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FADE IN:

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

The Middle of Nowhere.

A gentle breeze insistently rustles the straw- like grass, baked brown in the oppressive heat of an unrelenting Southern summer. It ceases and the fields instantly retreat back to their previous stoicism, undisturbed.

A distant strain of MUSIC invades from over the hills, challenging the stillness with a harmony of what exactly transpires when one is "*In the Still of the Night.*"

A BLUE 1964 "DYNAMIC 88" STATION WAGON cruises over the hill. A thin, pasty white arm dangles out the window, aimlessly beating out the rhythm of the music on the sill.

INT. DYNAMIC 88 - CONTINUOUS

ELI ROSENBERG, twenty two, cocky, a full head of wavy, well styled hair with a part straight enough to make Pythagoras jealous, enthusiastically doo-waps his way through the music. He steals a quick satisfied look at himself in the rear view mirror, clearly happy with both the reflection, and the young man behind it. He returns to the road but the temptation to recheck his reflection becomes to great, and he peeks back...

ELI

Ah, *shit.*

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Dynamic 88 pulls to a stop on the side of the highway.

A POLICE CRUISER rolls to an ominous halt behind. A pair of spit-shined black boots step out onto the hot asphalt, loudly clicking a direct path to Eli's open window.

The boots halt and the COP leans down- reflective sunglasses, stiffly pressed shirt, wide brimmed hat, and a *sneer*...

INT. ANOTHER CAR - SIMULTANEOUSLY

MICHAEL DUBOIS, black, twenty three, immaculately overdressed for driving, looks timidly up at the stoic COP looming just outside his open window.

MICHAEL  
Is there a problem, Officer?

COP  
License and registration, *boy*.

MICHAEL  
*Excuse me?*

The Cop places a hand on his CLUB. Michael fumbles for his paperwork and hands it to the cop, who frowns.

COP  
(mispronouncing)  
Du-bo-is. That African or something?

INT. DYNAMIC 88

The Cop looks up from Eli's license, eyebrow arched.

COP  
"Rosenberg." What nationality is that?

ELI  
Nationality? I'm American.

COP  
*Jewish*, right?

ELI  
German.

COP  
German? I thought they got rid of you.

Eli falls silent, shocked, as the Cop inspects his license.

COP  
Long way from New York, Rosenberg. You  
registrin' voters?

ELI  
What?

COP  
*Negros*. You registrin' 'em?

ELI  
Oh no. I'm... I'm going to Medical  
School.

INT. ANOTHER CAR

The cop furrows his brow.

COP  
 Medical School? What the hell kind of  
 medical school could you possibly be  
 going to, boy?

MICHAEL  
 Meharry Medical College.

INT. DYNAMIC 88

The Cop lowers his glasses to get a better look at Eli.

COP  
 You're kidding, right?

ELI  
 No sir.

He takes out an envelope, and with trembling hands removes a  
 LETTER, displaying it to the cop.

COP  
 Wouldn't have figured you for a  
 Meharry Man.

ELI  
 Because I'm white?

COP  
 Because you Jews own Harvard and Yale.

ELI  
 I wish I would have known that when I  
 was applying there.

The Cop frowns. He tosses the letter back into Eli's lap.

ELI  
 Have I done something wrong, officer?

COP  
 This ain't New York, Rosenberg. I  
 don't need some fancy Jewish reason to  
 pull you over.  
 (leans back, eyeing the  
 car)  
 Your brake light's out.

ELI  
(incredulous)  
My brake light?

EXT. ANOTHER CAR

The Cop SMASHES Michael's back left brake light out with his club. He walks calmly back to the window.

COP  
Yeah. The back left one.

He rips off a fix-it ticket.

COP  
You have two weeks to fix it.

INT. DYNAMIC 88

The cop rips off a fix-it ticket.

COP  
Welcome to Dixie, Rosenberg. Better watch your ass. The darkies don't like you any more than we do.

Eli takes the ticket.

ELI  
Yes, sir. Thank you sir.

The cop strides off, and Eli remains frozen, holding his breath.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY

The police car roars past the Dynamic 88, sending a thick cloud of choking dust into the open window.

**TITLE CARD: NASHVILLE, 1967**

INT. DYNAMIC 88

Eli picks up the rumpled ACCEPTANCE LETTER and gently smooths it out, folding it up as reverently as a flag. He delicately slips it back into the envelope, staring at the "Meharry Medical College" stamp officially displayed upon it...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROSENBERG KITCHEN - BROOKLYN, NEW YORK - DAY

Eli sits around the dinner table in a modest cramped Brooklyn brownstone with MIRIAM and HERMAN, his mother and father, SYD and BELLE, his aunt and uncle, noisily combatting each other, fork to fork, over the steaming plates.

HERMAN

Have you ever seen so much food?

MIRIAM

No one's telling you to eat it.

SYD

I think it's terrific.

HERMAN

Of course you do- you're a moron.

Belle laughs. Herman turns on her.

HERMAN

And you're a moron for marrying him.

Eli stares off.

BELLE

Still no word on School, hon?

HERMAN

(chuckles)

There's word all right.

ELI

(whines)

Dad!

HERMAN

Tell 'em.

MIRIAM

Leave him alone, Herman!

HERMAN

Twenty Nine applications.

ELI

Twenty *Eight*.

HERMAN

Twenty Nine rejections.

ELI  
Twenty *Eight*.

BELLE  
What happened?

ELI  
(shrugs)  
I don't know. I went straight A's my  
last two years at Brooklyn College.

BELLE  
What about the first two?

HERMAN  
Straight D's.

ELI  
I had an A in Theatre.

HERMAN  
Good. Go live with Shakespeare while  
you figure out what the hell to do  
with your life.

Eli stuffs his mouth with food to keep from screaming.

BELLE  
Why Medical School anyway? Why coop  
yourself up like that for so long?

Eli falls silent.

HERMAN  
Go on. Tell 'em.

ELI  
Dad-

MIRIAM  
Herman-

HERMAN  
He wants to be rich. He wants to be  
rich and famous.

MIRIAM  
Can you blame him? Look at this sty.  
(takes Eli's hand)  
You go on and be a rich Doctor, honey.

ELI

So, I want to be rich. What's wrong with that? I want a car built after the Depression. I want to impress a girl. I want to get the hell out of here-

HERMAN

You want, you want- all the wanting in the world won't get you a damn thing. You have to *do* something. You have to work *hard*. You have to take a *chance*.

(takes a huge bite)

Wanting's dangerous, believe me. I wanted a wife, and look what I got- A flounder in a dress.

Miriam hurls a KAISER ROLL past his nose and onto the floor.

HERMAN

Thank God- one less thing we have to eat tonight.

They all laugh. Miriam takes a few dishes to the sink. Herman puts his arm around his son, consoling him.

HERMAN

Look, Eli- I want you to go to Medical School. I do. I think it would be an honorable profession.

Miriam raises an ENVELOPE off the counter.

MIRIAM

You need this, Eli?

ELI

Need what?

HERMAN

(continuing)

But we've trying everything and it's just not working out for you.

MIRIAM

(checking the envelope)

What's Meharry?

ELI

(hazily)

...Meharry? I don't...

HERMAN  
 (continuing)  
 Eli- focus. This is exactly what I'm  
 talking about.

Eli suddenly leaps up.

ELI  
*Meharry?!*

He snaps the envelope away from his mother.

MIRIAM  
 What? What's Meharry?

ELI  
 It's TWENTY NINE!

He stares intently at the envelope.

MIRIAM  
 Twenty Nine?

Herman gets up excitedly.

HERMAN  
 I thought you already *had* Twenty Nine.

ELI  
 Twenty *Eight*. I didn't count this one.  
 I never thought they'd actually-

Syd grabs it, studying it.

SYD  
 It's awfully *thin*.

HERMAN  
 Shut up, Syd. If you sent in an  
 application to Medical School they'd  
 have you arrested for mail fraud.

He snatches it back and hands it to his son.

HERMAN  
 Open it.

The family sits, leaving Eli standing. He delicately opens  
 the envelope, careful not to rip it even the smallest bit,  
 and eases out the carefully creased letter, which he opens...

ELI  
 "Dear Mr. Rosenberg..."

MIRIAM  
 (whispers)  
 That sounds good-

HERMAN  
 Shut up, Miriam!

ELI  
 "Meharry Medical College received a  
 record number of applicants for the  
 incoming class of 1971..."

HERMAN  
 That's *not* so good-

MIRIAM AND BELLE  
 Hush!

ELI  
 "And I am pleased to inform you..."

He looks up. They GASP.

MIRIAM  
 He is *pleased*? Did he say he was  
pleased?

ELI  
 "That you have been chosen to be among  
 the select few..."

His words are drowned out by a huge CHEER, as everyone leaps  
 up, smothering him.

ELI  
 "Please send a check for Fifty dollars  
 for us to hold your place in the  
 class..."

HERMAN  
 Miriam- get my check book!

MIRIAM  
 There's nothing in it!

HERMAN  
 Get it anyway!

Miriam rushes into the kitchen.

ELI  
 "...The first day of classes is August  
 Twentieth."

MIRIAM

Belle- get the trunk! The Big Trunk!

Belle rushes upstairs.

HERMAN

Why are you hearing so late?

ELI

(finally looking up)  
They had rolling admission.

HERMAN

But it's impossible!

ELI

I sent this in two weeks ago-

HERMAN

I know- they have rolling admission...  
but why on Earth would it be rolling  
for you?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE - DAY

The small but stately buildings of Meharry Medical College stand proudly between rows of ancient trees, surrounded by the run down homes of the indigent community it serves.

An army of crisply dressed BLACK STUDENTS file in and out of the buildings, down the street, out of the dormitory, talking excitedly with BLACK PROFESSORS and ADMINISTRATORS. A proud island of Black Education and Professionalism of the highest order among the rampant anxiety, anger, racism, classicism and poverty of 1960's Nashville.

INT. DYNAMIC 88 - DAY

Eli looks frantically about and is terrified by this alien world. The more he sees, the lower he sinks in his seat, desperate not to be seen, He quietly prays:

ELI

Don't stick out like sore thumb, don't  
stick out like a-

CLANG!

EXT. DYNAMIC 88 - DAY

The MUFFLER falls off its hanger but remains on the car, SCRAPING down the street. Every man, woman, child and dog stop and stare at the WHITE MAN in the giant blue station wagon, who appears to be sinking even further...

EXT. DORMITORY - DAY

Eli, lugging a large TRUNK, stumbles toward the single DORMITORY entrance. Highly entertained Black students file past him, chuckling to each other as they pass.

INT. DORMITORY - DAY

Eli drops the trunk and practically collapses onto the RESIDENT ADVISOR'S desk.

R.A.

Name?

Eli can say nothing for a moment as he catches his breath.

R.A.

(impatiently)

Let's go Newbie.

ELI

"Newbie?"

R.A.

Are you a Vet?

(Eli just stares)

Vet? Returning student?

ELI

Uh- no.

R.A.

Then you're a Newbie.

(beat)

'Sides, I think I'd remember you.

ELI

Because I'm *white*?

R.A.

Because you're an *idiot*.

(looks at a LIST)

Student Number?

ELI  
 (halts)  
 Student...? I don't-

R.A.  
 You have a name, I presume.

ELI  
 (now terrified)  
 ...Yes.

R.A.  
 Might you be so kind as to reveal it,  
 so that I may be able to confirm you  
 are indeed a student here, and not in  
 fact a mental patient scheduled for a  
 lobotomy.

ELI  
 Sorry. Rosenberg. Eli Rosenberg.

The RA frowns and looks down at the list.

R.A.  
 Rosenberg. You're in 202. I don't have  
 the key. It should be open. I'll bring  
 up a copy.

The RA brusquely turns and rummages through a box of KEYS.

ELI  
 Thank you.

R.A.  
 For what? *I* don't want you here.

The RA turns away again. Eli picks up his trunk.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Eli struggles down the hallway. He comes to room #202 and  
 opens the door...

INT. DORM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MICHAEL DUBOIS looks up from his open suitcase. Eli halts in  
 the doorway.

ELI  
 Oh- sorry. Wrong room.

Eli backs out and closes the door. Michael hesitates for a moment, a little amazed, and then returns to unpacking.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

MICHAEL

Come in.

The door slowly opens and Eli steps in.

ELI

I'm sorry- is this- is this 202?

Michael points to the "202" on the door beside Eli's head.

ELI

Yeah. Well... I think there's been a mistake.

MICHAEL

What kind of mistake?

ELI

They told me I'm in 202.

MICHAEL

They told me *I'm* in 202.

Silence.

The R.A. barges in with a KEY.

R.A.

Here you go Rosenberg.

MICHAEL

Excuse me- I thought I was in 202.

R.A.

What's your student number-

MICHAEL

(beat)

My student...?

R.A.

(testily)

Name, Newbie.

MICHAEL

Dubois. Michael Dubois.

The RA glances at his LIST.

R.A.  
Take 210.

MICHAEL  
You told me 202.

R.A.  
And now I'm telling you 210, Frenchie.

Michael tosses a pile of clothes back into his suitcase.

MICHAEL  
It's (((Creole))).

R.A.  
Tell it to Rosenwhite.

He leaves. Michael glares at Eli.

ELI  
(weakly)  
Sorry, I-

Michael abruptly picks up his suitcase and storms out. Eli watches his stalk...

DOWN THE HALLWAY

Michael meets up with another student. He gestures angrily back at Eli. Both now glare back down the hall...

ELI

quickly closes the door, leaning up against it.

INT. ELI'S DORM - LATER

Eli has finished unpacking, and is bathed in sweat. He opens his window and looks down at the passing throng of students.

VOICE (O.C.)  
(whispered)  
Hey!

Eli looks around outside, confused.

VOICE (O.C.)  
Over here!

Eli turns to his right, and a sheepish looking WHITE STUDENT is leaning out the neighboring window.

WHITE STUDENT  
Help me.

ELI  
What's the matter?

WHITE STUDENT  
They hate me.

ELI  
Maybe I'll hate you too.

WHITE STUDENT  
I'm coming over. You can hate me in person.

He disappears. A few moments pass. THREE QUICK KNOCKS.

ELI  
Yeah.

The door swings open and ZACHARY GELB slips in, quickly slamming the door behind him. He is a little fat, a little neurotic, and more than a little out of breath.

ZACK  
Boy am I glad to see you. Zack Gelb, Brooklyn New York.

ELI  
(shaking his hand)  
Eli Rosenberg, Madison High School.

ZACK  
(brightening)  
Hey- you went to Madison? I went to Dickinson.

Zack plops down on Eli's bed. Eli takes a chair.

ZACK  
Nice to see a fellow Tribesman. I heard there's two more.

ELI  
Whites?

ZACK  
Jews.

ELI  
Right.

Zack looks out the window.

ZACK  
Sure are a lot of black guys.

ELI  
Are you surprised?

ZACK  
No, I- I expected it, you know, but  
it's still a shock, right?

ELI  
Yeah, I suppose it is.

ZACK  
I mean, I've never even met a... I  
mean, I've seen them in the city,  
but... I've never...

ELI  
Yeah. Me neither.

Eli joins him at the window. They watch the students below.

ZACK  
*Weird.*

EXT. MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE- DAY

Students stream up a stately marble staircase, through heavy wooden double doors beneath an imposing vaulted archway. The main building itself is a deep red brick, etched with history, its age lines perhaps outrunning the monies needed to keep her young. It is a small complex of three interconnected buildings- the two level lobby with offices, connecting to HUBBARD HOSPITAL to the East and classrooms, laboratories, and Nurses' quarters to the West.

Eli notices all the students leaning down to reverently touch an ETCHED PHRASE in the marble.

DEDICATED TO THE WORSHIP OF GOD THROUGH SERVICE TO MAN, 1876

INT. MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE - CONTINUOUS

The lobby is dominated by a massive MURAL depicting the rich history of Meharry- the exhausted white traveller, the black family who sheltered him, his vow to someday repay them, the building of the hospital and school, the tireless service to the desperate community that grew up around it...

Eli is awestruck by the mural, and negligently allows the door to SLAM behind him.

A HUGE HEAVYSET PROFESSOR stalks over, looming above him.

DEAN HOLMES

How dare you slam these doors! These are hallowed halls, son. Men of great stature have walked through them for a hundred years, and you will *never* be one of them.

He stalks off. Eli stands, frozen.

ZACK

Who the hell was that?

A passing student:

STUDENT

That's the Fat Man. Don't piss him off.

ELI

Too late.

Eli and Zack follow the student into a buzzing, cramped-

INT. PUBLIC HEALTH LECTURE HALL - CONTINUOUS

The room is filled with sixty five black medical students (of which 5 are women) and two uncomfortable, stiffly seated white students in the front row. Eli and Zack make a beeline for the two open seats to each side of them. STEVE LEMKIN and JIM NUSSBAUM appear greatly relieved to have a "white buffer" to each side.

JIM

Hey.

ELI

Hey.

STEVE

Look at us. You'd think we'd never heard of Custer.

They laugh, as the side door opens and

DR. MARTIN FELDMAN enters in a perfectly bleached white coat. He is, to everyone's abject surprise, WHITE...

Without acknowledging the silent class, he opens up the ROLL, settling on a random name. With just a trace of a sneer:

DR. FELDMAN  
*Doctor Williams...?*

An anxious STUDENT answers from the back of the room:

STUDENT  
 Yes, sir?

DR. FELDMAN  
 Would you please dazzle us with the largess of your knowledge by naming the dizzying array of the ligaments of the human knee, starting with the anterior?

STUDENT  
 Uh...

DR. FELDMAN  
 Stand up, *Doctor*. For the benefit of the whole class, if you would.

The student stands, visibly shaking.

STUDENT  
 ...The ligaments of the knee?

Feldman finally looks up from the role with a sarcastic smile.

DR. FELDMAN  
 ...Yes, *Doctor*?  
 (silence)  
 Don't tease us, *Doctor*.

STUDENT  
 I'm sorry, sir. I can't.

DR. FELDMAN  
 Of course you can't. But you *will* at the end of this course. In fact, *Doctor*, you will name and identify every ligament, muscle, bone, nerve, tissue, artery, vein and capillary of the human body if I have to twist every one of yours to get it out of you.

STUDENT  
 Yes, sir.

DR. FELDMAN

(pause)

Or you will *not*. But that, I suppose  
is up to you... *Doctor Williams*.

STUDENT

Yes, sir.

He remains standing, terrified.

DR. FELDMAN

You may sit.

He does.

Eli leans in to Steve and whispers:

ELI

How did we end up with Dr. Mengele?

Dr. Feldman's sharp gaze falls upon them.

DR. FELDMAN

Need I point out to you gentlemen that  
although being White might get you  
served faster in a local restaurant,  
it has not yet been proven to be a  
balm for ignorance and stupidity.

Eli feels the gaze of the entire class.

ELI

I don't know how to respond to that.

DR. FELDMAN

I believe my point has just been made.

The black students share a small chuckle.

DR. FELDMAN

Welcome to Anatomy, *Doctors*. If you  
can set aside for the moment your pre-  
pubescent masturbatory delusions of  
Medical Grandeur and open your hymnals  
to page thirteen, we shall begin...

The class pulls open their massive copies of GRAY'S ANATOMY.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PUBLIC HEALTH LECTURE HALL - LATER

The class sits rapt at attention to a very different voice...

DR. JOHNSON (O.C.)

... and as you sit here today,  
excited, terrified, anxious to begin,  
I ask you to take a moment to consider  
Rene Dubois, who said that "Each place  
has a spirit of its own, which  
progressively shapes its appearance  
and the genius of its people."

ANGLE ON: DR. MOSES JOHNSON, black, early forties, firm in  
speech, movement and bearing; a distinguishing gray just  
beginning to inquire about his temples, as if asking for  
permission to continue.

DR. JOHNSON

How will you be shaped? By the rigors  
of this Medical School? By the  
patients you encounter? By the systems  
you master?

(gestures to the  
chalkboard)

By *Physiology*?

(beat)

Or will you allow something deeper to  
pass through the membrane of your  
consciousness? Will you search for the  
spirit beneath the numbers and the  
names and the mitochondria? Men and  
Women of passionate dedication beyond  
your comprehension have sat in those  
very chairs you occupy now. Will you  
allow the ghost of their genius to  
inspire you?

Eli catches the similarly enraptured eyes of GARRISON HILL,  
the burly black student beside him.

ELI

Sign me up. This guy's incredible.

GARRISON

Careful. I heard he likes to "Salute  
'em and Shoot 'em."

ELI

Salute 'em and *Shoot* 'em?

Dr. Johnson looks out over the students.

DR. JOHNSON  
 Now, do we have a Michael Dubois in attendance this afternoon?

Michael stands up in the middle of the class.

MICHAEL  
 Right here, Dr. Johnson.

DR. JOHNSON  
 (grins)  
 Well, look at you. I haven't seen you since you were small enough to hold in the palm of my hand.

MICHAEL  
 Yes, sir.

DR. JOHNSON  
 In fact, if I remember correctly, I *did* hold you in the palm of my hand.

MICHAEL  
 (smiles)  
 Yes sir.

DR. JOHNSON  
 You see, class, I was honored to have received my MD here at Meharry, alongside Mr. Dubois' Father, who has, incidentally, a very successful practice in New Orleans. Isn't that true, Michael?

MICHAEL  
 Yes, sir.

DR. JOHNSON  
 (beat)  
 Then tell me, Michael, isn't it also true that the Krebs Cycle **XXXXX XXX XXX XXXXXX, etc...**?

Michael, and indeed the entire class, freezes.

MICHAEL  
 Uh... Sir?

DR. JOHNSON  
 Didn't you hear me, son? You seemed to hear me pretty well when I was talking about all the money your Father was making.

MICHAEL  
Yes, sir, but-

DR. JOHNSON  
It's a simple question. What is the  
.....?

MICHAEL  
(sheepishly)  
I'm sorry. I don't know.

DR. JOHNSON  
That's alright. I don't think your  
father ever learned that either.  
(beat)  
Sit down, Michael.

Michael sits, beaten. Garrison elbows Eli, whispering:

GARRISON  
"Salute 'em and Shoot 'em!"

Dr. Johnson's demeanor turns to molten granite as he shifts his attention to Garrison, taking issue with his very well developed AFRO.

DR. JOHNSON  
And you, sir, what is your name?

GARRISON  
(standing)  
Garrison Hill, your honor.

DR. JOHNSON  
Dr. Johnson will suffice, young man.

GARRISON  
Yes, sir.

DR. JOHNSON  
And so will a haircut if you wish to  
spend another second in this  
classroom. This is the Age of Science,  
not the Age of Aquarius, is that  
understood?

GARRISON  
Yes, sir.

He sits. Dr. Johnson remains silent, staring at him.

DR. JOHNSON  
Now, sir.

GARRISON

Yes, sir.

He leaps up and shuffles out the door.

DR. JOHNSON

And now, if there are no objections, I would like to begin. If you would please direct your attention to the board, where I have laid out the...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE - LATER

The students file out, bleary eyed. Eli somehow ends up walking next to Michael.

ELI

I guess we all took a hit today, huh?

Michael just glares and walks on. Eli hesitates for a second, and then catches back up to him.

ELI

Look, I'm sorry about the room. If you want to switch back-

MICHAEL

Keep it, I don't care.

ELI

Hey, what did I do?

MICHAEL

(beat)

Nothing. I don't like you.

ELI

What- because I took "your room?"

Michael halts and spins on Eli.

MICHAEL

Because you took a black man's *place*. There's one less black doctor treating one less black family in one less black neighborhood because of you.

ELI

Hey- I didn't take anything from anyone. I applied. They accepted me.

MICHAEL

And why did you come *here*, huh? Which Ivy League Schools were banging down your door? Harvard? Princeton?

(silence)

Yeah, I thought so.

He storms off. After a moment, Eli sighs and joins the slow student Exodus down the street...

INT. DORMITORY HALLWAY - NIGHT

Eli, books in hand walks down the hallway, passing room after room of INTENSELY STUDYING STUDENTS.

Then he passes one filled with PARTYING STUDENTS- drinking, smoking grass, playing music. He stops beside

GARRISON, who by the way now sports a very short CREW CUT.

ELI

What's up in there?

GARRISON

(peeks inside)

Guess they got The Rock.

(Eli looks confused)

An old test. Sometimes the professors get lazy and just crank out the same ones. They must know one of the Second Years or something.

ELI

Why don't you have a Rock?

GARRISON

The Second Years don't talk to me.

ELI

That's okay- the First Years don't talk to me.

GARRISON

(remembering)

Shit, that's right.

He quickly walks away from Eli.

Eli walks back toward his room. TWO BLACK STUDENTS, who had been curiously loitering there, scatter from his door.

INT. ELI'S DORM - NIGHT

Eli enters and closes the door, tossing his books on the bed.

He SMELLS something odd. In fact, he smells it all over his room. Everywhere. Overpowering. He goes to the door. Sniffs at the bottom. Opens it.

THE TWO STUDENTS are crouched low, caught in the middle of blowing MARIJUANA SMOKE under his door.

FIRST STUDENT  
Got a light?

ELI  
I'd say you two are pretty lit up as  
it is.

They scatter into a nearby room. Laughter.

Eli closes the door and returns to his studies. The smell proves too much. He slams the book closed.

INT. ZACK'S DORM DOOR - NIGHT

Eli bangs on the door. Silence. Bangs again.

ZACK (O.C.)  
Yeah? 'S open, brother.

Eli opens the door to find Zack on his bed, his left hand dangling over his head, his eyes riveted to it.

ZACK  
Is my hand not the most beautiful  
thing you've ever seen? Like a woman's  
hand, only masculine.

Eli takes a whiff and frowns.

ELI  
Jesus.

He goes to the window and throws it open. The moment he does,

THREE STUDENTS BELOW switch on a radio, BLASTING it.

Eli shuts the window and gathers up Zack's materials.

ZACK

Don't fight it, Eli. We're all one  
when we're all tripping.

ELI

Not when we're all *flunking*. Come on.

He grabs Zack, lifts him up and drags him out the door.

INT. HOSPITAL PATIENT ROOM - LATER

Eli sits on a narrow hospital cot, studying by the small light of a lamp. Zack studies on a gurney, SEVEN EMPTY COFFEE CUPS at his feet, an EIGHTH in his hands...

INT. LAB - DAY

DR. JOHNSON sits behind a desk in the corner, surveying the anxiety before him with just the hint of a smile, as the students file past station after station for the first PHYSIOLOGY Exam.

At one station, a CADAVER, cut open at the wrist to reveal a small FLAG marking a certain MUSCLE GROUPING. Students write down the proper muscle as they pass.

One STUDENT elbows GARRISON, and indicates ELI is about to move to the station. Garrison REMOVES the flag and affixes it to a DIFFERENT MUSCLE. They snicker, moving on.

Eli arrives at the station, and needing only a split second, scribbles in an answer...

DR. JOHNSON (O.C.)

Excuse me, Mr. Rosenberg.

Dr. Johnson reaches out and switches the FLAG back.

DR. JOHNSON

I believe this has been accidentally misplaced. Carry on.

He walks off. Eli hesitates for a second, shrugs, and again, requiring less than a heartbeat, writes the answer.

Dr. Johnson approaches Garrison and the other offending student, who keep their heads low, terrified...

DR. JOHNSON

That's a fine haircut, Mr. Hill.

He walks off, and Garrison nearly faints.

INT. LAB - LATER

Dr. Johnson at his desk. Eli drops his completed EXAM on the desk- it is the first one completed. Johnson looks up:

DR. JOHNSON  
Finished so soon?

ELI  
Yes, sir.

DR. JOHNSON  
You don't want to check your work?

ELI  
That's what you're here for, right?

DR. JOHNSON  
There's a fine line between confident  
and cocky, young man.

ELI  
That's very true, sir.  
(pause)  
You've heard of Dr. Jason Ellenberg?

DR. JOHNSON  
Certainly have. Brilliant biochemist.  
Tough as nails.

ELI  
At Brooklyn College we used to call  
him The Shit Shoveller.

DR. JOHNSON  
(intrigued)  
Oh?

ELI  
Yeah, because he shovelled all that  
shit at us to try to break us down.

DR. JOHNSON  
Did he now?

ELI  
Yes sir.  
(beat)  
You know, you remind me of him.

DR. JOHNSON  
 (raises an eyebrow)  
 Is that so?

ELI  
 Yeah. So you go on shovelling that  
 shit- 'cuz I'm gonna shovel it right  
 back at you.  
 (beat)  
 Sir.

Eli nods and walks confidently out.

Dr. Johnson looks after him, shakes his head, and looks down  
 at Eli's examination...

INT. ELI'S DORM - DAY

Eli enters, head held high, closes the door behind him,  
 throws down his bookbag... and COLLAPSES.

INT. ELI'S DORM - NIGHT

Eli passed out, same position, still clothed. There is a LOUD  
 KNOCKING on the door. He paddles to the door and opens it.

GARRISON AND THE OTHER STUDENT burst in, grabbing Eli.

GARRISON  
 Nussbaum, you sonnofabitch, I'm gonna  
 kick your ass!

ELI  
*What?*

OTHER STUDENT  
 Bennie heard you telling Dr. Johnson  
 we switched your flag! We're gonna  
 fucking *kill* you.

ELI  
 You switched my flag?

Garrison halts, confused.

GARRISON  
 Didn't I?

ELI  
 Why are you calling me Nussbaum?

GARRISON  
Because you're Nussbaum.

ELI  
I'm Rosenberg.

Garrison lets him go.

GARRISON  
I'm Hill. Nice to meet you.

ELI  
(still terrified)  
Yeah.

GARRISON  
Where's Nussbaum?

ELI  
204.

GARRISON  
Thanks.

He leaves with the other student, respectfully closing the door. A few moments go by. A loud KNOCK is heard down the hall, followed by a loud commotion.

Eli collapses back onto his bed, oblivious to the screaming in the distance...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELI'S DORM - MORNING

A gentle ray of sun brings Eli to a contented consciousness. He slowly gets up, stretches, and looks around, confused.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

A crowd of students stand by the doorways of their rooms, dazed. Eli emerges, and catches a similar expression on the students around him- first ZACK, then NUSSBAUM (sporting a colorful black eye), then GARRISON to his other side.

ELI  
Morning.

GARRISON  
Yeah.

They stand frozen, without a task for the first time.

ELI  
What are we supposed to *do*.

GARRISON  
When's Anatomy?

ELI  
(checks his watch)  
Two hours.

GARRISON  
Want to go outside?

ELI  
...Sure.

The students, en masse, slowly file down the hall.

EXT. DORMITORY - MORNING

The dazed students emerge, and at the edge of the street, they HALT, lining up as a group...

A PROCESSION OF EXQUISITE, IMPECCABLY DRESSED YOUNG BLACK WOMEN walk past, wending their way from the stately buildings of FISK UNIVERSITY across the street towards the MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE MAIN HALL. Each woman is more lovely, better dressed, better bred than the woman before her.

The men watch, absolutely transfixed...

ELI  
What are *those*?

GARRISON  
Those are Fisk Girls.

ELI  
Can I have one?

GARRISON  
Depends.

ELI  
On what?

INT. MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE LOBBY - DAY

THE GRADES have been posted inside the lobby. The FISK WOMEN, in small tight knit groups, peruse them with great interest.

Eli and Zack poke their heads above the throng.

ELI  
"87." Not bad.

ZACK  
"Not bad?" You're second in the class, asshole. I'm practically last.

ELI  
(squinting)  
Who's first?

MICHAEL appears, emerging from the crowd.

MICHAEL  
(coldly)  
*I am.*

He walks past without another word.

ELI  
Someone tell him being first is a good thing.

EXT. MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE - CONTINUOUS

The Meharry Men have arranged themselves outside on the grass, and one by one, a FISK GIRL approaches demurely, making polite conversation.

Michael comes down the stairs...

VOICE (O.C.)  
Michael?

MELANIE DIXON rushes over to him with an iridescent smile. She is arguably the most gorgeous woman at Fisk, and the fact she behaves unaware of this makes her even more attractive. Michael's icy demeanor thaws the moment he sees her.

MICHAEL  
*Melanie.* Hi.

She gives him a warm hug.

MELANIE

Ninety- Three! That's fantastic!

MICHAEL

(slightly blushing)

Thanks, but you know what Dad'll say.

MELANIE

"What happened to the other seven?"

They both laugh.

MELANIE

I was wondering when I was going to see you. When my parents moved me back to school they told me you were coming. Mom wants to know when we're getting married.

He pretends to laugh it off as best he can. She takes his arm and they walk down the street.

MELANIE

How's Chandra?

MICHAEL

(beat)

She... I don't know. We're not... We broke up.

MELANIE

Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know.

MICHAEL

When I didn't get into Tulane-

MELANIE

Long distance. It's tough, I know. Well, remember what we said when we were kids- if we're both single when we're Thirty-

MICHAEL

Hell will have frozen over.

She shoves him playfully.

MELANIE

Whatever- you're the one with the line around the block.

MICHAEL  
Yeah- my friends waiting to ask you  
out.

She laughs, and falls silent a second.

MICHAEL  
What?

MELANIE  
Who's Two?

MICHAEL  
Two?

MELANIE  
You're One. Who's Two? "Rosenberg."

Michael halts.

MICHAEL  
Why do you want to know?

MELANIE  
I've always had a thing for Number  
Two.

MICHAEL  
Why is that?

MELANIE  
He's always has to work a little  
harder than Number One. I like that.

MICHAEL  
Don't be too sure. This one doesn't  
have to work at *all*.

MELANIE  
Introduce me.

MICHAEL  
No.

MELANIE  
(playfully)  
Mikey...

MICHAEL  
(seriously)  
No way.  
(he goes cold)  
I've got to prepare for class.

He starts off the other way.

MELANIE  
I'll see you later?

He doesn't make an answer. She watches after him...

INT. HUBBARD HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - DAY

Students eat along side Doctors, Nurses, patients and their families in the crowded, simple Hospital cafeteria.

Eli wolfs down a TURKEY SANDWICH, as he reads a medical text.

MELANIE (O.C.)  
Excuse me?

MELANIE stands before him in all her glory. Eli just GAWKS.

MELANIE  
Can I sit down?

ELI  
Oh my God. Yes- Of course. I'm sorry.  
Please. Sit down. Please.

He stands as she sits across from him. He re-seats himself.

MELANIE  
I'm Melanie.

ELI  
I'm speechless.

She laughs.

MELANIE  
Everyone's talking about you, but no one knows exactly who you are. It took me a while to find you.

ELI  
Why did you want to meet me?

MELANIE  
I'll be honest with you, when I heard you were...

ELI  
Not exactly Black...

MELANIE  
I wasn't exactly sure.

ELI  
And now?

She gazes at him for a moment. Plays a little hard to get...

MELANIE  
I'm *still* not sure.

ELI  
Well, Miss, I *am* studying to be a Doctor. Perhaps I could help you with this terrible case of indecision.

MELANIE  
And how exactly would you do that, Doctor?

ELI  
Well, let's look it up, shall we?

He elegantly dances through the pages of the TEXT.

ELI  
Let's see... Ah, here it is-  
(pretends to read)  
In case Acute Feminine Indecision, accompany patient to nearest Italian restaurant for a candle-lit dinner and fascinating conversation until cured.

MELANIE  
Thank heaven I go to school across from a Hospital.

ELI  
It's a service vocation, Ma'am. I'm just happy to be of assistance.

MELANIE  
I think I need a second opinion. I'll get back to you.

ELI  
And I'll wait right here until you do.

MELANIE  
It might take a few days.

ELI  
I've got a few thousand pages to read.  
Don't worry about me.

She laughs and floats off. GARRISON slides down next to Eli.

GARRISON  
I know you're white and all, but I  
think you just officially became my  
hero.

They both turn to watch her disappear down the hall...

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Michael is hunched in a corner on a PAY PHONE:

MICHAEL  
I know, Dad, but it *is* the highest  
grade in the class.  
(listens)  
I'm *trying* to be the best.  
(listens)  
It's just the first exam, you know.  
I'll study harder.  
(listens)  
Of course I want to make something of  
my- don't you think I-  
(listens)  
I'll do better. I will. I promise.  
(listens)  
Sure. See you at Alumni Weekend.

He hangs up the phone and slumps against the wall.

EXT. DORMITORY

Michael walks outside in a deep gloom.

ACROSS THE STREET

MELANIE floats down the stairs of Fisk University to meet up  
with a beaming ELI. She gives him a quick kiss on the cheek.

Michael sits, watching them disappear, and WAITS...

EXT. PERRONI'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

PERRONI'S looks like any other average mediocre "family style" Italian restaurant- faded green and white awning, corny painting of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, etc.

Melanie tries to peer in the window.

MELANIE  
How does it look?

ELI  
(staring at her)  
Damn good, I'd say.

MELANIE  
No, *inside*.

ELI  
It looks... Like an Italian  
Restaurant.

MELANIE  
(anxiously)  
That's not- Never mind.

ELI  
Your table awaits, Madam.

MELANIE  
*Senorina*.

ELI  
Whatever.

He gallantly opens the door for her, and they walk inside.

INT. PERRONI'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The restaurant is practically EMPTY. Eli and Melanie wait to be seated...

A WHITE COUPLE enters, standing beside them. A WAITRESS immediately rushes directly over to the new couple.

WAITRESS  
Table for two?

She seats them in the corner. Eli smiles at Melanie, who is already ashen.

MELANIE

Let's go. I don't really feel like Italian-

ELI

Come on- Zack said this place is amazing. He may not know the Krebs Cycle, but believe me, that guy knows his *gniocchi*.

Before she can protest, Eli catches the eye of the Waitress.

ELI

Excuse me- table for two?

WAITRESS

(sweet as pie)

Of course, darlin'. Right this way.

She sits them at a table by the kitchen, and brings two menus. Melanie is increasingly uncomfortable.

ELI

Do you want some wine?

MELANIE

Eli, I don't think-

Eli calls over the Waitress.

ELI

Two glasses of house Chianti please?

WAITRESS

Of course, darlin'.

She disappears. Eli returns to staring at Melanie.

ELI

You really are disgustingly beautiful, you know that?

MELANIE

(relaxing slightly)

You won't let me forget it.

They laugh.

MELANIE

So, what brings a...

ELI

Jew-

MELANIE

A...

ELI

*White Jew-*

MELANIE

What brings you to Nashville? There must have been other places to go.

ELI

France.

(she laughs)

I'm serious. My Father wanted to send me to France. He landed at Normandy, and aside from the mortar shells and Nazis, he liked it very much. There's supposedly some medical schools there.

MELANIE

There are medical schools here.

ELI

Not for me.

The waitress passes, and Eli flags her.

ELI

Could we have that wine, please? I need all the help I can get over here.

WAITRESS

(laughing)

Of course. I'm sorry. We're incredibly busy tonight.

Eli looks around confused.

ELI

Would you mind if we ordered?

(to Melanie)

I heard the lasagna's fantastic.

MELANIE

I love lasagna.

ELI

Two lasagnas.

WAITRESS

Coming right up.

She jots down the order and rushes off.

ELI  
 Wait- is it "lasagnas" or "lasagni?" I  
 think I've been in Medical School too  
 long.

She laughs. He reaches out for her hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PERRONI'S RESTAURANT - LATER

Still holding hands, still without food or drink...

MELANIE  
 ... I don't understand. Why was  
 Meharry your only choice? You're doing  
 so well.

ELI  
 It's taken me a long time to focus, I  
 guess. I still don't know completely  
 what the hell I'm doing here, to be  
 perfectly honest. In my Family, there  
 were only a few professions you were  
*allowed* to pursue... Law...  
 (thinks)  
 Medicine...  
 (thinks)  
 Did I say Law?

MELANIE  
 (laughs)  
 And what do you want to pursue.

ELI  
 (directly)  
 You.

MELANIE  
 Besides me.

ELI  
 I don't know.

MELANIE  
 There must be *something-*

He fidgets, uncomfortable with the question, and directs his  
 anxiety to the waitress.

ELI  
Where's that wine? And where's the  
*food*? Excuse me?

The Waitress comes over.

WAITRESS  
Yes, darlin'?

ELI  
Did you put our order in yet?

WAITRESS  
Oh dear- I don't think I- I am so  
sorry. Give it to me again.

ELI  
Two lasagnas.

MELANIE  
Lasagni.

ELI  
Right.

WAITRESS  
(writing it down)  
I'll put it right in, sweetie.

She walks away. Eli thinks a moment...

ELI  
Excuse me, Melanie.

He gets up and follows the Waitress...

TO THE BACK

Where he sees her rip off the ORDER, CRUMPLE it up, and throw  
it in the TRASH.

BACK AT THE TABLE

Eli sits down, the blood drained from his face.

MELANIE  
You okay?

ELI  
Can we go?

MELANIE  
Sure. Of course.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

They walk together, slowly, in silence.

ELI  
I am such an idiot.

MELANIE  
It's okay.

ELI  
I am so sorry.

MELANIE  
It's not your fault.

ELI  
Actually, I think it sort of *is*.

He stops at the base of the FISK STAIRCASE and looks at her.

ELI  
I've never seen anything like that.  
I've heard, you know, *stories*, but...  
(pause)  
I'm so *humiliated*.

She moves a little closer.

MELANIE  
I wish you wouldn't be.  
(smiles)  
But I have to admit, I'm a little  
relieved you are.

She kisses him gently on the lips.

MELANIE  
Next time *I'll* pick the restaurant.

ELI  
I don't know- I think we discovered a  
helluva diet.

She laughs and floats up the stairs. Eli walks back toward the DORMITORY across the street.

EXT. DORMITORY - CONTINUOUS

MICHAEL is still sitting, waiting...

Eli starts up the stairs, avoiding Michael's gaze.

MICHAEL  
Isn't it enough you want to steal our  
school, you have to steal our women?

ELI  
(had enough)  
What the fuck are you talking about?

Michael stands.

MICHAEL  
Stay away from her.

ELI  
(moving in)  
Stay away from me. I've had it with  
you, man.

MICHAEL  
You've had it with me?

Michael shoves Eli, who stumbles back, losing his footing.

A few STUDENTS standing by CHEER Michael on.

STUDENT  
Get 'im Mike! Kick his ass!

Michael heats with the encouragement as the crowd grows,  
students pouring out of the dorm.

MICHAEL  
You don't belong here, White Boy!

ELI  
The hell I don't!

He SHOVES Michael. Michael SHOVES him back.

Eli abruptly PUNCHES Michael and he collapses like a sack of  
potatoes. The crowd ERUPTS, grabbing Eli.

GARRISON appears out of nowhere, pushing the crowd back.

GARRISON  
Relax! Everyone just chill out! CHILL!

They back off a few paces, still yelling.

ELI  
Thanks, Brother.

GARRISON  
 (spins on him)  
 I ain't your *Brother*. What's the  
 matter with you? The fuck didn't you  
 walk away?

ELI  
 He was pushing me.

Garrison SHOVES Eli.

GARRISON  
 Now *I'm* pushing you!

DR. JOHNSON (O.C.)  
 HEY!

The crowd FREEZES. DR. JOHNSON storms between them.

DR. JOHNSON  
 What the heck is going on here?  
 (Silence)  
 Rosenberg- you come with me.

ELI  
 Me? What did *I-*

Johnson GLARES.

ELI  
 Yes, sir.

DR. JOHNSON  
 The rest of you get your butts inside  
 before I flunk the lot of you.

They disperse. He grabs Michael's arm, taking him aside.

DR. JOHNSON  
 You're running around like a damn  
 fool. I don't care if you are your  
 Father's son. You're *my* student. Start  
 acting like it.

MICHAEL  
 Yes, sir.

Johnson wheels around on Eli.

DR. JOHNSON  
 Let's go, Mr. Rosenberg.

He storms off. Eli follows...

INT. DR. JOHNSON'S HOME - NIGHT

Johnson's home is a simple one- old, sparsely furnished, dimly lit. Walls of books and journals. A small corner serves as a reading area.

Eli sits on a well-worn sofa. MRS. JOHNSON, a lovely elegant woman, enters and sets a cup of coffee before him and her husband, who sits in a deep armchair.

MRS. JOHNSON  
Here you are, gentlemen.

ELI  
Thank you Ma'am.

DR. JOHNSON  
Thank you, love. Give us a moment, will you?

MRS. JOHNSON  
Of course.  
(to Eli)  
Yell if you need reinforcement.

ELI  
Yes, Ma'am.

She leaves. Johnson gestures to the coffee.

DR. JOHNSON  
Sober up, young man.

ELI  
I'm not drunk.

DR. JOHNSON  
You're not *sober* either.

Eli sips the coffee, slightly trembling.

DR. JOHNSON  
This is *Family Talk*, Mr. Rosenberg.  
What we say here stays here.

ELI  
Yes, sir.

DR. JOHNSON  
Call me Moses.

ELI  
Yes, sir- *Moses*, sir.

Johnson thinks a moment.

DR. JOHNSON  
Why are you here, Eli?

ELI  
Meharry accepted me.

DR. JOHNSON  
You might as well say you're alive because the Doctor slapped your bottom. You have a higher purpose in this world, young man, and so have you at this institution.

ELI  
I just want to be a Doctor, sir.

DR. JOHNSON  
I don't know what that *means*.

ELI  
I want to graduate. I want to intern.  
I want to practice-

DR. JOHNSON  
I know what a Doctor *does*, son. That's not what a Doctor *is*.

(pause)  
Look at that sofa you're sitting on.  
What do you see?

ELI  
(studies it)  
I see the seams, a coffee stain, the texture of the cloth...

DR. JOHNSON  
I see Mr. Harold Douglass. I diagnosed him with Chron's disease. We fought against it, he and I, for two years. He died. His son made that for me.

Eli's hand runs over the fabric differently, reverently.

DR. JOHNSON  
When I see a dislocated shoulder, I see a man's job, I see his family's livelihood. When I see an application, I see a small town's savior.

DR. JOHNSON(cont'd)

(leans in closer)

What do you see, Eli? When you look at Meharry, do you see a lifetime of service, or do you see a paycheck?

Eli is absolutely silent. Johnson leans back in his chair.

DR. JOHNSON

You know, I never thought much of Michael Dubois Senior, and to be perfectly honest, I don't think much of Michael Dubois Junior, either, but he might be right.

(gets up)

You might not belong here after all.

He walks to the door and opens it.

DR. JOHNSON

Good night, Mr. Rosenberg.

Eli stands and goes to the door.

ELI

Good night, sir. Please thank Mrs. Johnson for me.

Eli walks out the door and Johnson closes it.

EXT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Eli walks past a group of students who WHISPER conspiratorially as he passes...

INT. DORMITORY HALLWAY - NIGHT

The students in the hallway, glare as Eli walks between them to his door.

INT. ELI'S DORM - CONTINUOUS

He walks inside to find his room TRASHED. Without any surprise whatsoever, he removes his TRUNK from under the bed and begins packing up his SCATTERED BELONGINGS.

EXT. MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE - NIGHT

Eli walking toward the parking lot with his trunk.

ZACK (O.C.)

HEY!

ZACK tackles him into the grass.

ZACK

Where the hell are you going?

ELI

Brooklyn.

ZACK

You're *quitting*?

ELI

Absolutely.

He gets back up. Zack SITS on his trunk, preventing him.

ZACK

You can't.

ELI

Why the hell not?

ZACK

I'll fail if you go.

ELI

You're failing already.

ZACK

*You'll* fail if you go.

Eli hesitates.

ELI

What's the point? I don't know what the hell I'm doing here in the first place. It's just not *worth* it.

ZACK

Don't you want to be a doctor?

ELI

(long pause)

No. I don't think I do.

ZACK

Really?

ELI  
(realizing)  
Yeah.

Eli sits beside Zack in the trunk.

ZACK  
Wow.

ELI  
Yeah.

The men sit in silence.

ZACK  
I'm not like you. You screwed around  
in College. I didn't. I worked as hard  
as I could, every day, and all I ended  
up with was a "C." Same grade I'm  
getting now. I want to be important,  
Eli. I want to be *something*.

ELI  
Then you stay.

ZACK  
I won't make it without you. I'm not  
kidding.

ELI  
(pause)  
Then I'll stay.

Zack looks up, astonished.

ZACK  
You will?

ELI  
Yeah, what the hell. I don't know what  
I'd do in Brooklyn either. At least  
here I don't have mom yelling "rise  
and shine" every goddamn morning.

Zack leaps up.

ZACK  
Thank you. Thank you, Eli.

Eli gets up and goes for the trunk.

ZACK  
Let me get that for you.

Zack grabs the trunk and lifts it a few feet, freezing.

ZACK  
Little help, here?

Eli grabs one side, Zack the other, and they walk back...

MONTAGE:

INT. HOSPITAL PATIENT ROOM - DAY

Eli and Zack studying.

INT. PUBLIC HEALTH LECTURE HALL - DAY

Dr. Feldman lecturing. Eli listening...

INT. PUBLIC HEALTH LECTURE HALL - DAY

Dr. Johnson lecturing. Eli listening...

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Eli eating lunch with Melanie. She tests him on his notes...

INT. MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE - DAY

Eli checking his grades:

DUBOIS: 95... ROSENBERG: 93...

Eli walks off. Mike slides in and reads the news. Turns and watches Eli walking away with an anxious look in his eye.

MONTAGE ENDS:

INT. PUBLIC HEALTH LECTURE HALL - DAY

A STRANGE MAN ever so slowly wheels in a CADAVER beneath a clean white sheet...

Eli leans over to Garrison.

ELI  
I've never seen a cadaver wheeled in  
by a cadaver.

GARRISON  
Old Rip? He's a trip.

ELI  
Rip?

GARRISON  
Yeah. "Rest In Peace." Randy got his toupee off him. Well, technically he got his toupee off the junky they wheeled in last week, but Rip's the one that set him up.

ELI  
Randy wears a *rug*?

GARRISON  
(looks at Eli)  
You *do* study too much.

"RIP" sets the cadaver in front of the lectern and walks toward the door as slowly as he entered.

DR. FELDMAN pulls back the sheet and holds his nose.

DR. FELDMAN  
Please promise me, *Doctors*, that when you "pass on" you do so with a little more decorum than this gentleman.

The class laughs.

"Rip" spins back at the doorway.

DR. FELDMAN  
Yes, Mister Peabody?

"Rip" quietly turns away, disappearing out the door.

DR. FELDMAN  
As you can see, there are indeed jobs in the marketplace for those of you who cannot make it through this class.

Again, the class laughs, save Eli and Garrison...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Eli, Garrison and Zack are leaving the lecture hall, passing by the faculty offices, when suddenly:

DEAN HOLMES (O.C.)  
Mister Rosenberg?

The DOOR to Dean Holmes' office lies open...

ELI  
...Yes?

DEAN HOLMES (O.C.)  
Could you come in my office, please?

Garrison and Zack vehemently shake their heads "no!"

ELI  
Uhm... Sure.

DEAN HOLMES (O.C.)  
Are there any other students out there  
with you?

Garrison and Zack SCATTER.

ELI  
No.

DEAN HOLMES (O.C.)  
Come in, then.

Eli gulps and walks inside...

INT. DEAN HOLMES' OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Where Dean Holmes sits behind his desk, smoking a pipe, arms  
folded tightly across his chest.

DEAN HOLMES  
Sit down, Mr. Rosenberg.

Eli looks around, but there are no other chairs in the  
office.

ELI  
Thank you, sir, I think I'll stand.

DEAN HOLMES  
Very well. It has come to my attention  
you've been acquitting yourself  
honorably in the first year class.

ELI  
I'm learning quite a lot, sir.

DEAN HOLMES

We shall see. Could you please tell me the \_\_\_\_\_ ?

ELI

I don't believe we've studied that yet, sir.

DEAN HOLMES

Is that what we're teaching you here at Meharry, sir? How to compose a finer excuse?

ELI

No, sir.

DEAN HOLMES

Then I suggest you do some research of your own before I call you into this office again, or it will be the last time I summon you, do you understand?

ELI

Yes, sir.

Eli leaves, closing the door-

DEAN HOLMES

Leave it open, please. Someone has to monitor the shameless shenanigans that transpire in that hallway.

ELI

Of course, sir.

He leaves.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Eli, alone, poring through books on ??????.

INT. PUBLIC HEALTH LECTURE HALL - DAY

Dr. Feldman lecturing. "RIP" brings in another CADAVER. Eli watches him intently...

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Eli, Garrison and Zack are walking out of class...

DEAN HOLMES (O.C.)  
Mr. Rosenberg?

The other two immediately scatter.

INT. DEAN HOLMES' OFFICE - DAY

Eli once again standing before Dean Holmes.

DEAN HOLMES  
Mr. Rosenberg- tell me, what is the  
function of the .....?

Eli gapes.

ELI  
I thought you wanted me to know  
the..... ?

DEAN HOLMES  
I did.

ELI  
And I looked it up for you.

DEAN HOLMES  
For *me*? Mr. Rosenberg, do you think I  
extend myself in these little sessions  
for *my* education or *yours*?

ELI  
Mine sir.

DEAN HOLMES  
Please don't make me think I'm wasting  
my time on you, son.

ELI  
No, sir. Sorry sir. It won't happen  
again, sir.

DEAN HOLMES  
See that it doesn't.

Eli begins to shut the door, and remembering, leaves it ajar.

INT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Eli, with a MASSIVE STACK OF BOOKS of all kinds.

He looks out the window, exhausted, and spots

"RIP" loading CADAVERS in black bags into a small van.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

It's a pitch dark night, no Moon. RIP tosses another CADAVER onto the ground and opens up the back of the van as

ELI walks out onto the loading dock ramp.

ELI  
Excuse me?

Rip stops and stares at him.

ELI  
Hi. I'm sorry to bother you.

No response.

ELI  
I understand you're the man that knows how to get things.

RIP  
Depends.

ELI  
I've been dating this girl-

RIP  
Then you need a psychiatrist. I can't help you with that.

He kneels to lift the cadaver-

ELI  
No, I... I know I'm supposed to buy her something. She's- her family's rich, and I- I want to do right by her.

Rip hesitates. Climbs into the van. The sound of ZIPPING.

He emerges with a thin GOLD bracelet and hands it to Eli.

ELI  
That's beautiful. No one claimed this?

RIP  
Things move fast in there. Sometimes they miss things.

RIP(cont'd)

(beat)

They missed her heart murmur too.

Rip goes back inside and ZIPS up the bag.

ELI

Excuse me?

RIP

She died from congenital heart failure.

He comes back out. Eli is amazed.

ELI

How do you know?

RIP

I read the file.

ELI

But how did you...?

RIP

*Understand* it? It ain't hieroglyphics.

He gestures for Eli to kneel down beside the CADAVER BAG on the dock floor.

RIP

Take this guy.

He UNZIPS the bag. A PALE BLUE FACE, eyes closed.

RIP

Forty years old. Healthy looking-well, he was.

(beat)

Aneurism. Any idiot could have spotted it.

He looks back toward the hospital.

RIP

Well, not *any* idiot, I guess.

Eli contemplates the lifeless face before him.

RIP

It's funny, you know, I've been selling these things to you Doctors for years- jewelry, a watch, the hair off their damn heads, when what you guys *really* need you could have gotten off them when they were alive. For *nothing*.

Eli hands back the bracelet.

ELI

I don't think I should have this.

RIP

Probably best. If she's expecting gold when you're in debt, imagine what she'll expect when you're *practicing*.

Eli looks back at the dead man.

ELI

So, what was *he* trying to tell us?

Rip ZIPS it back up.

RIP

What does it matter now? He's dead.

Rip lifts up the body and tosses it into the back of the van.

RIP

Get 'em when they're *alive* kid. They ought to teach you that, don't they?

ELI

I'm in class all day-

RIP

Wasn't saying you weren't.

Rip walks around to the driver's door and opens it.

RIP

But for an observant man, class is *always* in session.

Rip takes a quick look off into the distance, and then slides behind the wheel, driving off.

Eli watches him go, then follows the point of his gaze to...

THE HUBBARD HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM ENTRANCE

An auburn glow methodically pulses from the fluorescent lights over head. The hospital doors are closed, the area totally devoid of life.

Eli slowly walks over through the shadows...

EXT. HUBBARD HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eli stands outside a moment in the silence. Without moving, the doors suddenly OPEN for him, and he walks inside.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

PANDEMONIUM!

DOCTORS rushing from station to station, barking orders at an army of NURSES. The high pitched squeal of metal curtain rods as thin station drapes are savagely ripped open and closed.

The repetitive electronic percussion of medical machines call out the eternal alarm of the emergency room in action.

PATIENTS are wheeled in, wheeled out, stacked up in the hallways, waiting for attention.

There are WAILS of physical anguish, CRIES of pain, the SHOUTING of technicians and orderlies...

ELI watches from the doorway, his eyes straining to stretch large enough so he might take in the visual carnage.

VOICE (O.C.)

HEY!

An African American EMERGENCY ROOM DOCTOR is pointing at him.

ER DOCTOR

No visitors.

ELI

But, I-

ER DOCTOR

No visitors.

(to a Nurse)

Nelda, call the cop.

ELI

I'm a student.

ER DOCTOR

What?

ELI

I'm a medical student.

The ER Doctor immediately changes his demeanor from righteous fury to all business:

ER DOCTOR

Great. Get a coat.

ELI

What?

ER DOCTOR

NELDA?!

The NURSE tosses a WHITE COAT at Eli.

ER DOCTOR

Put it on.

ELI

(terrified)

I'm a first year.

ER DOCTOR

Ah, youth.

He grabs Eli, dragging him down the row of stations.

ELI

Wait- are you sure this is legal?

ER DOCTOR

I don't know. But I got a backlog of about a dozen people bleeding to death, and I'd rather save a life or two right now than argue about the finer points of Medical Malpractice, how about you?

Eli stops him.

ELI

Are you *listening* to me? I'm only a *student*-

ER DOCTOR

Here-

He takes off his STETHOSCOPE and places it around Eli's neck.

ER DOCTOR  
- Now you're a Doctor.

He takes off. Eli makes his decision... and rushes after him.

ER DOCTOR  
What's your name, kid?

ELI  
Eli Rosenberg.

ER DOCTOR  
God help us.

They come to a station with an OVERWEIGHT MAN in obvious pain, writhing on a gurney.

ER DOCTOR  
Alright, Mr. Grady, this is Dr. Rosenberg. He's going to ask you a few questions. I want you to answer them as precisely as you can. I'll be back in five minutes.

The ER Doctor spins around and starts to leave.

ELI  
HEY!

He grabs him, lowering his voice:

ELI  
Where are you going?

ER DOCTOR  
I'll be right back.

ELI  
What the hell am I supposed to *do*?

ER DOCTOR  
I told you- ask him anything you can think of that might be relevant. Where does it hurt, how does it hurt, how long has it hurt... got it?  
(beat)  
Good. Go get 'im, Doctor.

He flies off and Eli turns back, terrified. The man stares at him, grimacing. Eli just stands there, incapacitated before an actual, breathing, writhing patient.

ELI  
... Hi.

PATIENT  
(through pain)  
Hello.

ELI  
You don't look so good.

PATIENT  
I don't feel so good.

Silence.

PATIENT  
How old are you?

ELI  
Twenty Three.

PATIENT  
Isn't that too young to be a Doctor?

ELI  
I skipped Eighth Grade.  
(beat)  
And ninth, tenth and eleventh.

PATIENT  
Oh.

He winces in pain.

ELI  
So. What's the matter?

PATIENT  
Hell, I don't know. You tell me.

Eli sits in a chair beside the gurney.

ELI  
Well, you have to- you have to tell me  
what hurts, ok?

PATIENT  
My whole body.

ELI  
(forcefully)  
No it doesn't. *What* hurts exactly.  
Pinpoint it for me.

PATIENT

Well, I guess it's... It's right here.  
Under my chest.

ELI

Is it a sharp pain, or a dull  
throbbing one?

PATIENT

It's sharp. Really sharp.

Eli grabs the man's CHART, and scribbles on an open page.

ELI

Uh huh. Does it come and go, or-

PATIENT

No, it's there, all the time.

ELI

Getting worse, or constant?

PATIENT

Worse.

He GROANS in pain.

ELI

Hold on. I'll be right back.

Eli rushes out the station and grabs the ER Doctor away from  
a Nurse.

ELI

He's having a heart attack.

ER DOCTOR

No he isn't.

He grabs the file and reads Eli's notes.

ELI

He's overweight, flushed, sharp pain  
in his lower chest-

ER DOCTOR

Gas.

ELI

... What?

ER DOCTOR

He has to fart.

He grabs a package of "?????????" Out of a drawer.

ER DOCTOR  
Give him this.

ELI  
I really think you should look at-

The ER doctor is gone.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Eli sits beside the Patient, an empty cup of water by his bed. Silence.

A large, clear, razor- sharp FART.

The man smiles.

ELI  
Better?

PATIENT  
Much.

Eli shrugs and gets up as the ER doctor comes in.

ELI  
I think he farted.

ER DOCTOR  
Congratulations. Come with me.

He rushes off. Eli starts after him.

PATIENT  
Thank you, Doctor.

Eli spins around looking for a Doctor, but no one is there. He turns back, realizing the man is thanking him.

ELI  
*Excuse me?*

PATIENT  
Thank you, Doctor.

Eli pauses, drinking it in. Then very contentedly:

ELI  
You're welcome.

ER DOCTOR (O.C.)  
Let's go, Rookie!

Eli rushes off...

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Eli walking with the ER Doctor.

ELI  
I feel so stupid.

ER DOCTOR  
Why?

ELI  
It was just gas.

ER DOCTOR  
Do you think he cares? Is he feeling better?

ELI  
Yeah.

ER DOCTOR  
Was he feeling sick?

ELI  
Yeah.

ER DOCTOR  
*That's* Medicine, kid. Move on. I need you to take a B.P. for me.

ELI  
(totally lost)  
*... Batting Practice...?*

The ER Doc shakes his head and drags Eli off...

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - MONTAGE

The ER Doc takes a patient's BLOOD PRESSURE, Eli looking on.

Eli takes another patient's BLOOD PRESSURE.

Eli taking another patient's MEDICAL HISTORY.

Eli SUTURING up an INCISION in a man's leg, as the ER Doc washes up. The Doc comes over to look at Eli's STITCH:

ER DOCTOR  
Looks like a Football seam.

PATIENT  
(leaning up)  
*What?*

ER DOCTOR  
Said you'd be playing football in no  
time, Sam.

He winks at Eli and walks off, as Eli dresses the wound...

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

The ER Doc yanks Eli away from another HISTORY.

ER DOCTOR  
Ok, Rook, get your car. I need you to  
Go To Momma's House.

ELI  
*Where?*

ER DOCTOR  
Sorry- some nights we run out of  
ambulances, so we go out and pick up  
the patients ourselves. First time, it  
was an old woman's house. She made us  
call her Momma. So now, when we get a  
call-

ELI  
You "Go to Momma's House."

The ER Doc starts toward the door, Eli in tow.

ER DOCTOR  
You're quick, Rook. How are you doing  
in Johnson's Physiology class?

ELI  
Number Two.

ER DOCTOR  
We'll have to work on that.  
(gives him a slip of  
paper)  
Ok, you got a Skater on 26th Street.

ELI  
Skater?

ER DOCTOR  
Slipped in the bathtub. Bring him in,  
Rook.

ELI  
Dead or Alive, sir!

Eli plows out the door...

ER DOCTOR  
Preferably *alive*, kid!

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Eli gets out of his car and looks up at a DECREPIT HOUSE:  
Windows broken, overgrown, trash in the driveway, roof in  
tatters.

An OLD WOMAN sits outside on a weather-stripped wooden bench,  
fanning herself in the humid night.

Eli approaches her deferentially.

ELI  
'evening, Ma'am.

OLD WOMAN  
The hell do you want?

ELI  
I'm here for...  
(checking paper)  
Mr. Calvin Parker.

OLD WOMAN  
You his Parole Officer?

ELI  
No ma'am.

OLD WOMAN  
He's broken that parole in more ways  
than you can shake a stick at.

ELI  
I'm not his Parole Officer.

OLD WOMAN  
Why do you waste your time with these  
damn laws if you ain't gonna hold  
anyone accountable?

ELI

I'm-

OLD WOMAN

Damn embarrassing- you ought to throw away the key on him this time.

ELI

I'm from Meharry, Ma'am.

She looks at him a long time.

OLD WOMAN

You looking for a donation?

She laughs long and hard.

OLD WOMAN

Well, let me get my checkbook, young man. What can I do for you? You need a new building or something?

ELI

I'm here to take your husband to the emergency room.

She stops.

OLD WOMAN

Can you hold him there a while?

ELI

If he's sick enough.

OLD WOMAN

Well go get him, then. I could use the break.

Eli opens the door and walks inside.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Eli walks into a room even more run down than the exterior.

AN OLD MAN, about sixty-five, is sitting in a frayed CHAIR, dressed in an old tattered SUIT.

ELI

Mr. Parker?

OLD MAN

You a parole officer?

ELI

No, sir.

OLD MAN

She told me she was in College. She looked about Thirty.

ELI

I'm here to take you to the Emergency Room.

OLD MAN

Bullshit.

ELI

Sir?

OLD MAN

I want a Negro Doctor, not some damn white administrator.

ELI

I'm not an administrator, I'm a medical student.

OLD MAN

They sent a damn student to get me? Forget it. I'll fix my damn leg myself.

He tries to get up and COLLAPSES in pain.

Eli leaps forward, catching him.

OLD MAN

Leave me alone!

He tries to take a step, and cries out in pain.

ELI

(yells)

STOP IT! Shut up and stop fighting me, or I'm going to drop you like a sack of potatoes, okay?

The man freezes, shocked.

ELI

If you can't put weight on it, it's broken, and if it's broken, it's not going to heal, understand?

ELI(cont'd)

Now you have two choices- one, you go quietly with me to the hospital so we can fix you up; or two, you sit on your ass for the next three months, the bones fuse incorrectly, and you never walk right again.

(beat)

Pick one, pops.

The man stares at Eli...

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Eli half carries the Old Man out the door toward his car. The Old Woman watches, impressed.

OLD WOMAN

Can you tell that damn fool to stop coming home drunk at two in the morning while you're at it?

ELI

As soon as we fix his leg, Ma'am.

Eli opens the car door and helps the man inside.

OLD WOMAN

Good boy. I might just have to give you that building after all.

Eli and she share a laugh, as he goes around and hops into the driver's seat.

EXT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Eli yanks his car to a stop outside the entrance. He leaps out and runs around to the other side, opening up the door for the Old Man.

ELI

Just a second, sir- let me get you a wheelchair.

Eli runs inside...

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Eli looks around frantically for a wheelchair, but only spots ONE in the corner with a BURLY AID sleeping in it. Eli delicately approaches.

ELI  
Excuse me-

BURLY AID  
What?

ELI  
I need this wheelchair.

BURLY AID  
You need to get out of my face before  
I bust yours up.

SMACK! A CANE slams into the Aid's shoulder.

The OLD MAN stands beside Eli with his cane at his side.

OLD MAN  
The hell is wrong with you, boy? This  
young man's trying to get me in to see  
the doctor. If he says he needs the  
wheelchair, he needs the wheelchair.

BURLY AID  
Yes, sir!

He jumps up, and he and Eli ease the Old Man into the chair.

OLD MAN  
Now get the hell out of here.

BURLY AID  
Yes, sir.

He retreats as the ER DOCTOR comes over.

ER DOCTOR  
Good work, kid. Just park him here,  
and we'll get to him asap.

Eli gently parks the chair by the Nurse's Station, and joins  
the ER Doc.

ER DOCTOR  
What?

ELI  
What else?

ER DOCTOR  
Go home.

ELI  
Home? No, I want to-

ER DOCTOR  
Go study. I want you number one in  
that class, understand?

ELI  
Yeah.

Eli starts off.

ER DOCTOR  
Don't be a stranger, Rook.

ELI  
(grins)  
No, sir. I won't.

Eli walks out, almost skipping. The ER Doc shakes his head with a thin smile, and returns to work...

EXT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

Eli walks out toward his car.

OLD MAN (O.C.)  
Young man?

The Old Man has wheeled himself to the doorway.

ELI  
Yes, sir.

OLD MAN  
(pause)  
Thank you.

ELI  
They'll take good care of you, sir.

OLD MAN  
They already have.

He reaches out to shake Eli's hand.

ACROSS THE STREET

GARRISON and a few other med students watch the Old Man warmly thanking Eli.

MEDICAL STUDENT  
What's he doing over there?

GARRISON  
What am I, a lip reader?

The other students walk off, but Garrison remains, watching Eli and the man from afar...

INT. ELI'S DORM - NIGHT

Eli, thoroughly exhausted, eases his bloodied, sweat stained shirt off his back. He catches a glimpse of himself in the mirror- HE IS A MESS. He views himself with a mix of amazement and admiration.

ELI  
Wow.

INT. SHOWERS - NIGHT

Eli slowly drags himself into the GROUP SHOWERS.

GARRISON AND THE OTHER STUDENTS are already each at their own showers. They ignore Eli as he passes, save Garrison, who watches him out of the corner of his eye.

Eli hangs up his towel beside the shower head and turns on the water, swaying back and forth beneath the relaxing warm water.

Eli begins to HUM a tune.

ELI  
(singing)  
*"In the still of the night..."*

As they shower, the other students become aware of the singing. Garrison joins in:

GARRISON  
(singing)  
"....."

MONTAGE:

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Garrison and Eli loading an OLD WOMAN into the "ER TAXI"...

INT. SHOWERS

Another STUDENT join in on the song with Eli...

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

All three students are taking patient histories at neighboring stations...

INT. SHOWERS

A FOURTH STUDENT sings along at his shower stall...

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - DAY

All four students gently transfer a patient from a gurney to an ER station bed...

INT. SHOWERS - NIGHT

Eli, Garrison and the other two black students are covered in lather, facing each other in a circle, finishing the song in a well meaning but awkward sounding harmony:

STUDENTS  
*"In the still... Of the Night!"*

They finish, laughing.

One by one, they realize they are staring at each other, face to face, BUCK NAKED.

All four abruptly spin back to their respective showers, humming as if nothing had happened.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Eli, Garrison and Zack are walking out of class. Eli carries a small wooden FOLD UP CHAIR.

DEAN HOLMES (O.C.)  
 Mr. Rosenberg?

Garrison and Zack salute Eli, as he goes in...

INT. DEAN HOLMES' OFFICE - DAY

Dean Holmes looks up and frowns.

ELI  
Yes, sir?

DEAN HOLMES  
Take a seat, sir.

ELI  
Don't mind if I do.

Eli opens up the CHAIR and sits.

DEAN HOLMES  
Tell me, Mr. Rosenberg, what is the  
\_\_\_\_\_?

ELI  
-----.

DEAN HOLMES  
And the \_\_\_\_\_?

ELI  
-----.

DEAN HOLMES  
And what about the ...?

Eli pauses... Stumped...

ELI  
The...? Gosh, I don't know.

DEAN HOLMES  
(grinning)  
Well then, Mr. Rosen-

ELI  
Just kidding. It's the .....

Silence. Dean Holmes blinks once... Twice...

DEAN HOLMES  
Thank you, Mr. Rosenberg.

ELI  
My pleasure sir.

Eli folds up his chair and leaves.

After fifteen long seconds, Dean Holmes SMILES...

INT. LABORATORY - DAY

The students stand around multiple DISSECTION STATIONS, two students per table, hovering anxiously over ANAESTHETIZED LABRADOR RETRIEVERS. DR. MARVIN LITTLE, an ancient African American professor shuffles laboriously through the room.

DR. LITTLE

... Now I know all you fine young men and women can navigate your way around the digestive tract in a textbook, but can you do so within a living breathing body- without turning it into a cadaver?

Eli skillfully makes an incision with Zack, his lab partner, assisting, while Mike and Garrison begin at the neighboring station.

DR. LITTLE (O.C.)

Let me be clear about this assignment, ladies and gentlemen. If your dog's heart stops beating during the time of operation, you will receive an "F." There is no in-between when we are dealing with a patient's life...

Garrison makes a deep tissue incision and HALTS.

GARRISON

Shit.

MICHAEL

What?

GARRISON

I think I cut the (.....) artery.

MICHAEL

*What?*

GARRISON

I-

MICHAEL

What the fuck did you do that for?

GARRISON

I didn't mean to, Mike.

Dr. Little waddles by station after station, checking to see if the dog hearts are still beating.

GARRISON  
Shit- Dog Man's coming.

Eli looks up from his work.

ELI  
What's the matter?

GARRISON  
I think I cut the (....) artery.

ELI  
What the fuck did you do that for?

Dr. Little moves closer.

GARRISON  
(to Michael)  
I'll tell him it was my fault.

MICHAEL  
It was your fault, you idiot! Now we both flunk!

Eli suddenly puts down his scalpel.

ELI  
Garrison, switch with me.

GARRISON  
What? Why?

MICHAEL  
No-

ZACK  
Eli-

ELI  
Just *do* it. Now.

Dr. Little looks down at another station. Eli and Garrison quickly swap stations.

MICHAEL  
What the hell are you doing?

ELI  
I have no idea.

Dr. Little moves to the adjacent station. Eli quickly surveys the instruments.

ELI  
Give me the (....).

MICHAEL  
What are you-

Eli reaches past Michael and grabs a long thin rod like instrument, quickly burrowing it deep inside the dog's open chest (off camera).

ELI  
Cover me.

Michael throws a SURGICAL PAD over Eli's arm, covering it from view, and moves closer to him, shielding him.

Dr. Little arrives, frowning.

DR. LITTLE  
Since when do you two work together?

They say nothing. Little sighs and briefly looks at the dog.

THE DOG'S HEART rises and falls in rhythmic fibrillation.

DR. LITTLE  
Looks good.

He moves on. Eli stops manipulating the instrument, and the dog's heart STOPS.

Eli and Michael lean over the dog, relieved.

THE DOG'S HEART LURCHES BACK TO LIFE.

Both leap back, screaming.

DR. LITTLE  
(from another station)  
What's the matter over there?

ELI  
His heart's beating!

DR. LITTLE  
That is the *idea*, isn't it, Doctor?

The heart beats on...

INT. HALLWAY

Garrison leads Zack, Eli and a morose Michael out of the lab.

GARRISON  
Mike, cheer up- you look like you just failed.

MICHAEL  
(glaring at Eli)  
I *should* have.

He starts the other way.

ELI  
Hey- I was just trying to help.

MICHAEL  
I don't need your help.

GARRISON  
I sure as hell did.

MICHAEL  
Then *you* take it.

He stalks off. Eli and Garrison watch him go.

GARRISON  
Man. That is one white Negro.  
(beat)  
No offense.

EXT. VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY - EVENING

Students file into the BASKETBALL ARENA on the campus of nearby VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY.

INT. VANDERBILT ARENA - EVENING

Eli and Melanie stand, enjoying a BASKETBALL GAME. A mostly white team for Vanderbilt, all black for Mississippi State.

On the SCOREBOARD: VANDY 17; MISSISSIPPI STATE 35

MELANIE  
I thought you said Vandy had a *team*.

ELI  
They did. This must be the J.V.'s.

Another Mississippi score. Eli sighs.

MELANIE

You white men just cannot play this game any more.

ELI

You should see us in Brooklyn. We put up a much better fight, believe me.

MELANIE

I bet you in twenty five years, there'll only be a handful of white players in the pros.

ELI

Yeah- let me have some of whatever you're smoking.

She laughs. Another Mississippi score. Eli shakes his head.

ELI

And to think I wanted to come here.

EXT. VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY - NIGHT

Eli and Melanie strolling through the beautiful campus, holding hands.

MELANIE

What stopped you?

ELI

From kissing you the moment I first saw you?

MELANIE

(laughs)

From coming here?

ELI

Ah.

(pause)

Freshman year of college.

MELANIE

That's it?

ELI

Sophomore Year didn't help.

MELANIE

So, why the big change, Mr. Head of the Class-

ELI

Neck of the Class, Michael's Head.

MELANIE

Whatever. Is it so easy?

ELI

*Meharry?* Yeah- if you think the Bataan Death March was easy.

MELANIE

I'm serious.

Eli takes back his hand, uncomfortable.

ELI

It's tough. I guess. I have nothing to compare it to.

He looks at a gigantic LIBRARY, glowing from within.

ELI

I'm sure I wouldn't be so close to the top here.

MELANIE

(bristling)

Why? Because the students are *white*?

ELI

No.

(pause)

Because its just... better.

He stares around at the gigantic well-kept buildings.

ELI

Vanderbilt Medical School. It's the top of the heap.

MELANIE

Why?

ELI

(pause)

Because it *is*.

She smiles, giving up.

MELANIE

Well, I think you'd be the Neck of whatever school you went to.

She takes his hand and they walk on.

ELI

Speaking of necks...

MELANIE

Uh huh...?

ELI

What's stopping you from kissing me right now?

MELANIE

(laughs)

Well, we're walking too fast, for one thing. I don't want to bite your tongue off.

Eli stops them and turns to her. She smiles.

MELANIE

And you're so very, very far away.

He leans closer to her...

MELANIE

And...

A WHITE COUPLE stares at them from across the grass.

Melanie and Eli stiffen under their gaze.

ELI

And we just might make an international incident.

She laughs.

MELANIE

So- one last question... What's stopping you from taking me back to your place?

ELI

(pause)

You know something, that is a very, very good question.

INT. ELI'S DORM - NIGHT

Melanie and Eli stare at each other, the room only lit by the light seeping under the doorway from the hall.

ELI  
I've never done this before.

MELANIE  
You mean, "with a black woman?"

ELI  
No. I mean, "with a woman."  
(beat)  
Not "with a *man*" either.

MELANIE  
Well, that's a relief.

An awkward silence.

MELANIE  
Are you going to take off my clothes,  
or would you rather I do it?

ELI  
Uhm... You could, sure, if you want,  
that'd be...

She takes off her shirt.

ELI  
That'd be...

She removes her bra.

ELI  
*Wow.*

He stares at her, overwhelmed.

ELI  
You know, I spend all day learning  
about the human body. And its so  
beautiful, so complex. But looking at  
you, right now... I don't remember  
studying *this*.

MELANIE  
Well, I guess its time you *did*.

He kisses her, and their arms slowly wrap around each other.

INT. ELI'S DORM - LATER

Eli and Melanie lie on the bed together, sometime later.  
Melanie looks contented, Eli restless.

ELI  
So. Was that, you know...?

MELANIE  
What?

ELI  
Different?

MELANIE  
No, the pieces usually fit together  
pretty much the same way.

ELI  
No- I mean, different than...

MELANIE  
(she laughs)  
Oh- you mean a black man?

ELI  
Yeah.

She thinks a moment, then slyly says:

MELANIE  
Well, one time is too small a sampling  
for me to make a final judgement.

ELI  
(smiling)  
Well, perhaps I can assist you in your  
deliberations.

He rolls ontop of her...

INT. DORMITORY HALLWAY - LATER

The door slowly opens, as Eli quietly emerges and delicately  
closes the door behind him.

APPLAUSE

Eli turns to find the ENTIRE HALLWAY outside their rooms,  
cheering him boisterously.

He acknowledges the cheers as he walks down the hall, his fellow students clapping him on the back as he goes.

INT. FISK UNIVERSITY BANQUET HALL - DAY

A Banner reads: MEHARRY / FISK ALUMNI WEEKEND

Alumni, students, and Professors from both schools mingle together in a large hall.

Eli and Harrison

She pulls away from parents to talk w Eli but won't introduce him.

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The EAGLE SCENE...

ELI

It's just- it's too much sometimes.  
Medicine, morality-

DR. FELDMAN

*Morality?*

ELI

Yeah- like we're kids, I mean, we're right out of College, and all of a sudden, we're supposed to be Saints or something.

DR. FELDMAN

Whoa! Eli- slow down. When did Medical School become a Seminary.

ELI

All I hear is what we owe,  
responsibility, service... Sometimes,  
I'm embarrassed to say this, but  
sometimes I feel, just a little...  
that morality in Medicine is bullshit.

DR. FELDMAN

Absolutely not. I don't doubt for a second there's a morality in medicine. I think there are earnest men who practice from a foundation of great honor and genuine concern.

DR. FELDMAN(cont'd)

What I will say is that it makes very little difference to a *patient* when you read them their pathology report what part of your heart it comes from. They want to be cured Eli, not empathized with. And when they dump you for another physician without a second thought, and refuse to pay their bill because they're "better now," and badmouth you because they waited a quarter of an hour to see you, and sue you to the ends of comprehension because you, and every other doctor on the case, missed the infinitesimal minutia that only the very eye of God could see, what kind of *morality* is practiced upon you?

(takes a drink)

I have nothing against morality, but it's- let's face it- it's a *luxury* that basically exists almost exclusively in the classrooms of educational institutions, not in the space between Life and Death in the halls of a Hospital. At two o'clock in the morning, when you haven't slept for a week, and the phone rings for the thirteenth fucking time so you can explain to an Eighty Seven year old Alzheimer's patient, who, in Natural terms, should have died ten years ago, that a cough is a natural function of the human respiratory system, is it *immoral* to answer out of a desire for compensation? What do you think? Without emotion, without making social commentary- does it matter? The patient wants to be better, you want a better life- does anyone really care how they each get there?

ELI

It's so much easier to say I want to do the right thing.

DR. FELDMAN

In the short run. *Here*. Philosophizing with your friends over a beer or a joint. Not out *there*. Not if you're going to make it in this profession without going mad.

DR. FELDMAN(cont'd)

Look, Eli- the sooner you admit why you're here, and what you've come for, and what you're going to do with your life- *your* life- the sooner you'll know what the hell you're doing here, and more importantly, how to get the hell *out* of here.

He ruffles some pages together.

DR. JOHNSON

You can start by getting those grades up, beginning with my exam tomorrow.

(MORE)