

ERIC

"John Dumbeck is Dead"

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INT. ERIC'S DORM ROOM - DAY

ELEANOR DUMBECK and her BOYFRIEND, both 19, white, enter the room.

ELEANOR

How much more stuff are you putting in my room?

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

(in his usual booming voice)

Not much more, darling! You won't even know I'm there!

ELEANOR

Of course I know! You're moving in with me! I'm walking with you right now!

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

Less talking, more moving of my stuff.

ELEANOR

You do know best.

They walk into his bedroom. ERIC NELSON and his girlfriend, BERNIECE WILLIAMS, both 18, black, exit from Eric's bedroom.

BERNIECE

This is a good idea pretending that we're married!

ERIC

Yeah, I got the idea from Eleanor and her boyfriend.

Berniece stops and looks at him.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Okay, from Eleanor's boyfriend.

BERNIECE

Let's go down and meet the movers.

They exit the dorm room. Eleanor and her boyfriend exit from his bedroom.

ELEANOR

Was that Eric's voice I heard?

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

If it was, then he's probably moving his stuff out.

They exit the dorm room. Eric carries a pile of boxes inside and struggles to walk. Berniece follows him inside the dorm room.

ERIC
(grunts)
How much more stuff you got?

BERNIECE
Not much, babe!

ERIC
And shouldn't the movers be doing this?

BERNIECE
They went on break.

They enter Eric's bedroom. Eleanor and her boyfriend enter the dorm room.

ELEANOR
Hey, isn't that Eric's milk carton sitting out? It has his name on it.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND
(scoffs)
Yeah. Damn Eric! He has to come back for it!

Eleanor touches the carton.

ELEANOR
It's still cold! Are you sure he doesn't live here anymore?

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND
Sure I'm sure, snookums! Nobody lives here but me, if anything!

They enter his bedroom. Eric's brother, BILLY, 20's, enters the dorm room with his son, WILL, 1.

WILL
Is this where my new parents live?

BILLY
No, your uncle. And aunt, too, if he doesn't Nelson it up! And you're only staying with them for a few weeks while Mom and I try to reconcile.

WILL
What does that mean?

BILLY
What, "reconcile"?

WILL
No, "Nelson it up".

BILLY
You'll learn soon enough.

They enter Eric's bedroom. Eleanor and her boyfriend walk out of his bedroom.

ELEANOR
Now what were those voices?

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND
Will you stop being paranoid? No one else is here!

He heads for the door.

ELEANOR
Well, okay. They didn't make me the Resident Advisor for nothing. I can sense when something's going on.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND (O.C.)
Huh? Eleanor, we talked about that two hours ago!

ELEANOR
What?

INT. ELEANOR'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor looks around and sees that she is driving her car, with her boyfriend in the passenger's seat.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND
And look out!

BOTH
AAARRGGGHHH!!!

SFX: BRAKE SOUND!

The car drives and brakes towards a cliff. Eleanor makes a U-Turn and drives past a sign that says, "ROAD MAY NOT BE FINISHED".

ELEANOR

That was close! Imagine what would've happened! That would've been a real hanging-off-a-cliff thingy!

EXT. CAR DEALER - DAY

A new car pulls up to the lot. Exiting out of it are Eric and Billy's stepfather, MATT JAMES, 40's, black, and Eleanor's father, JOHN DUMBECK, 40's, white.

MATT

What do you think of it, John?

JOHN

I don't know. I couldn't drive it!

MATT

You don't know how to drive!

JOHN

Neither does anyone else in this city!

MATT

I'll teach you later. Right now, you need your own car. You can't bum a ride off of me all the time.

JOHN

It's only because my chauffeurs were off fixing the partition in my limo. It happens to everybody, man!

MATT

Just come on. It'll be good for you to own something as well as operate it. And didn't you say that you wanted to act more like a regular person?

JOHN

Yeah.

MATT

Well, coming here and getting ripped off is part of it! Follow me.

INT. CAR DEALER - MOMENTS LATER

The men sit at a desk, facing the salesman, JIM, black.

JIM

I'm glad you decided on this car, Mr. Dumbeck. It's the last one left, you know.

JOHN

Well, I'm glad we came when we did!

JIM

Excuse me, I gotta take this call.

He pulls out his phone and steps away.

MATT

Don't listen to him, man. I'm sure they got plenty.

JOHN

None like that one, though!

MATT

You sure you wanna purchase this?

JOHN

(chuckles)

I thought you were purchasing this. You drove it!

MATT

Yeah, right! I ain't working! I'm just like you!

JOHN

Like hell you are! Anyway, if I don't like it, I'll just keep it in one of my garages.

MATT

Or just trade it in. Or, worst-case scenario, have it repossessed voluntarily, like I did once.

JOHN

Really? Did you still have to pay for it?

MATT

Ah, they claimed I owed something on it and kept trying to garnish my wages. But the joke's on them, because I don't have a job!

JOHN

Well, let me get to signing this contract.

MATT

Hurry up. I still got errands to run.

JOHN

Okay.

He reads the contract.

MATT

John, you don't have to read all that stuff. Just sign it!

JOHN

I suppose Jim would tell me if there was something dire in here. Man, Matt, you are full of good advice!

John signs the contract.

INT. DUMBECK MANSION - DAY

John sits in the living room with his older daughter, SHANA JONES, 20, biracial, and Eleanor. They both read from their phones. Eric comes from downstairs, holding a stuffed animal.

ERIC

Hey, guys. See ya later.

ELEANOR

Hey! That's my Goose Moose!

ERIC

Oh yeah. Your boyfriend said I could have it.

SHANA

What would you want with that?

ERIC

It's for my nephew, Will. A little housewarming gift.

(pause)

For his house back at home. See ya.

Eric swiftly walks towards the front door.

ELEANOR

(to her family)

You can't heat a house up with that! Something strange is going on!

ERIC

Oh, there's some people coming up to your door.

Eric exits.

JOHN

Huh?

Enter the O'NEIL family: mother ROBIN, son DESHAUN, and daughter KATE. They enter with suitcases.

ROBIN

Hi, how ya doin'? Okay, time for ya'll to bounce!

John approaches them.

JOHN

Who the heck are you guys?

ROBIN

We're the O'Neils, new owners of your house!

DESHAUN

And what a house it is!

KATE

I'm gonna throw my party here!

ELEANOR

Well, make sure to invite us! This was our house first!

JOHN

(to Eleanor)

Quiet!

(to the O'Neils)

She's slightly right, though. This is our house.

ROBIN

Not anymore, it's not! Didn't you read the contract?

JOHN

What contract?

ROBIN

That my husband, Jim, gave you.

JOHN

Jim? What are you talking about? I don't know a Jim!

ROBIN

He sold you a car yesterday!

JOHN

Okay, but I still don't get what you're saying.

ROBIN

Well, review it, while we move in more of our stuff. Come on, guys.

The O'Neils exit.

SHANA

Dad, what's going on?

JOHN

Some crazy people, that's what! Lemme pull out my receipts.

He reads his copy of the contract.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Yeah, I don't see anything in here! I'm calling the cops!

He tosses the papers. Shana picks them up.

SHANA

Uh, Dad, I wouldn't be so quick to do that. Did you read the fine print?

JOHN

I glanced over it. It's a lot of legal mumbo jumbo.

SHANA

You're half-right. Look in between this paragraph!

She shows John and Eleanor. John reads out loud.

JOHN

"You forfeit your Dumbeck mansion to my family"??

SHANA

And then in this paragraph.

ELEANOR

(reads)

"You agree to pay them each \$1000 a month"?

SHANA

And down here.

JOHN

"And you owe me a cheeseburger"! What is this mess? None of this is legal!

The O'Neils reenter.

ROBIN

Oh, yes it is! I took two days of Law. You signed a contract, so it's binding!

Shana approaches them.

SHANA

Now wait a minute! You can't just throw us out on the streets like this!

ELEANOR

Actually, Shana, we each got our own places, so it's okay.

SHANA

No it's not! We need to consult with our lawyers on this!

JOHN

And I got plenty of them!

ROBIN

Fine, do what you need to! But we will be back!

DESHAUN

And my dad still wants his burger!

Kate nudges him.

DESHAUN (CONT'D)

I mean, our money!

The O'Neils exit.

JOHN

Shana, I can't contact my lawyers! I sent them on a well-deserved vacation!

SHANA

Tell 'em it's important!

JOHN

I told them no matter how important I make it sound, don't answer their phones!

ELEANOR

Shana, do you know any legal people in the Army? I'm sure there's a lot of screw-ups there that need representation!

SHANA

I'll look into it.

ELEANOR

Good. Dad, go somewhere and hide out!

JOHN

No! This is my house, and nobody's gonna run me out!

A tall, buff guy named WALTER, black, enters.

WALTER

(deep voice)

Where's the old, white guy that won't leave?

JOHN

Oh, look at the time! I'm gonna go down to Timmy's for a drink!

SHANA

Dad!

JOHN

No, it's five o'clock somewhere!

ELEANOR

Dad, it really is five o'clock!

JOHN

Even better! Excuse me!

He struggles to squeeze by Walter.

WALTER

Too bad. I needed him to help me bring a sofa in. It's a two-man operation. But I'm strong enough to equal three men. Can ya'll ladies spot me?

SHANA AND ELEANOR
(lustfully)

Sure!

Walter exits. The sisters stare at him and lean to the side.

INT. TIMMY'S PLACE - LATER

John enters the bar and sits down.

JOHN
Ike, a scotch on the rocks, and leave the bottle.

IKE, black, gives him the drink and the bottle. He speaks in his usual "surfer" dialect.

IKE
No prob, Mr. Rich Man, sir!

Berniece's father, XAVIER, and OFFICER YVETTE TOWNSEND, both 40's, black, sit across from him.

XAVIER
What's the matter, John, long, hard day at work?

He, Townsend, and Ike LAUGH.

JOHN
Like you would know anything about work, Officer!

OFFICER TOWNSEND
And I'm proud of that!

IKE
What's the problem, man?

JOHN
Nothing. Just that I might've signed over my house while I was buying a car.

XAVIER
What?
(to Townsend)
Is that even legal?

Townsend shrugs and MAKES the "I don't know" sound.

JOHN

But my daughters said they would take care of it.

IKE

Fine, then, like, drink and be merry!
Some TV will cheer you up!

He picks up a remote and CLICKS on a TV.

ON THE TV

A female NEWSCASTER speaks.

NEWSCASTER

...seek shelter immediately. And shocking news coming out of Milwaukee: local zillionaire John Dumbeck has been pronounced dead after a plane crash.

The patrons GASP.

JOHN

That's terrible! I gotta get Jentille to send flowers to...me...WHAT??

IKE

Whoa! You're dead and you're here? I need to take a break! But no more smoke breaks!

Ike runs away.

OFFICER TOWNSEND

You know it's illegal to fake your own death. Now that, I do know!

XAVIER

How?

OFFICER TOWNSEND

(mutters)

I just do.

JOHN

I didn't do this, Officer!

(stammers)

What do I do now?

XAVIER

Hide?

John leaps behind the bar and CRASHES into some bottles.
Ike returns.

IKE

Okay, maybe one more smoke break.

Ike kneels underneath the counter, gets back up, balls his fist, and exits.

JOHN

Alright, now what?

XAVIER

Maybe go somewhere secluded, where nobody else is!

INT. SUBS N' SUCH - LATER

John sits in the empty sub shop at a table. PAULETTA, black, works behind the counter.

PAULETTA

Welcome to Subs n' Such...

She looks behind her, then turns back around.

PAULETTA (CONT'D)

Welcome to Such! May I take your order?

JOHN

Thanks, but not right now.

PAULETTA

Okay, but there's no laundering here.

JOHN

I think you mean, "loitering".

PAULETTA

Oh, right! 'Cuz why would there be laundering here? Heh, heh!

Her co-worker, PATTY, black, approaches her.

PATTY

Pauletta, I think that's John Dumbeck!

PAULETTA

Who?

PATTY

The owner!

PAULETTA

Oh yeah! But aren't you supposed to be dead?

JOHN

Long story.

He sees Shana and Eleanor enter.

JOHN (CONT'D)

And I think I found the ghostwriters!

ELEANOR

Dad, listen, before you freak out...

JOHN

Freak out? About getting killed? Heavens, no! This is how you've solved my problem, Eleanor?

ELEANOR

Hey, it wasn't me this time!

She points to Shana, who reluctantly raises her hand.

JOHN

Shana? What were you thinking?

SHANA

Okay, it sounds bad, but hear me out! You got presumably killed in a plane crash, and they can't find your remains. So those fools can't take your stuff!

JOHN

But what about the estate?

ELEANOR

(scoffs)

They won't go after the state of Wisconsin. It's too big!

SHANA

Please don't help, Eleanor.

JOHN

And what's gonna happen to me?

SHANA

Continue hiding out here in Madison! Then once the smoke clears, voila! We found out you weren't dead after all!

ELEANOR

Yeah, we can make it look like an accident!

Shana nudges Eleanor.

JOHN

You got all of this from your lawyer friend?

SHANA

Well, not really. He's in court right now. For himself.

JOHN

But these girls here recognized me. Don't you think others will recognize me, too? And I can't just "launder" around here!

ELEANOR

Oh, I got an idea!

JOHN

I almost want to hear it.

ELEANOR

Take a trip to Canada for the weekend! They don't keep up with America stuff!

SHANA

That could work, Dad. Just hop on a private jet, get some sandwiches from here...

PATTY

Uh...

Pauletta nudges her.

SHANA

...and just try to relax. We'll get all this worked out in no time.

JOHN

(sighs)

You girls really are trying to kill me.

SHANA

No we're not, Daddy. It's just a little white lie.

ELEANOR

From a giant white-ish girl.

Shana cuts her eyes at Eleanor.

JOHN

I'll sneak out the back. It'll give me practice.

John exits. Eleanor shakes her head.

ELEANOR

Our daddy. He launders, too! He should be rolling around in his grave!

Shana stares at Eleanor, then walks away. Eleanor follows her.

INT. DORM - HALLWAY - DAY

Berniece turns a corner. Eleanor heads in the opposite direction. Berniece stops.

BERNIECE

Eleanor! You're probably wondering what I'm doing here!

ELEANOR

Oh, I'm not concerned about that right now. I'm trying to set up my dad's funeral arrangements.

BERNIECE

Oh yeah. Sorry about that, by the way.

ELEANOR

Thank you. I just hope Dad's able to stream the service from wherever he is.

Eleanor exits. Berniece looks puzzled, then walks away.

INT. DORM - CONTINUOUS

Eleanor enters the lobby and sits on the couch next to her boyfriend.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

Eleanor, baby! What's up?

ELEANOR

Nothing, dear. It's just that my dad's never been dead before.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

He's not dead now, either.

ELEANOR

Still, it's a lot of hard work.

Behind them are Eric and some movers with furniture.

ERIC

(softly)

Right this way.

Eleanor's boyfriend sees them and grabs Eleanor closer.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

That's it, baby, let it all out.

Eric and the movers exit.

ELEANOR

Baby, there's something strange going on around here.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

Nothing stranger than usual!

ELEANOR

You sure?

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

Yeah!

ELEANOR

Well, don't ever try to screw with me. You know I got eyes in the front of my head!

DIMMEY ROBERTS and his girlfriend, CONNIE McDOWELL, both 18, white, lead a group of people past the back of the couch. They hold balloons and presents.

DIMMEY

(whispers)

All right, keep it down.

CONNIE

(whispers)

Yeah.

They exit.

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

Let's take your mind off all this and watch some "Cosby Show" reruns!

He picks up the remote and CLICKS on the TV.

ELEANOR

Are these the episodes with Olivia?

ELEANOR'S BOYFRIEND

Who?

ELEANOR

You know, where they bring in a cute, new kid because the other kids aren't cute no more?

POLLY and PABLO McNAIR, 13 and 10, respectively, Puerto Rican, enter with two double strollers, carrying Will, along with Eleanor's three baby niece and nephews.

POLLY

Hey, where's the party?

Eleanor and her boyfriend turn around.

ELEANOR

Huh?

PABLO

She means, "Where's the parting of Eric from his room?"

ELEANOR

Oh. Down the hall, I guess.
(to the babies)

Hey, sweetums!

The kids exit.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

SUPER: "TORONTO, ON"

John, wearing dark sunglasses, a hat with ear flaps, and a flannel jacket, sits on a couch in front of a fireplace. He watches a live stream on his phone.

ON THE PHONE

MILDRED, a black senior citizen, slowly walks up to a podium.

MILDRED

Family, I know you wanted this service to be private, but I just had to race up here to make sure he was dead.

(MORE)

MILDRED (CONT'D)

(sighs)

I outlived him. Big surprise, right? We had a thing goin' on. He had a little thing, am I right?

She CHUCKLES. The audience stares at her.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Too soon? Hey, I had to tell him, that, too!

(chuckles)

Anyway, he was a mess, but I kinda liked Junior.

Shana and Eleanor approach her.

ELEANOR

Mildred, this funeral is for John Dumbuck!

SHANA

Yeah, look at the picture!

Shana points at John's photo on a stand.

MILDRED

Wow, talk about takin' the wind out of a sail!

She exits.

BACK TO COFFEE SHOP

JOHN

Still better than what my ex-wife said about me.

STEPHANIE, the barista, white, approaches him.

STEPHANIE

Excuse me, sir.

JOHN

Oh, sorry, is this too loud?

STEPHANIE

No, I was just getting these dishes here. What's that you're watching, anyway?

JOHN

My funeral...playlist that I saved.

Stephanie looks at his phone.

STEPHANIE

Looks like he was pretty well-known.

JOHN

Wait, you don't recognize him?

STEPHANIE

No, should I?

JOHN

He's a highly rich celebrity in the United States.

STEPHANIE

Oh. I don't pay attention to celebrities. I wouldn't want to deal with them, either. Too much stress, all the paparazzi chasing you, you can't get a moment of peace.

JOHN

Yeah, that's right.

STEPHANIE

With normal people, you can easily figure out who likes you for you.

JOHN

True.

STEPHANIE

I like your hat, by the way.

JOHN

Oh, thanks.

STEPHANIE

It really brings out your eyes.

JOHN

You can see my eyes? I'm wearing shades.

STEPHANIE

They just...shine through.

John and Stephanie stare at each other.

ON THE PHONE

JAKEESHA, a black teen, approaches the podium.

JAKEESHA

Mr. Dumbeck was a good man, even though I gave him a hard time. And in my opinion, he could've done a little more for our rec center than just write checks.

ELEANOR

(scoffs)

Speak for yourself.

JAKEESHA

I believe I am.

BACK TO COFFEE SHOP

STEPHANIE

Let me get back to work. I'm sorry.

JOHN

No, don't be...

(reads her nametag)

..."Stephanie".

STEPHANIE

Oh, okay, uh...

ON THE PHONE

Shana walks up to the podium.

SHANA

Eric, I mean, "DJ Illson", would've played music at the repast for us, but we never signed a contract, nor did we pay him, so he kinda pulled out at the last minute.

BACK TO COFFEE SHOP

JOHN

Damn Eric.

STEPHANIE

What?

JOHN

"Damn...Eric." "DaMeric." That's my name. Or "Eric" for short. Eric...

He looks at a coffee mug.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 ...coffee. Eric Coffee!

STEPHANIE
 "Eric Coffee"? Wow, imagine running into
 a place that serves your namesake!

They LAUGH.

JOHN
 Yeah, what are the odds? You can't make
 this stuff up!

INT. NELSON HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

SFX: Cell phone RINGS!

Matt hits the speaker on his phone and stirs a pot on the
 stove.

MATT
 John! You're calling from the dead!

JOHN (O.C.)
 Very funny! You're the reason I'm in this
 mess!

MATT
 Oh, not even!

JOHN (O.C.)
 Well, look, I'm gonna need a favor from
 you. I'm here in Toronto until my girls
 fix this mess. Until then, I met this
 new, hot chick, and she'll keep me
 company.

MATT
 She doesn't know that you're you?

JOHN (O.C.)
 No, and she won't, either. All I have to
 do is grow a mustache...

MATT
 Good luck with that.

JOHN (O.C.)
 I can grow a mustache! Anyway, I'll tell
 her the truth when the time's right.

MATT
 Okay, so what do you need from me?

JOHN (O.C.)

Stay in my mansion for a while, so nobody takes it away.

MATT

What? No way! Ask your daughters!

JOHN (O.C.)

They're dealing with their own families. Come on, man! You owe me!

MATT

You took financial advice from me, you deserve what you get! I wouldn't even trust me!

JOHN (O.C.)

But...

MATT

No! Unlike you, John, no one's gonna force me out of my home!

Matt hangs up. He looks up and sees his wife, RHONDA NELSON-JAMES, 40's, black, stand there with her hands on her hips.

RHONDA

Excuse me?

MATT

What?

RHONDA

Did I hear this correctly? That John Dumbeck, of The Dumbecks, who damn near invented money, offered us to stay at his place, and you said, "no"?

MATT

This is home, Rhonda! A man's home is his castle!

RHONDA

So because you wanna hang on to an old cliché, we're not gonna move into "Wisconsin, Part 2"?

MATT

You just don't understand, honey.

RHONDA

I understand that we never had a proper honeymoon. And you never take me nowhere!

MATT

We just stayed in Brookfield last week!
There was a nail in my tire, but it still
counts!

RHONDA

Matt...

MATT

(hesitates)

I'm putting my foot down?

Rhonda steps up to him. He SUCKS HIS TEETH.

INT. NELSON HOUSE - DAY

Matt and Rhonda stand near the open front door with
luggage. Their pets, Bony Dog and Eddie the Cat, stand
with them.

MATT

Well, I guess we're all packed.

Eric walks past them.

ERIC

Aw, don't get so upset about house-
sitting their mansion, Matt. It ain't the
end of the world.

RHONDA

You sure you don't wanna stay there with
us, Eric?

ERIC

No, I already stayed there before. Kinda
overrated, if you ask me. Plus I'm a
family man now. Gotta tend to the flock!
Later!

He exits out the door.

MATT

When are you gonna tell him that we know
about him dropping out?

RHONDA

Give it a little more time. He still
hasn't invited you to his Open House yet.

MATT

Just don't deny my chance of killing him.

RHONDA
Never that. Let's get going.

MATT
Do we have everything?

RHONDA
I didn't forget nothin'. You?

MATT
No.

The family exits and closes the door.

SECONDS LATER

Polly and Pablo's mother, CYNTHIA, enters from the kitchen. She carries her purse.

CYNTHIA
(calls out)
Mr. James, I'm here for work!

She looks around.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)
(sotto voce, rapidly)
Guys, are you here, guess not, bye!

She dashes out the front door.

THE END