

FADE IN:

INT. SMALL APARTMENT, SUBURBIA 1983 - MORNING

Open on the bright living room of a second floor apartment, a portion of which has been converted to a dining area. MERLYX RHOADS, an eight year old boy, sits at the breakfast table blindly shoveling cereal into his mouth. His eyes scan back and forth over the open pages of a humongous book on the table. ELOISE, his mother, can be heard moving around in another room of the apartment.

ELOISE (O.S.)

Merl?

Merlyx hardly flinches and continues reading. He, like most eight year old boys, appears to be clean and dirty at the same time, as though he encountered a sandbox somewhere between the bathtub and breakfast. Eloise enters the living room.

ELOISE

Merl, you are going to miss the bus! You don't want to be late for Career Day, do you? Merl, are you listening to me?

Merl is startled out of his trance.

MERLYX

What? Oh yeah, thanks mom!

Merl wraps his mouth around one last heaping spoonful of cereal and closes the large book on the table revealing a cover that reads: Kingston's Unabridged Dictionary. An old and tattered gift tag is still taped to the cover of the dictionary: To Merlyx, From Santa. He grabs his lunch box and backpack off of the counter and scurries off toward the apartment door.

ELOISE

Forgetting something, sweetheart?

Merl stops in his tracks, shrugs, and STOMPS back to his kneeling mother - very inconvenienced - and kisses her.

MERLYX

Thrangwaggled again!

ELOISE

Thrang-what?

MERLYX

Thrangwaggled, you know, it's when you have to do something that you really don't want to do - even though you should.

ELOISE

Oh? Wow, I am impressed!

MERLYX

Yeah, me too.

Merlyx turns and runs out the door. Eloise walks to the window and watches below as the school bus pulls to the curb and Merlyx climbs aboard. She turns around and the dictionary on the table catches her eye. She opens the large volume and begins flipping through the pages, finally stopping to read.

ELOISE

(to herself)

Thrangwaggled... thrangwa-

Her finger moves down the page, passing over the word THRALL and stopping just past the word THRASH.

ELOISE

Sometimes I wonder if there is something wrong with that boy...

CUT TO:

INT. THIRD GRADE CLASSROOM - LATER

A banner that reads: CAREER DAY is visible over the chalkboard. Merlyx stands next to his desk in the center of the classroom. Merlyx stares forward, a proud smile on his face. Some of the children are pointing at Merlyx, all of the children are laughing at him.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Merlyx is seated on a chair across a wide desk from MRS. HYERDAHL, a mean looking woman in her fifties. She reads over a note on her desk and looks up at Merlyx. A sign on the desk indicates that she is the school principal. Merlyx has a fresh, purple bruise under and around his left eye.

MRS. HYERDAHL
Why exactly were you fighting, Mr.
Rhoads?

MERLYX
I really can't say.

MRS. HYERDAHL
You can't or won't?

Merlyx thinks about this for a moment.

MERLYX
I can't - I mean, I wasn't really
fighting.

MRS. HYERDAHL
That is not what Miss Meyer's note
says here, Merlyx.

She holds up the paper she has been reading and shows it to Merlyx. He squints, trying to read the note but Mrs. Hyerdahl places the note back on the desk.

MERLYX
Miss Meyer is a diathurst.

MRS. HYERDAHL
MR. RHOADS! YOU WATCH YOUR... she's
a what?

MERLYX
A diathurst, someone who doesn't
know all of the facts, but pretends
like they do.

MRS. HYERDAHL
There is no such word, Merlyx. Who
taught you that word?

MERLYX
I did. Well, I didn't teach it to
me, I made it.

MRS. HYERDAHL
You made it? You can't just make up
words, Mr. Rhoads. Nobody just
makes up words.

Mrs. Hyerdahl straightens her glasses, looks at the note again and then fixes her glare back on Merlyx.

MRS. HYERDAHL
Now, who started this fight?

MERLYX
Somebody had to...

MRS. HYERDAHL
Of course somebody had to, was it
you or was it...

She glances back at the note -

MRS. HYERDAHL (CONT'D)
Or was it Mr. Kendall?

MERLYX
No, I meant that somebody had to
make up words - at some point.
Words don't just come out of
nowhere.

MRS. HYERDAHL
Merlyx, I am asking you a question -
WHO started the fight?

Merlyx shifts in his chair and touches his swollen eye.

MERLYX
There wasn't a fight, really.

MRS. HYERDAHL
Oh no? That is precisely why you
are sitting here, young man. You
were in a fight and you are in big
trouble. Do you understand that?

MERLYX
All I did was get punched in the
eye. I don't think of that as a
fight - I think of that as...

Merlyx looks up into nothingness like he is searching for the
right word.

MERLYX (CONT'D)
I think of that as getting punched
in the eye.

Mrs. Hyerdahl lets out a frustrated sigh and begins filling
out a form. She speaks without looking up at Merlyx -

MRS. HYERDAHL

So, Joshua Kendall started the fight, is that what you are telling me, Mr. Rhoads? That he hit you first?

MERLYX

No and yes.

She SLAMS her pen on the desk and sends a fiery look toward Merlyx. He straightens in his chair.

MERLYX

Um, I mean yes, he hit me first.

Mrs. Hyerdahl picks up her pen and continues writing.

MRS. HYERDAHL

And did you do anything to provoke him?

MERLYX

I think so. I called him a slerpick.

MRS. HYERDAHL

You called him a what?

MERLYX

A slerpick. It means jerk.

MRS. HYERDAHL

Is that another word that you made up?

Merlyx nods his head. Mrs. Hyerdahl sighs again and continues on with her writing.

MRS. HYERDAHL

So, why did you call Joshua a jerk?

MERLYX

I didn't. I called him a slerpick.

MRS. HYERDAHL

MERLYX RHOADS, my PATIENCE is wearing THIN!

MERLYX

I called him a slerpick because he was laughing at me, they all were.

(MORE)

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