

DANCING UNICORNS

"Cornrows"

Episode 101

by

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A1 INT. GALLERY - NIGHT

A1

PULL BACK FROM BLACK TO: The depths of curly, puffy afro hair. As we continue to float away, we see the face belonging to that iconic 'fro. COLIN KAEPERNICK (PDC). CLOSE UP. Sitting on a bench in our gallery.

PRESENT DAY COLIN

In 1997, right after taking the league by storm and winning Rookie of the Year, a young NBA superstar did something no other player was doing at the time.

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*

The roar of a rowdy crowd seeps into the gallery as a HOODED FIGURE strides past Colin like a heavyweight fighter, into the depths of the gallery which transforms into an-

1 ARENA TUNNEL

1

An occasional camera flash lights up the end of the tunnel.

PRESENT DAY COLIN (O.S.)

It was so against the grain that his advisors warned him not to do it. Other players thought it made them all look bad. The NBA front office definitely wasn't with it. And even his friends were concerned about the move.

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1 CONTINUED:

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PRESENT DAY COLIN (O.S.)
 But that didn't stop him. He knew
 some people would never understand.
 Especially people who were content
 with the status quo, which he
 definitely was not.

The Hooded Figure stops at the end of the tunnel. A golden
 light shines in the arena. The crowd is raucous.

PRESENT DAY COLIN (O.S.)
 He was a nonconformist. A rebel.

The Hooded Figure PULLS OFF THE HOODIE.

PRESENT DAY COLIN (O.S.)
 You know him as AI. The Answer.
 Allen Iverson. And what did Iverson
 do to start all that controversy?

The Hooded Figure reveals himself as ALLEN IVERSON, wearing
 long cornrows.

PRESENT DAY COLIN (O.S.)
 He braided his hair.

Iverson offers a *can you believe that?* smirk.

A2 **BACK TO PDC IN THE GALLERY:**

A2

Sitting on his bench, talking to us.

PRESENT DAY COLIN
 It's easy to see how crazy that is
 today. But at the time I didn't
 know how he felt.

PDC looks beyond us, to the screen/window in front of him-

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2 **INT. KAEPERNICK HOME (TURLOCK) - COLIN'S BEDROOM - MORNING** 2

An Allen Iverson poster on the wall. Sports trophies and
 accolades fill out the teenage boy's room.

TEENAGE COLIN, checking himself out in a standing mirror,
 holding the awkward posture of a kid still growing into his
 body. He's in preppy but plain clothes, as threatening as a
 styrofoam cup.

(CONTINUED)

2 CONTINUED: 2

CHYRON: THE 8TH GRADE

Colin pats down the loose curls of his biracial afro, does a little dance move, then pats his hair again.

A school bell RINGS...

3 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY 3

Colin marches down the hall, running late. RYAN, 14, the cockiness and swag of a lovable mumble rapper with a penchant for good-natured ribbing, catches up with him. *

RYAN

Aye, you see "Baby Boy"?

Colin subtly checks out Ryan in his Sean Jean clothes and his platinum herringbone contrasting off his dark skin. Ryan has style and Colin wants it.

COLIN

What?

RYAN

"Baby Boy."

COLIN

The movie?

RYAN

Nah fool, like a toddler. Yeah, the movie!

COLIN

Not yet.

RYAN

I snatched it off Limewire last night. You know it's rated R, right? Would your moms even let you watch it? She's strict as shit!

COLIN

She's not *that* strict.

RYAN

I'll burn you a copy.

COLIN

Bet.

A group of cute GIRLS walk by, Ryan smiles at them.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED:

3

RYAN
Okay then, Lori. I see you.

(CONTINUED)

3 CONTINUED: (2)

3

The girls giggle, blush, and shake their heads at Ryan.

RYAN

Yeah, I might holler at Lori. She
aiight for a eighth grader.

COLIN

We're eighth graders, too.

RYAN

Yeah, but I'm mature for my age. I
watched Frasier last night.
Anyways, go ahead. Ask.

COLIN

Ask what?

RYAN

Just ask, Colin.

COLIN

Ask *what*, Ryan?

RYAN

You wanna know about the hair,
right? Dope, ain't it?

Colin glances at Ryan's hair, loves it but downplays it.

COLIN

It's cool.

RYAN

Look at the back. My shit got hang.

Ryan shakes his head, making his long braids swing as they
step out to-

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4 **EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - BASKETBALL COURTS - DAY** 4 *

Colin and Ryan walk and talk by EIGHTH GRADERS playing various sports and games in gym class. *

RYAN
This girl I know hooked me up. Dee Dee. She can probably do something with yours, too. Want her number?

COLIN
...Okay. I gotta go.

Colin jogs onto the court. A classmate passes him a ball and he does a reverse layup, wowing the GYM TEACHER/BASKETBALL COACH on the sideline with his arms folded. *

BASKETBALL COACH
...Wow.

RYAN
Yeah. But look at his shoes. Are those Kangaroos?

Coach looks down at Ryan who's standing there with his arms folded, mimicking Coach.

BASKETBALL COACH
Get to class, Simms. *

RYAN
Hey, I was just tryin' to help you out.

Ryan walks away as a phone RINGS, outgoing...

5 **OMITTED** 5

6 **INT. KAEPERNICK HOME - KITCHEN - DAY** 6

Colin, eating a Pop Tart, scribbles words on a sticky note as we listen to a previous phone via voice over.

DEE DEE'S MOM (FILTERED)
Hello.

COLIN (V.O.)
Hi... Is this Dee Dee?

DEE DEE'S MOM (FILTERED)
No, this is her mother. Who is this?

6 CONTINUED:

6

COLIN (V.O.)
This is, uhh - I'm Colin. I'm
calling about getting my hair
braided. Ryan said it's cool.

DEE DEE'S MOM (FILTERED)
Oh. Hold on.
(yells)
DEE DEE!

Colin slaps the sticky note on the fridge and heads out. The
note reads "BE BACK LATER!"

7 **EXT. DEE DEE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY**

7

Colin rides his bike into the complex.

(CONTINUED)

7 CONTINUED:

7

He dismounts and walks his bike down the path, past a LATINO MOM holding a baby and a basket full of clothes, then past an ASSYRIAN MAN carrying garbage bags out of his apartment where Assyrian music blasts. The man nods politely as he passes by.

Colin finds the door he's looking for. Knocks.

DEE DEE answers. Seventeen going on forty in attitude and physicality.

DEE DEE

Colin?

COLIN

Yeah. Dee Dee?

DEE DEE

Mm-hmm.

Dee Dee gives him a once-over, then tries to run her fingers through his hair. They get stuck and force Colin's head back, but he tries to keep himself braced so it's awkward.

DEE DEE

Okay. A challenge.

8 INT. DEE DEE'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY

8

Colin is sitting in a chair in the cramped kitchen, grimacing every so often as Dee Dee struggles to braid his hair. We don't see the hair yet, just his pained face.

DEE DEE

You okay?

COLIN

(no)

Yeah.

Dee Dee's LIL BRO, 10, is off to the side, arms folded, face smirked, wearing a big RED CLOWN NOSE. Colin notices him but can see the kid is bothered so he doesn't say anything.

Dee Dee's MOM enters the kitchen, grabs keys from a key holder on the wall.

DEE DEE

Momma, can you grab me some hair grease from the bathroom?

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

DEE DEE'S MOM

We don't have any more, Dee Dee.
And I told you you were going to
run out, didn't I?

DEE DEE

I know, but I need some to finish
his hair.

DEE DEE'S MOM

Well, you can run and get some or I
can pick you up some from the mall.

DEE DEE

What mall you going to?

DEE DEE'S MOM

Modesto.

DEE DEE

That'll take too long.
(thinks about it)
You know what? There's this cute
top I wanted to look at. I'll just
come with you.

Colin cocks a brow like, *"WTF is going on?"*

9 INT/EXT. DEE DEE'S MOM'S CAR / MALL PARKING LOT - DAY

9

Dee Dee's Mom parks and exits the car with Dee Dee.

DEE DEE

We'll be right back.

Colin and Lil Bro sit next to each other in the back. Lil Bro
is still pouty, wearing his clown nose and Colin's hair is
half-braided, half James Brown mugshot (Google it).

Colin checks his watch, worried about the time. It's
awkwardly quiet, then-

COLIN

What's your name, little dude?

Lil Bro turns his glower to Colin.

LIL BRO

You look ridiculous.

COLIN

(mumbles)
...So do you.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED:

9

LIL BRO
What?

COLIN
Nothing.

Lil Bro weighs whether to talk to Colin or not, then-

LIL BRO
I was being funny at school and got
in trouble, so my mom is making me
wear this clown nose. To make me
look like a clown.

COLIN
(empathetic)
Man. That's messed up. I'm sorry
little dude.

LIL BRO
I told a joke.

COLIN
You did?

Lil Bro nods.

COLIN
...Can I hear it?

Lil Bro looks at Colin, a hint of a smile, his guard
lowering.

LIL BRO
What's the difference between a
snowman and a snowwoman?

COLIN
What?

LIL BRO
Snowballs.

COLIN
(smiling)
Yeah. Okay. That's funny.

LIL BRO
(feeling better)
Thanks.

COLIN
My mom is kinda tough on me
sometimes, too.

(CONTINUED)

9 CONTINUED: (2)

9

LIL BRO
Sucks, man.

COLIN
Yeah. Just means she loves you,
though.

And they go back to sitting in silence.

LIL BRO
You don't really look ridiculous. I
was just mad at myself.

COLIN
All good, little dude. I've been
there.

Colin holds out his fist for dap. Lil Bro gives it up.

10 **EXT. DEE DEE'S APARTMENT - BALCONY - EVENING**

10

Dee Dee puts the finishing touches on Colin's braids, steps
back, takes a look at her work.

DEE DEE
(proud)
Aww snap! You ain't ready to see
this! You ain't ready, Colin!

She hands Colin a mirror.

DEE DEE
Boom!

Colin, clearly in pain, looks at his reflection. His face is
pulled tight, his head feeling like a three-alarm fire.

DEE DEE
Well?

COLIN
Is it supposed to be this tight?

DEE DEE
That's the way I had to do it
because of your texture. Biracial
hair is hard to work with. It slips
and slides all over the place. I
made it work though. You know who
you look like? Allen Iverson.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

Colin takes a look at himself in the mirror again. His expression is neutral but he doesn't believe he looks like Iverson.

DEE DEE
 Sorry it took so long. You good getting home?

Colin checks the time on his watch.

COLIN
 Can I use your phone?

All **EXT. DEE DEE'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT**

All

Colin exits Dee Dee's apartment. *

TERESA, 50s, white, wearing a nurse uniform, stands at the bottom of the stairs, watching him with a bewildered glare. *

TERESA
 We didn't know where you were. *

COLIN
 Huh? *

TERESA
 I said we didn't know where you were. Me and Dad. *

COLIN
 I left a note on the fridge. *

TERESA
 I saw it. It didn't say where you were, Colin. *

COLIN
 (she's right)
 Sorry. *

Colin unlocks his bike and rolls it toward the rear of Teresa's minivan. *

As they walk, Teresa throws subtle glances at Colin's hair. Colin can feel it. He's self-conscious. He's going to make her ask about it. He's not talking first. *

(CONTINUED)

All CONTINUED:

All

TERESA

I didn't know you knew anyone who lived here.

COLIN

I just met her today. She's a friend of a friend. She lives with her parents and little brother.

TERESA

Did they feed you?

COLIN

I wasn't hungry.

TERESA

(fishing)

What else did you do?

COLIN

(not biting)

Nothing really.

TERESA

You've been over here since after school and did "nothing really"?

COLIN

Just talking. Hanging out.

Teresa, not getting the answers she wants to a question she won't ask, switches gears as she opens the trunk of the minivan and Colin puts his bike inside.

TERESA

You have a good day at school?

COLIN

Yeah, it was cool.

TERESA

Your gym teacher is your basketball coach, right?

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COLIN

Yeah.

*

TERESA

You think he'll like your hair like that?

And there it is. Finally. Colin can't dodge it anymore.

(CONTINUED)

A11 CONTINUED: (2) A11

COLIN *
 Never even thought to ask. You *
 think it'll be a problem? *

TERESA *
 You should ask to be sure. *

Teresa moves to the driver's side, Colin the passenger side. *

11 INT/EXT. TERESA'S MINIVAN / DEE DEES'S BUILDING - NIGHT 11 *

Teresa slides in behind the wheel, Colin shotgun. A brief *
 moment passes. *

COLIN
 Do you like it, Mom?

Teresa finds the most loving way to say "no".

TERESA
 I don't know, Colin. I'm sure there
 will be a new trend next week.

Colin processes that, not sure how to take it.

TERESA
 I saved you some dinner. I'll warm
 it up for you when we get home.

COLIN
 Okay.

Teresa gives Colin another look, shakes her head.

TERESA
 Unbelievable.

She starts the car, drives off. *

12 INT. KAEPERNICK HOME - COLIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 12

Colin, in bed, can't get comfortable because his head is
 tender. He props up a pillow under his neck so his head isn't
 touching anything and tries to fall asleep. Doesn't work.

13 INT. KAEPERNICK HOME - KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING 13

Colin, dressed in an Iverson jersey, baggy shorts, and
 Iverson sneakers, strides through the kitchen, grabs a Pop-
 Tart and heads for the door.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

COLIN

Have a good day! See you later!

Teresa, sitting at the table eating breakfast, gapes at Colin as he exits.

14 INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

14

Colin, in his Iverson gear, and with his new cornrows, gathers confidence then approaches Ryan.

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COLIN

What's up?

Ryan turns to Colin, pleasantly surprised.

RYAN

Yo! You went to see Dee Dee?

COLIN

Yeah. I dunno. It's whatever.

RYAN

And you got the fresh AI's on, too? Out here looking like "The Answer" for real. Surprised your mom let you out the house without your khakis on, though.

COLIN

Okay, you got jokes.

RYAN

Nah, but for real, you like it?

COLIN

Yeah, it's cool. Good lookin' out.

They slap hands/man hug. Ryan touches Colin's hair. Colin recoils. It hurts.

RYAN

Mine hurt at first, too. You get used to it.

COLIN

It's not that bad. Better than yesterday.

Ryan takes a good look at Colin, who yawns looking sleepy and flushed, and upon closer inspection not that fresh to def.

RYAN

Why's your face and head all red, though?

COLIN

I couldn't really sleep last night. Just tired.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED:

14

RYAN

Being tired don't make you look like that. Your face looks like a botched facelift.

COLIN

That's -- that's from the, like, from the way she had to do my hair.

RYAN

Hmm... If you say so.

They step out to the-

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15 **EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - BASKETBALL COURTS - DAY**

15

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Colin, looking good in his Iverson gear but clearly tired and lethargic, jogs onto the court, gets a pass from a classmate and airballs a layup.

*

BASKETBALL COACH

(to himself)

Did he just airball a layup?

RYAN

He did. He looks good, though.

Coach gives Ryan a look.

RYAN

I'm leavin', I'm leavin'.

Ryan walks away.

BASKETBALL COACH

Colin?

Colin jogs over to the Basketball Coach.

BASKETBALL COACH

What's goin on, bud?

COLIN

Nothing. I have a little headache and I'm tired, but I'm good.

Colin lets out a world-class yawn. Basketball Coach looks at Colin's hair. Tries to touch it but Colin flinches. They stare at each other.

BASKETBALL COACH

You don't look well. Run a couple of laps, see if that wakes you up.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

COLIN

You want me to run even though I'm
tired and have a headache?

BASKETBALL COACH

I want you to run so you can know
you can do it even when you're
tired and have a headache.

Colin nods, appreciates the challenge. He starts to run, then-

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED: (2)

15

COLIN

Hey, my mom wanted me to ask you if it's okay to wear my hair like this when basketball starts.

*

BASKETBALL COACH

(shrugs)

Okay with me.

Colin nods again, runs off.

16 INT. KAEPERNICK HOME - COLIN'S BEDROOM - DAY

16

Colin stares at himself in the mirror, looking at his braids. His scalp is red and irritated. He turns to his Allen Iverson poster. Iverson's scalp is not red or irritated.

COLIN

This isn't right.

Colin uses a comb to take out the braids. Even that hurts.

17 INT. KAEPERNICK HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

17

Colin, exhausted and melancholy because his hair looks like Don King's now, bites into a pork chop, his face barely able to hide his disappointment in the lack of flavor.

He grabs the salt and pepper and shakes a ton of each on the meat. Still shaking... Still shaking...

He's at the table with his mom and his supportive, good-intentioned dad, RICK (white, 50s), both watching him for a moment.

RICK

Colin, you ever hear of a thing called decision fatigue?

COLIN

What's that?

RICK

The brain is like a muscle, right? The more decisions you make, the more you use that muscle. And the more you use a muscle, the more tired it gets.

COLIN

...Okay.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED:

17

RICK

I think you're wasting your brain energy on hairstyles.

COLIN

My "brain energy"?

RICK

Yesterday it was the braids, today it's whatever that is.

COLIN

This isn't a style, Dad. It-
(big yawn...)
It looks like this because I took the braids out. I was hoping to maybe find someone to try it again.

TERESA

Try again? I don't think so.

RICK

That's part of what I'm getting at, Colin. You don't want to get decision fatigue because you're thinking about your hair or what to wear or anything like that. You need your brain to focus on more important things.

COLIN

I don't have decision fatigue.

RICK

Sixty-four times nineteen?

COLIN

(falling asleep)
One thousand two hundred sixteen.

RICK

Is that--
(to Teresa)
Is he right?

TERESA

From now on, we want you to get your hair cut by professionals, Colin. No more of this going rogue business. You don't go to someone's house. I'm sure they don't even have a license.

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: (2)

17

RICK

Let me add that I think we should get your hair cut low, that way you won't even have to think about it. One of the reasons Michael Jordan accomplished so much is because he was bald. You can probably make it to Supercuts tonight if you hurry.

TERESA

That's not a bad idea. He has a million things to worry about. Hair doesn't have to be one of them.

RICK

So it's settled.

TERESA

I'll take him after dinner.

Teresa and Rick look at Colin, who is now dead asleep.

18 INT. KAEPERNICK HOME - COLIN'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING 18

Colin, dressed plainly for school, stands in front of his mirror. He doesn't see his door creep open ever so slightly.

Teresa is covertly watching Colin from outside the door.

Colin puts on a baseball cap. Tries it backwards, tries it cocked, searching for the style that best fits him. He settles on wearing it straight. His mini-fro sticks out of the sides of the cap. He looks disappointed.

Teresa, empathic, eyes the Iverson poster then back to Colin.

Feeling eyes, Colin looks over at his door. No one there.

19 INT. HOSPITAL - CAFETERIA - DAY 19

Two BLACK NURSES (one male, one female) talk politics while eating lunch at a table.

FEMALE NURSE

You already know what it is. They want war, so they invade Afghanistan. They want to spy on us, so they give us the PATRIOT Act. They want to control who gets to be American, so they create the Department of Homeland Security.

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED:

19

Teresa, in her nurse uniform, holding a sports magazine, saunters up to them.

TERESA

Hey Shawn. Hi Patrice.

MALE NURSE

Hey. What's goin' on with you?

TERESA

Not too much. Question: You know that hairstyle Black people like? The braids that go back and hang off the head? They kinda look like tracks? Not quite, but sorta. The style Bo Derek made famous.

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TERESA (ALT)

Not too much. Question: You know that hairstyle Black people like? Looks like ropes that go back and hang off the head? Kinda like tracks? The style Bo Derek made famous.

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TERESA (ALT)

Not too much. Question: You know that hairstyle Black people like? Looks like ropes that go back and hang off the head? What's that singer's name?

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(singing/butchering lyrics)

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"Every little thing is going to be just fine." Bob Marley. You know, the style Bo Derek made famous.

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TERESA (ALT)

Not too much. Question: You know that hairstyle Black people like? Looks like ropes that go back and hang off the head? They're kinda like braids. I think I saw it in a National Geographic magazine. You know, the style Bo Derek made famous.

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The nurses are giving Teresa their best deadpans.

TERESA

You like basketball, right?

(CONTINUED)

19 CONTINUED: (2)

19

The nurses are looking like "*should we be offended by this?*"
Teresa opens the magazine to a folded page, shows the nurses.

TERESA

Do you know where I can get my
son's hair done like this?

They look down at the magazine. It's Allen Iverson rocking-

MALE NURSE

Cornrows.

TERESA

That's what they're called?

MALE NURSE

That's what they're called.

TERESA

(sincere/vulnerable)
Can you help me out? I'm sorry. I
don't know what I'm doing.

FEMALE NURSE

Yeah... I can help you with that.

Teresa looks relieved.

22 CONTINUED:

22

Police sirens race by outside, but CLIVE (HERC), 17, built like an NBA Power Forward, is unbothered, laying on his bed, flipping through JET magazine while intermittently singing lines to the James Brown blasting from his giant speakers. *

A knock at his door. He looks over and his FATHER enters, holding a vinyl record. *

HERC'S FATHER
Don't you have homework to do? *

HERC
(music's too loud)
Huh? *

HERC'S FATHER
Homework, Clive. *

HERC
Hold on, Pop. The break about to drop. *

The breakbeat kicks in. Herc gets up, goofily dances in front of his half-grinning, half-stoic father, 70s style. Boogaloo, Funky Chicken, Robot, et al. *

HERC
What you know about this old man? *

Herc's Father walks over to the stereo, turns the music down. *

HERC
That's cool. The breakbeat is too short, anyway. Every party I throw people go crazy over the breaks. The guys, the girls, everybody! *

HERC'S FATHER
(doesn't care)
How was school, Clive? *

HERC
School is school, Pop. Boring since they canceled the music program. *

HERC'S FATHER
You get enough music at home. Everything can't be about music. You stay focused at school. Right now, there's nothing more important than your education. Got it? *

HERC
Yes, sir. *

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (2)

22

Herc's Father hands Herc the vinyl record. It's James Brown's "Ain't It Funky". *

HERC
I love you, Pop. Thank you. But I already have this one. *

HERC'S FATHER
As much as you play it I figured you needed a backup. Do your homework. I'll see you later. *

Herc's Father walks out. Herc looks at the James Brown record in his hand... and is hit with an epiphany. *

QUICK CUTS show Herc setting up two turntables, an equalizer, and other '70s DJ equipment until he is standing over the turntables. *

He puts a James Brown album on turntable one, then an identical one on turntable two. *

22 CONTINUED: (3)

22

He drops the needle and plays the breakbeat on turntable one then perfectly times it to switch to turntable two and the beat seamlessly continues. While the beat plays, he reverse spins turntable one, then switches back to continue the beat.

HE HAS ENLOGATED THE BREAKBEAT. He's astonished.

HERC

Holy shit.

We SPIN around Herc's gaping face as his world spins. PDC steps up behind Herc who is oblivious.

PRESENT DAY COLIN

As obvious as it may seem today, it was the first time anyone had mixed the breakbeat of the same song. Herc called it the "Merry-Go-Round". And everybody loved it.

PDC heads back toward his-

A23 **GALLERY**

A23

As Herc's room fades away behind him.

PRESENT DAY COLIN

In fact, they loved it so much that it became a movement.

He takes a seat at his bench, looking out at the store.

PRESENT DAY COLIN

From the music came dancing-

PDC watches an EMPLOYEE dance in the hip-hop store.

PRESENT DAY COLIN

Clothes.

The PRETTY WOMAN shot of people coming out of the dressing room wearing different hip-hop clothes.

PRESENT DAY COLIN

Hairstyles.

People in the store wearing AFROS, GUMBYS, AFRO PUFFS, WEAVES, PERMS, DREDZ, HIGH TOP FADES. ALL THAT.

PRESENT DAY COLIN

And art.

(CONTINUED)

A23 CONTINUED:

A23

Beautiful art posters of gone-too-soon hip-hop legends. Pac, Biggie, Nipsey. The marathon continues.

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PRESENT DAY COLIN

*

But not everybody embraced the
vibe. In 2005, the NBA put in a
dress code because one man was
helping bring the vibe the masses.
I don't have to tell you who that
one man was, do I?

*

Allen Iverson, dressed in a durag, gold chains, baggy clothes like his Rookie of the Year press conference, walks past PDC, wearing that same smirk, shaking his head.

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(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (2) 22

INSERT: ALLEN IVERSON at his Rookie of the Year press conference. Durag. Gold chains. Baggy clothes.

23 **INT. URBAN STORE - DAY** 23

PDC talks to us from where we left him in the store.

PRESENT DAY COLIN

Hip-Hop was conceived and raised by rebels. Who wouldn't want to be a part of that?

Teresa and Colin step past PDC, Colin nodding to the music, smiling while admiring his surroundings. Teresa, looking lost and confused, stops in the middle of the store.

TERESA

This must be the wrong place.

Colin snaps a glare to his mom, cocking a "What'chu talkin' 'bout, Willis?" brow at her.

She steps over to an EMPLOYEE stocking a shelf with t-shirts. Colin follows.

TERESA

Hi. Is there a barbershop nearby?
This is the address I was given.

EMPLOYEE

Shop's in back.

Colin cranes his neck, looking at the back of the store. He sees a glow. He's drawn toward the light, stepping toward it as a cacophony of buzzing clippers and people talking rises.

Colin pushes through the double doors into the-

24 **INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY** 24

Four barber chairs all occupied by BLACK BARBERS cutting and styling CLIENTS while cordially conversing in the confines of the Black sanctuary known as the barbershop. Hairstyle posters show distinctive styles for Black men. Clippers buzz. Scissors snip. Razors edge up beards and hairlines.

Colin and Teresa take a seat in the waiting area. A young father and son play CONNECT FOUR next to them. Colin is within earshot of barber ERICA, 20s, Snoop from The Wire vibe finishing up with her client REGGIE.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED:

24

REGGIE

I didn't even tell you. I tried to get a fade at one of them franchise spots.

ERICA

What?! You tried to cheat on me?

REGGIE

I was in a hurry, I needed a cut. Anyways, don't you know I sat down in the chair and the white woman was visibly shaking? I'm talking her hands were shaking, E. And you know what she said?

ERICA

What she say?

REGGIE

"I can't do this."

Whole barbershop throws up their hands and go "Awww!"

BARBER

Wow. She straight up said it?

REGGIE

Straight up said it.

ERICA

Did she say why?

REGGIE

Yeah. She said she didn't have experience with this texture.

ERICA

"Texture?"

A few laughs in the shop. Colin is smiling and probably has no idea why. He just feels good and safe in the moment. Teresa looks a bit uncomfortable but tries to bury it.

REGGIE

I know, right?

ERICA

Crazy. That's what you get though, Reggie. You know I'm the only person for the job.

REGGIE

I know, I know.

(CONTINUED)

24 CONTINUED: (2)

24

Erica whips the cape off Reggie. Reggie stands, pays Erica in cash, hugs her, heads out.

REGGIE

See y'all next week.

VARIOUS

Peace Reggie-Reg! Be cool, homie!
Aight, fam!

The vibe is familial. Reggie walks out past Colin, who has a look of wonderment on his face. Erica walks over to him.

ERICA

You must be Colin.

COLIN

Yeah. Hi.

ERICA

(to Teresa)

You're Mom? You called me, right?
You want me to bless shorty like
the boy AI?

TERESA

He wants braids like Allen Iverson.

ERICA

(disarming smile)

That's what I said.

(then)

Come on, Colin. Let's get it.

Colin, surprised, turns to Teresa.

COLIN

Really?

She gives him a little smile and a "go ahead" nod. He smiles, the best moment of his young life, and follows Erica to the open barber chair.

ERICA

(to Teresa)

Relax, Mom. It's gonna be a minute.

Teresa takes a seat, looks down at table full of Essence and Ebony magazines, scans the Black faces and bodies on the covers. Hesitant, she picks up one with The Rock on the cover and reads as she waits.

25 INT. BARBERSHOP - DAY (LATER)

25

Erica finishes touching up Colin with clippers. She spins him in the chair, stopping him in front of a mirror.

ERICA

Well?

Colin checks himself out, unable to contain a megawatt smile.

COLIN

I like it.

ERICA

You *like* it? That's it? You don't love it?

COLIN

I love it.

ERICA

That's better. You know how to take care of it?

Colin shakes his head "no".

ERICA

Come on. Let's get you some product.

Erica whips the cape off of Colin.

26 INT. URBAN STORE - CHECKOUT COUNTER - DAY

26

Rows of hair products are behind the counter. Erica, standing with Teresa and Colin, clocks Teresa's uneasy, anxious demeanor. They are waiting for the cashier.

ERICA

You okay, Mom?

TERESA

(faking it)

I'm fine. Thank you. He looks great.

ERICA

First time being around this many Black people, huh?

TERESA

(put on the spot)

No, it's -- I'm not -- I'm fine.

(CONTINUED)

26 CONTINUED:

26

ERICA

Mm-hmm.

Erica takes a card from her pocket, hands it to Teresa.

ERICA

My number is on there. If you can't catch me here, try me at the crib. It's a little more private.

Teresa nods, appreciates the gesture. The Employee steps behind the counter.

EMPLOYEE

What can I get you?

ERICA

Yeah, they g'on need some shea butter, some of those essential oils, that conditioner-

Teresa looks intimidated as Erica keeps naming stuff.

ERICA

Three or four satin durags, moisturizer, couple spray bottles, shampoo, some-

JUMP CUT TO:

27 **EXT. URBAN STORE - DAY**

27

Colin, holding two plastic bags filled with hair product, exits with Teresa, headed toward her minivan.

COLIN

Thank you, Mom.

Teresa kinda sorta nods, not sure how she feels about it. Colin, on the other hand, is not hiding his happiness, grinning ear-to-ear, feeling good.

28 **INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY**

28

*

Colin, confidence leaning toward cocky, sits in class with smoldering bravado.

*

*

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED:

28

PRESENT DAY COLIN (V.O.) *
 Look, I'm not even gonna front. *
 When I got my hair braided, my swag *
 meter went from zero to a hundred *
 real quick. Your boy was feeling *
 pristine. *

Colin stands, struts toward the camera transitioning us to- *

MONTHS LATER (FALL) *

Still confident in class, his hair a tad more frizzy now, *
wearing his team's football jersey. *

PRESENT DAY COLIN (V.O.) *
 You know how when you're a kid and *
 you get a new pair of shoes and you *
 just know you can run faster? Well, *
 cornrows made me feel like I was *
 faster on the football field. *

Colin stands, glides toward the camera transitioning us to- *

MONTHS LATER (WINTER) *

Colin, settled into his desk wearing his middle school team *
basketball sweatshirt, pats his hair which is starting to *
show some wear and tear. *

PRESENT DAY COLIN (V.O.) *
 Jumping higher on the basketball *
 court. *

Colin strides toward the camera transitioning us to- *

MONTHS LATER (SPRING) *

Colin's hair is frizzy and in need of some TLC, but he still *
feels good and confident in his baseball team T-shirt. *

PRESENT DAY COLIN (V.O.) *
 And was definitely about to *
 dominate on the baseball field. *

Colin smiles to himself. *

PRESENT DAY COLIN (V.O.) *
 I was a superstar. Scratch that. I *
 was a superhero. In this moment, I *
 felt invincible. Thanks to *
 cornrows, nothing was going to stop *
 me. I was the man, I was the *
 future. The world was mi(mine)- *

(CONTINUED)

28 CONTINUED: (2)

28

PDC is cut off as the music scratches to a halt. A YOUNG BLACK GIRL walks by Colin with matter-of-factness on her face.

*
*
*

YOUNG BLACK GIRL
Boy, you need some moisturizer or something because your hair is a hot mess.

*
*
*
*

Colin, slightly horrified, looks at YBG, his swagger meter tumbling from 100 to zero real quick.

*
*

31 CONTINUED:

31

TERESA

How long do you think this will last?

COLIN

What, the braids?

TERESA

...The whole thing.

Colin is not sure what she means. Erica answers the door.

ERICA

Hey. Y'all made it.

KEKE, Erica's effeminate girlfriend, steps up behind Erica.

KEKE

Hey.

COLIN

Hi.

ERICA

(to Colin and Teresa)

Come on in.

TERESA

What about your dog?

ERICA

Oh, the sign? That's to keep fools on the block at bay. Cheaper than an alarm. Y'all good.

32 INT. ERICA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

32

Colin and Teresa sit on the couch. Incense burns near them. Weed roaches in an ashtray. "106 & Park" on TV. Colin lounges like he's been here before. Teresa is a bit more guarded.

Erica yells out from the kitchen-

ERICA (O.S.)

We just finished eatin'. Y'all hungry?

TERESA

No, thank you.

COLIN

I'll have something. Thanks.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED:

32

Teresa gives Colin a look.

Erica comes out with a full dinner plate. Pork chops, mac and cheese, cornbread, and a glass of purple Kool-Aid in an old jelly jar. She sets it on the coffee table.

ERICA

Sit on the floor. You can eat while
I do your hair.

Colin sits on the floor, leaning against the couch. He digs into the food. Teresa, trying to find some way to connect to Erica, tries small talk.

TERESA

Yeah, he's at the age where he eats
all day. He's going to want salt
and pepper, though. Puts it on
everything.

COLIN

(mouthful)
No, this doesn't need it. It's
good.

Ouch. A gut-punch for Teresa.

Erica sits on the couch, straddles Colin so his back is between her legs.

Keke enters with a basket full of barber and salon supplies, sets it next to Erica. Erica goes to work on Colin's head.

This is the moment. Colin eating good, watching Ludacris' "Area Codes" video and getting his hair done by a Black lesbian in the middle of the hood.

He doesn't have the words to describe the feeling, but it's written on his face. He's in his element. *It feels right.*

Not for Teresa, though. She's lost and a bit confused. She is out of place and looking at Colin like she doesn't recognize him. She stands from the couch.

TERESA

I'm going to run some errands. I'll
pick you up in a couple of hours.

COLIN

(barely listening)
Bye.

Teresa looks at her son, whose eyes are glued to the TV and mouth is chewing food better than hers.

(CONTINUED)

32 CONTINUED: (2) 32

At this moment, she's sad and lonely, feeling the heartache of a son cutting the metaphorical umbilical cord. She walks out of the house.

33 **EXT. BASEBALL FIELD - DAY** 33

Colin, fresh braids sticking out of the back of his slightly cocked cap, plays catch with a teammate to warm up. The COACHES AND PETURBED MANAGER watch him from the dugout.

MANAGER

What's up with Kaepernick?

BASEBALL COACH

Nice arm on him, huh?

MANAGER

I'm talking about his hair.

(watching for a beat)

That's unacceptable. I can't accept that on my field.

34 **INT. KAEPERNICK HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT** 34

Colin eats with Teresa and Rick. He takes a bite of his pasta, tastes it, reaches for the salt and pepper. Teresa subtly rolls her eyes.

RICK

Mom said your baseball coach called today.

COLIN

About what?

RICK

They want you to cut your hair.

COLIN

What?!

RICK

You have to cut your hair if you're going to stay on the team.

COLIN

You're joking, right? Is this about brain energy or whatever?

TERESA

It's a team rule, Colin.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED:

34

COLIN
What team rule?

RICK
It makes sense. Truth be told, you
look unprofessional.

COLIN
Why do I need to look professional?
I'm fourteen. I'm a kid.

RICK
Rules are rules.

COLIN
What rule, Dad? I play every year
and never heard of it.

TERESA
If you want to play this year you
do what your coaches say.

COLIN
Can't you talk to them?

TERESA
You think they should change the
rules for you?

COLIN
It's a stupid rule whatever it is.

TERESA
You're cutting your hair, Colin.

COLIN
I don't want to.

TERESA
Too bad.

COLIN
Why?

RICK
We told you. It's a team rule.

COLIN
But why?

TERESA
Because you look like a thug!

Colin is frozen, gaping, speechless.

(CONTINUED)

34 CONTINUED: (2) 34

PRESENT DAY COLIN (V.O.)
 What is a thug?

35 INT. GALLERY - NIGHT 35 *

PDC lounges on his bench, talking to us. *

PRESENT DAY COLIN
 The earliest use of the word "Thug"
 described a religious group called
 Thuggee, who worshipped the god
 Kali.

On a screen in front of PDC, images from the 1860s of THUGGEE *
 are projected.

PRESENT DAY COLIN
 If you've seen "Indiana Jones and
 the Temple of Doom" you've seen the
 Western world's depiction of the
 Thuggee. But I'm sure that's not
 what's meant when someone is called
 a thug today. So let's check out a
 more contemporary definition. *

The definition of THUG appears on the screen. *

PRESENT DAY COLIN
 A quick Google search would tell
 you that a thug is defined as a
violent person, especially a
criminal. A ruffian, hoodlum,
bully. Examples of this would be a
 Nazi or skinhead. And even some
 politicians.

ON SCREEN: Trump at a rally saying of Greg Gianforte, "*Any*
guy that can do a body slam, he's my kind of guy!" *

PRESENT DAY COLIN
 We're getting closer, but let's be
 honest, no one is looking online
 for their definition of "thug". The
 medium that informs us more than
 any other is television. So let's
 take a look at how TV defines the
 word.

ON SCREEN: VARIOUS MEDIA OUTLETS AND POLITICIANS using the *
 word "Thug" as a racist code word and dog-whistle projects on
 the wall. After a few it abruptly pauses and Colin looks at
 us.

(CONTINUED)

35 CONTINUED:

35

PRESENT DAY COLIN

So I guess that's what it is.
That's why they think I'm a thug.
Not because I'm from a fringe
religious group. Not because I'm a
violent criminal...

Iverson sits on the bench next to PDC with his hat cocked and
that classic wry smirk.

*
*

ALLEN IVERSON

Because *they* said so.

PDC turns his attention back to the screen.

*

36 INT. KAEPERNICK HOME - KITCHEN - NIGHT

36

Colin wallows in heartbreak.

RICK

You have to play by the rules, son.
We wouldn't tell you to do it if it
wasn't okay, if it wasn't for your
own good.

Colin hangs his head. Nothing he can do but accept his fate.

COLIN

...Okay.

Teresa wears her guilt on her face, but does nothing to
remedy it. She just eats her food.

PRESENT DAY COLIN (V.O.)

After that, I didn't grow my hair
out for at least another 14 years.

37 INT. SUPERCUTS - DAY

37

Colin gets his haircut by a FRIENDLY WHITE LADY at the
franchise barbershop. There's no familial camaraderie here.
Just corporate, capitalistic blandness. Teresa reads "Us
Weekly" in the lobby with the headline: "New Hollywood Hair".

PRESENT DAY COLIN (V.O.)

I never felt good about it. I knew
it wasn't right, but I didn't have
the knowledge, the wisdom, or the
language to express myself. I
couldn't rebel because I didn't
know how.

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

We watch young Colin's hair fall to the floor in clumps.

(CONTINUED)

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37 CONTINUED: (2) 37

PRESENT DAY COLIN (V.O.)
But now... *

38 INT. GALLERY - DAY 38 *

PDC smirks Allen Iverson-style. *

PRESENT DAY COLIN
Now I know how. And I will.

Erica, years older, appears from behind PDC, puts a cape
around him, and fires up her clippers as we FADE OUT. *

END OF EPISODE