA
If you try to suspend our son because of this, we'll sue everyone in this school.

LOUIS
(smiling)
Hey, it's the American Way, right?

Principal Hunter looks shaken, clearly not expecting this.

EXT. ABE LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - MINUTES LATER

Eddie, Louis and Jessica walk out of the building, towards their car. Eddie looks up at his parents, still stunned.

EDDIE
I don't... why...

Louis puts a hand on Eddie's shoulder.

LOUIS
You're my son. We're family. We always have each others back. Like The Scarface in my favorite movie, "The Scarface".

EDDIE
(beat)
It's just "Scarface" and his name is Tony Montana.

LOUIS
Shut up, Eddie.

Jessica puts her arm around Eddie.

JESSICA
You do your best not to make waves, but I'll never be mad at you for standing up for yourself. It takes courage to stay and fight, to not run away when things get hard.

LOUIS
(to Jessica, with meaning)
It's harder. To stay. But as long as we stick together, as a team, we can do anything.

JESSICA
(grudging)
Maybe.
(then)
Yes. Of course we stick together, we belong together.

Louis smiles at her. She smiles back. Then:

JESSICA
Oscar Wong is <u>not</u> gay.

LOUIS
Oscar Wong cut your bangs.

JESSICA
It's his hobby!

Eddie isn't listening. He's watching Probably Brock and the other kids who teased him approach in the parking lot. They see Eddie and stop. Tense. A beat... then Probably Brock and his buddies walk far around Eddie and his family, giving them a wide berth.

EDDIE
(smiles, to himself)
Yeah, son. Little bit of respect.

They continue to walk towards their car, Louis and Jessica completely unaware of what's just happened. The Notorious B.I.G. song we started the show with starts PLAYING again ("I love it when you call me Big Poppa") as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EDDIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Eddie walks into his room and his eyes widen. On his bed is the brand new Orlando Magic baseball cap from the Cold Open.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jessica dries dishes as Eddie runs in, holding his new cap.

EDDIE
Mom, thank you, it's super dope!

JESSICA
What are you talking about?

EDDIE
You got me the Orlando Magic hat!

JESSICA
No, I didn't.

EDDIE
But it was on my bed...

JESSICA
It wasn't me, I didn't buy it.

A beat, then Eddie smiles and nods in understanding.

EDDIE
Ohhh, got it. Wasn't you, 'cause if it <u>was</u> you, you'd have to get Freddy and Gary hats too. Gotcha.

He winks at her and strolls off... past Grandma, watching QVC. And an infomercial advertising sports gear. She smiles at Jessica, who smiles back.

JESSICA
Well, look who's credit card application got approved.

Grandma holds up a Visa card and kisses it.

EXT. HUANG HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Eddie walks out onto the front porch, puts on his new cap and tilts it to the side, just so. He strikes a pose, clearly feeling good. The Barefoot Kid (who we've seen driving through the neighborhood a couple times) drives up to Eddie on his sit-down lawnmower.

BAREFOOT KID
(matter-of-fact)
You guys just moved here.

EDDIE
Yup.

BAREFOOT KID
I'm Dave.

EDDIE
Eddie.

BAREFOOT KID
(beat, then re: hat)
You like basketball?

EDDIE
Yeah, man!

BAREFOOT KID
Me too! How great is Shaq?

EDDIE
Yo, where <u>is</u> Shaq? I'm tryin' to meet that kid!

Dave laughs at this. As Eddie and his new friend talk basketball, we come to the...

<u>END OF ACT THREE</u>

TAG

INT. CATTLEMAN'S RANCH STEAKHOUSE - DAY

Country music PLAYS. Someone sits at a table, an open menu obscuring their face. The menu is lowered REVEALING Mitch, dressed as “Mr. Cattleman”. He has red make-up on his neck.

MITCH
(terrible southern accent)
Hey, y’alllll. When my neck gets red from my white skin being in the sun all day, I like to stop by Cattleman’s Ranch for a spell.

He gets up and walks over to a table where over-the-top country bumpkin-looking girls sit. Mitch gestures to them.

MITCH
Maybe meet my wife or my cousin or my cousin-wife for a beer and a steer. Especially on Tuesdays, when we have a live jug band.

A few guys are dressed like the human version of Disney’s ‘Country Bears’. One BLOWS A NOTE into his jug for emphasis.

MITCH
So come on down to Cattleman’s Ranch Steakhouse, where you can be comfortable among your own kind and enjoy an onion blossom for $2.99.
(really doesn’t want to say this part)
Tell ‘em... Cattleman Mitch sent ya. Right, donkey?

WIDEN to REVEAL a donkey in a cowboy hat standing next to him. PULL OUT to REVEAL...

...Louis and Mitch, watching the commercial on the TV above the bar. Louis looks around the dining room -- it’s the same amount of people as before. He shakes his head as he walks off.

LOUIS
(muttering to himself)
Maybe it is the food, I don’t know.

END OF SHOW