

MALCOLM IN THE MIDDLE

PILOT

by

Linwood Boomer

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FADE IN:

THE EARTH

Floating in space.

MALCOLM (V.O.)

This is the world. One hundred and ninety-six million square miles. If I covered a hundred square miles an hour, every hour for the rest of my life... I'd still only see half of it.

CUT TO:

EXTREME CLOSE UP - A NOSE

MALCOLM (V.O.)

This is the left nostril of my brother Reese. It squeaks all night long.

CLOSE UP - FEET

MALCOLM (V.O.)

These are the freezing cold feet of my little brother Dewey. He shoves them in my back every night.

CLOSE UP - A SNAPSHOT

A Polaroid of a nice-looking fifteen year-old boy.

MALCOLM (V.O.)

This is my oldest brother Francis. He's the one I really like, so of course he got sent to military school.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Eleven year-old REESE sleeps in a twin bed. Six year-old DEWEY sprawls over most of a double bed, leaving a tiny space on the edge for nine year-old MALCOLM. Malcolm is sitting up, LOOKING INTO CAMERA.

MALCOLM

My name is Malcolm. You know what the best thing about childhood is?

(grim)

At some point, it stops.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

We are VERY CLOSE on an EXTREMELY HAIRY MALE BACK. After a moment, ELECTRIC CLIPPERS BUZZ through, leaving a clean pink track. We WIDEN TO REVEAL:

MOM AND DAD

LOIS WILKERSON, late thirties, attractive (if a bit frazzled), in a housecoat. SHE RUNS THE CLIPPERS UP AND DOWN her husband's body. Despite what she's doing at the moment, believe this: Lois is not a woman to trifle with.

HAL WILKERSON is a beefy guy in his forties. He STANDS NAKED on newspapers, reading the business section as his wife SHAVES HIS BODY. Mercifully, the paper blocks some of our view. A RADIO is playing oldies as she works.

LOIS

(sings along)

Oh Mandy, well you came and you gave
without taking...

(screams)

Malcom-Reese-Dewey, get down here, I'm
not gonna call you again!

(sings)

... Oh, you kissed me and stopped me
from shaking...

Malcolm, Reese and Dewey TRUDGE IN.

LOIS

There's only two toaster waffles, so
one of you has to have cereal.

The boys BOLT FOR THE REFRIGERATOR. Dewey gets there last. The older boys wrestle with the waffle carton as Dewey PUMMELS THEIR BACKS with ineffective punches and kicks.

DEWEY

Hey... Give it... You cheated... Give
it... Come on...

HAL

Hey, have some consideration. There's
people in this house trying to forget
they have kids.

The boys start fixing breakfast. Whenever they pass each other, ELBOWS OR FISTS FLY. The blows are perfunctory, like the territorial mock-combat of mountain goats.

LOIS

These clippers are dull already.
Honestly Hal, you're like a monkey.

(then)

Take a good look, boys. This is your future. You've got maybe five more years of being cute, then you start sprouting like a bunch of Chia Pets.

MALCOLM

(to camera -
quietly)

They do this every month. He has sensitive skin and the hair gets itchy under his clothes.

Lois picks up a clump of hair from the floor, examines it thoughtfully.

LOIS

It always seems like such a waste to just dump this in the trash. Maybe birds would like to make nests out of it, or you kids could use it for school projects.

(to Hal)

Arms up.

Hal RAISES THE PAPER over his head, keeps reading. The boys SHUDDER AND LOOK AWAY.

LOIS

Oh, Malcolm. You have to come right home from school. I made a play-date for you with Stevie Kenarban and you have to take a bath.

MALCOLM

(horrified)

What? Mom, no.

REESE

(laughs)

Malcolm has a play date.

MALCOLM

Shut up, Reese. Mom --

REESE

(laughs)

With "Stevie the Wheelie" Kenarban.
Oh, man...

Reese BREAKS UP WITH LAUGHTER. It doesn't occur to him to stop eating while he laughs, so he pretty quickly starts CHOKING on his food. As LOIS POUNDS REESE ON HIS BACK;

HAL

(sighs)

So, Malcolm. Why is playing a problem for you?

MALCOLM

First off, you only have "play dates" when you're like five. Second off, I don't even know Stevie.

LOIS

(confused)

I saw his mom at the grocery store. She said you boys ate lunch together.

MALCOLM

One time! He rolled his wheelchair next to me and I couldn't say "go away." He's not even in my class. He's in the Krelboyne class in the trailer next to tether ball.

LOIS

You listen to me, young man. That one lunch obviously meant a lot to Stevie. He is a human being, with human feelings. Now you are gonna be friends with that crippled boy and you're gonna like it. Understood?

MALCOLM

Yes, ma'am. Understood.

(to camera)

If I give up now, I won't get the lecture.

LOIS

You kids don't know how good you have it...

MALCOLM

(wincing)

Dang.

LOIS

You just take your legs for granted, like nothing could ever happen to them. Well, let me tell you, that is just wishful thinking. There's Meningitis, car accidents... You could squirm during a spanking and accidentally snap your spinal cord. Every day is a lottery, and first prize is you don't have to push yourself around town on a skateboard with your hands. Think about that.

SILENCE. Then;

DEWEY

I don't take my legs for granted, Mom.

LOIS

I know, honey. You're a good boy. Stop playing with yourself.

CUT TO:

EXT. MALCOLM'S STREET - LATER THAT MORNING

CAMERA TRAVELS along small, well-kept houses. LOVING PARENTS send CLEAN-CUT KIDS off to school with a kiss. Then we come to a slightly shabby house with a neglected lawn. The houses on either side have "For Sale" signs up. The DOOR OPENS and Malcolm, Reese and Dewey HUSTLE OUT as Lois hands them lunch bags.

LOIS

I ran out of ham, so one of these has egg salad.

The boys grumble as they HURRY OUT TO THE STREET.

LOIS

(calls)

And don't ditch your little brother, I don't want him kidnapped.

REESE

(to Malcolm)

It's your turn to walk with him.

MALCOLM

I walked him yesterday. And the day before.

REESE

I walked him when he wet his pants.

MALCOLM
(beaten)

Okay.

Reese RUNS OFF ahead. Dewey runs to catch up with Malcolm.

DEWEY
Mom said to hold hands.

MALCOLM
She did not say to hold hands. I'm
not holding hands, Dewey.

DEWEY
Come on, hold hands. Please?

MALCOLM
No! You're in first grade now, you're
too big for that. Now come on.
(then)
Look, I'm walking right next to you.
(then)
You'll be fine.

They walk along for a few moments. Dewey looks at the
ground. A few more steps, then;

MALCOLM
Dammit.

Malcolm GRABS DEWEY'S HAND and stomps down the street,
dragging Dewey roughly behind him. Dewey smiles.

MALCOLM
This is why everyone teases you!

A boy named RICHARD walks up beside them.

RICHARD
Hey, Malcolm.

MALCOLM
(to camera)
This is Richard. He's the only kid on
the block allowed to play with us.

RICHARD
So my mom? Was telling my dad last
night? About your brother? She said
he's in jail?

MALCOLM

He's not in jail, dipwad. He's at Marlin Academy, it's like one of the best private schools in the country.

(to camera)

And it's totally unfair anyway. Everyone acts like Francis is this big troublemaker, and he's not.

CUT TO:

FRANCIS

Facing camera. In the background, a POLICEMAN has a tight grip on his shoulder.

FRANCIS

Dad, I know what you're gonna say, and believe me, I agree with you. There's no excuse for what I did. It was idiotic and immature and ...

FRANCIS

Facing camera as before, but now in the background we see a TEENAGE GIRL frantically PULLING HER CLOTHES BACK ON.

FRANCIS

(continues)

... totally reckless. I'm really sorry, and I'm just hoping against hope that you'll give me another chance, which I admit...

FRANCIS

As before, but now in the background we see a STATION WAGON ENGULFED IN FLAMES.

FRANCIS

(continues)

... I don't even deserve, but if you can somehow find it on your heart to forgive me, I know I can earn your trust back.

CUT TO:

BACK ON MALCOLM

MALCOLM

(to camera)

It's not like it was even our car.

As they round the corner, Richard STOPS SUDDENLY.

RICHARD

Spath.

DOWN THE STREET

Half a block ahead. DAVE SPATH, a mean-looking nine year-old, strolls along dangling a SMALLER KID by his shirt collar. An audience of CRONIES watch in amusement.

SPATH

(to his victim)

Okay, here's how it works. You can beg for mercy on your belly, lick the bottom of my shoes, or take a beating. You must pick at least two, but if you take three you get a pass for the next two weeks. That's your best value.

Spath's CRONIES CRACK UP.

MALCOLM

(to camera)

Dave Spath. He doesn't get sent anywhere.

(to Dewey)

We'll try to go around the block. What do you do if he catches you?

DEWEY

Roll into a ball.

MALCOLM

What if he starts kicking you?

DEWEY

Stay in a ball.

MALCOLM

Okay. Come on.

As the boys start quietly CROSSING THE STREET behind them;

CLOSE ON SPATH

He stops, narrows his eyes suspiciously. It almost seems like he's sniffing the air.

SPATH

Wait.

SPATH'S CRONIES SHUT UP. Malcolm, Dewey and Richard FREEZE halfway across the street, praying Spath doesn't turn around. A BEAT. Then;

SPATH
(shrugs)

Never mind.

Spath STARTS POUNDING on his victim as our boys RUN OFF in the background, unseen.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

Malcolm and other FOURTH-GRADERS are seated around tables in Miss Hogan's class, painting various masterpieces with tempera paint. MISS HOGAN is 30, wound way too tight.

MISS HOGAN

Those of you finished with your tempera paints may bring your work up here and start on your charcoal still-lives. You may take two pieces of fruit only, and please be careful with them, I bought them with my own money.
(bitterly)

My own money.

MALCOLM'S TABLE

As he finishes his painting. Spath sits at a table behind him. A PRETTY GIRL named JULIE sits next to Malcolm. She looks at his work.

JULIE

God, Malcolm. That's so good.

The OTHER KIDS at his table AD-LIB their agreement. We see Spath look over resentfully.

MALCOLM

It's Mars. That's my brothers hanging over the acid pit.

JULIE

It's really cool.

They smile at each other. Malcolm gets up and takes his painting over to Miss Hogan. Spath picks up a jar of red paint, looks at Malcolm's chair.

MISS HOGAN

As Malcolm hands her his painting.

MISS HOGAN

Malcolm, this is wonderful. The perspective is good, the composition is clean, it even shows signs of actual technique. I have to say, this is the high point of my day.

(then)

How's that for sad?

MALCOLM

Um, thanks.

He takes some fruit and goes back to his chair. The second he sits down, he REACTS to a sudden slippery feeling. He LOOKS DOWN at his chair, then LOOKS UP, HORRIFIED. Behind him, Späth SNICKERS. As Malcolm turns to look at him;

JULIE

You okay?

MALCOLM

What?

(covering)

Yeah. Yeah. I'm fine.

Malcolm tries to regain his composure as a SIXTH-GRADER comes into the class and hands Miss Hogan a note.

MISS HOGAN

Malcolm?

MALCOLM

Yes?

MISS HOGAN

They want you in the office.

MALCOLM

Okay.

MALCOLM DOESN'T MOVE.

MISS HOGAN

I think they mean right now.

MALCOLM

Okay.

HE STILL DOESN'T MOVE. Julie looks at him, concerned. Some of the other kids start GIGGLING. Then;

MISS HOGAN

Get up, Malcolm.

PAUSE. Malcolm looks at Julie, then at Spath. Then he grits his teeth and STANDS UP. He HEADS FOR THE DOOR, and we see HIS ASS IS SOAKED IN BRIGHT RED PAINT. The class dissolves in hoots of LAUGHTER.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY

Malcolm stomps off down the hallway, head down, fists clenched, his bright red rear-end waving like a flag.

CUT TO:

INT. OFFICE - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Where CAROLINE MILLER, a 40-ish earth-mother type, sits behind a desk. MALCOLM ENTERS. He's still fuming.

CAROLINE

Hi, I'm Caroline. Are you Malcolm?

MALCOLM

(angrily)

Yes. And I didn't do anything.

CAROLINE

Oh. Oh. Good. Glad to hear it. You're not in any trouble, Malcolm. You're here because some of your teachers think you... Look, I just want to play some games with you - puzzles, things like that, okay?

MALCOLM

Why?

CAROLINE

Boy, you are a suspicious little dickens, aren't you? Now come on, do this for me. I know you like puzzles.

She picks up a large card with a drawing on it.

CAROLINE

You can look at this picture for sixty seconds, and then I want you to tell me everything that's wrong with it.

She sticks it in Malcolm's face.

MALCOLM
(after a few seconds)
The man only has four fingers.

CAROLINE
Right. But I want you to take your
time and really look --

Malcolm pushes the card away and looks directly at her.

MALCOLM
(with building anger)
The car's shadow is going the wrong
way, the steering wheel's on the wrong
side, there's no brake pedal, the
words in the mirror should be
backwards, the guy's watch wouldn't
say twelve o'clock if he's looking at
a sunset, and I have red paint all
over my ass! That's right! Red
Paint! On my ass!

Caroline stares at him, completely at a loss, as we;

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOFADE IN:EXT. KENARBAN HOUSE - THE NEXT AFTERNOONON THE FRONT DOOR

As it SWINGS OPEN and MRS. KENARBAN, a housewife of the pert/pretty/perky variety, breaks into a sunny smile.

MRS. KENARBAN

Malcolm, hi!

ON MALCOLM

Freshly scrubbed, hair combed in a neat part. LOIS STANDS BEHIND HIM WITH HER ARMS CROSSED, blocking any escape.

MALCOLM

Hi, Mrs. Kenarban.

MRS. KENARBAN

Come in, come in. Stevie is so happy about you coming over today.

(to Lois)

Oh, hi. Would you like to come in?

LOIS

No thanks, I have errands to run.

(smiles)

I was just making sure he didn't get lost on the way over.

Malcolm looks back at his mom as the DOOR SWINGS SHUT.

CUT TO:INT. STEVIE'S ROOM - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Malcolm sits chewing a cookie and staring blankly at STEVIE, who sits in his wheelchair chewing and staring back at him. Stevie's extra-thick eyeglasses make him look like an owl. He needs a breath before each word, which makes him talk very... very... slowly. A LONG SILENCE. Then;

MALCOLM

These are good cookies.

STEVIE

Yeah... They're... good.

Malcolm nods. Another SILENCE. Then;

MALCOLM

So, what can you do? I mean, what do you want to do?

STEVIE

I... know... a... joke.

MALCOLM

Yeah? Okay.

STEVIE

This... guy... has... three... days...
to... live... so... his... wife...
says... he.. can... do... anything...

MALCOLM

(jumping in)

Anything he wants?

STEVIE

... he... wants... as... long...
as... he... promises.....

(then)

Wait... I... screwed... up.

(then)

This... guy... has... one... day...
to... live...

MALCOLM

(quickly)

You wanna watch TV?

STEVIE

Can't. Not... allowed.

MALCOLM

(stunned)

What, you mean ever?

STEVIE

(nods)

Mom... says... TV... makes... you...
stupid.

MALCOLM

No, TV makes you normal.

(to camera)

How can they do that? He's in a
wheelchair.

(to Stevie)

So what do you do all day? Homework?

STEVIE

Mostly... read... comic... books.

MALCOLM

You have comic books?

Stevie wheels over to a closet and OPENS THE DOOR. Inside are BOXES FILLED WITH HUNDREDS OF COMIC BOOKS, neatly organized with folder tabs. Malcolm is blown away.

MALCOLM

Whoa...

(reads folder)

You really have Youngblood number one?

Stevie nods. Malcolm carefully takes it out of the box, looks at it through its glassine envelope.

STEVIE

Wanna... read... it?

MALCOLM

What? No way, I'd wreck it.

(puts it back)

Did you read the last Savage Dragon, when they split him in two?

STEVIE

(smiles)

Yeah... brilliant.

MALCOLM

I like how he never has to learn a lesson or anything, he just gets to pound on everyone.

(then)

Oh, Did you hear what they're doing to Spiderman next year? They're changing his costume - again - and...

The boys continue talking happily as we;

CUT TO:

INT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - SATURDAY MORNING

IN THE FAMILY ROOM

MALCOLM, REESE, AND DEWEY ARE SPRAWLED ON THE SOFA IN THEIR UNDERWEAR, watching a VIOLENT CARTOON. Reese has a bowl of cereal on his chest. Dewey's head is on Malcolm's stomach. They are the picture of contented sloth.

MALCOLM

(to camera)

Saturday morning is the only thing my family does better than anyone else.

THE LAUNDRY ROOM

Lois stands with her BACK TO CAMERA, hovering over the dryer. SHE IS TOPLESS, in a half-slip and panty-hose. A UNIFORM hangs by the door. She checks her watch, then takes a bra out of the dryer and holds it to her cheek.

LOIS

Damn.

She tosses her bra back in the dryer, goes to the refrigerator, looks in.

LOIS

(calls)

You boys keep this house clean till your dad gets home. Two of you can have slices of pizza for lunch, and the other one can have some - I don't know, I think they're peas.

(then)

And no Nintendo, you're still on punishment.

THE FAMILY ROOM

REESE

(calls)

We won't.

Reese looks at Malcolm, "Is she kidding?"

The TELEPHONE RINGS.

LOIS (O.S)

Somebody get that!

REESE/DEWEY

(together)

Not it.

Malcolm sighs, rolls over, picks up the phone.

MALCOLM

Hello?

INTERCUT - PAY PHONE

FRANCIS is in a dormitory common room. He now sports a military style crew-cut. He's puffing A CIGARETTE and blowing the smoke out the window. Behind him, MANLY YOUNG CADETS do PUSH-UPS and LIFT BARBELLS while the TV PLAYS.

FRANCIS
(grins)
Young master Malcolm.

MALCOLM
(excited)
Francis, hi.

Reese and Dewey JUMP UP and JOSTLE OVER THE PHONE with Malcolm.

FRANCIS
Look, I only have three minutes. I wrote you guys a really long letter. Put the Special Prosecutor on, okay?

MALCOLM
(calls)
Mom, it's Francis.

The boys STAY ON THE LINE as LOIS PICKS UP.

LOIS
Hey, honey. How's school?

FRANCIS
Couldn't be better, Mom. My new roommate showed me how to kill mice with a hammer. Between that and the general atmosphere of simmering homoeroticism, I think I'm really starting to turn around.

LOIS
It's just until summer, honey.

FRANCIS
Listen, I know I shouldn't ask, but can you send my allowance a couple weeks early? I need some --

LOIS
Oh my God, are you smoking?

FRANCIS
What?

LOIS
You're smoking, I can hear you smoking. You're smoking, aren't you?

FRANCIS
No, I'm not smoking. Geez.

LOIS

After seeing the hell your dad and I went through to quit? Didn't any of that register with you?

(then)

I'll talk to your dad about the money. Maybe we can send part of it, okay? I have to go, I'm late for work. I'll call you later, honey.

FRANCIS

Thanks, mom.

As Lois starts to put the phone down;

ON FRANCIS

FRANCIS

Love you.

He hears a CLICK. He shrugs, HANGS UP.

ON LOIS

She quickly PICKS THE PHONE BACK UP.

LOIS

I love you.

Too late. She HANGS BACK UP.

ON THE BOYS

Malcolm PUTS THE PHONE DOWN. They sit silently for a moment. Then;

REESE

He is so lucky.

MALCOLM

I know. We never go anywhere, and he gets to be in Alabama.

DEWEY

Is Alabama nice?

MALCOLM

(annoyed)

Look it up, Dewey. It's got Sequoyah Caverns, the Alabama Space and Rocket Center, the biggest cast-iron statue in the world... plus it's right next to Florida, where Disney World is.

DEWEY

I bet he goes to Disney World all the time.

REESE

(pokes Dewey)

Hey moron, he's fifteen, he doesn't do kid stuff. He goes to parties and drinks beer, and goes skiing.

MALCOLM

(pokes Reese)

Right, genius, they do lots of skiing in Alabama.

REESE

(shoves Malcolm)

Shut up.

MALCOLM

(shoves back)

Make me.

Reese THROWS A HEADLOCK ON MALCOLM. The BOYS TUMBLE OFF THE SOFA and CRASH INTO THE COFFEE TABLE.

LAUNDRY ROOM

As Lois takes her bra out of the dryer again.

LOIS

(calls)

You'd better not be fighting in there.
... Reese? Malcolm? I said you'd
better not be --

The DOORBELL RINGS.

LOIS

For God's sake.

(calls)

Reese! Malcolm!

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Where CAROLINE MILLER waits at the front door. She looks around, RINGS THE DOORBELL again. After a moment, the DOOR IS THROWN OPEN by an exasperated, and STILL TOPLESS Lois.

LOIS

Yes? Can I help you?

CAROLINE

(thrown)

Uh... Hi. Hello. Are you...? I'm, uh, Caroline. Caroline Miller.

LOIS

Am I supposed to know that name?

CAROLINE

I'm from Malcolm's school. I, I sent you some letters, and left messages on your machine.

LOIS

Okay, fine. You caught me. What do you want?

CAROLINE

Well, it's been three weeks and you haven't responded, and it's really important, I mean, for Malcolm's sake, that the parents be as involved as...

LOIS

So you're here to insult my parenting skills?

CAROLINE

What? No, I'm sure you're a terrific parent.

In the background behind LOIS, we see MALCOLM and REESE ROLLING ON THE FLOOR IN THEIR UNDERWEAR, PUNCHING EACH OTHER as DEWEY FOLLOWS BEHIND, KICKING THEM.

CAROLINE

I'm here because I think there's a real opportunity to... Could you, you know, maybe put a top on?

LOIS

They're just boobs, lady. You see 'em in the mirror every morning, and I'm sure yours are a lot nicer than mine.

CAROLINE

That's not what I'm --

LOIS

And I'll tell you something else. I didn't "respond" to you because it's a load of crap. You're not gonna stick my Malcolm in some Special Ed class.

CAROLINE

But --

LOIS

Why do you people have to label everyone? Malcolm may be a little strange, and I know he never shuts up, but that doesn't make him disturbed. He's a good boy.

CAROLINE

No, you don't understand. Could I just come in for a minute? I'll explain everything. Please?

Lois looks at her for a second, then steps aside. As
CAROLINE GOES IN the house, we:

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEFADE IN:INT. KITCHEN - THAT EVENING

THE FAMILY is at the table. Hal and the boys are **SHOVING DOWN DINNER** at warp speed. We hear **CLATTERING UTENSILS** and **CHEWING** and **GULPING NOISES**. Lois sits with a cup of coffee, waiting. The **RACKET CONTINUES** until, almost in unison, they **DROP THEIR FORKS** and push **EMPTY PLATES** away.

HAL

(mouth full)

S'good, hon.

The boys **GRUNT THEIR AGREEMENT** and they all get up.

LOIS

Wait. We have something to talk about.

HAL

(confused)

I thought we weren't going to mention Aunt Helen till after the biopsy.

LOIS

It's not that. It's about Malcolm.

MALCOLM

(instantly)

I didn't do it.

REESE

(same)

Yes he did, I saw him.

Hal shoots them a look and they **SHUT UP**.

LOIS

A woman from school came by. She said she did some tests with him, and...

(drops the bomb)

Malcolm has an IQ of one hundred and sixty-five.

BEAT. They all look at her blankly.

LOIS

(annoyed)

-- Which means he's a genius and he's going to go to special class.

MALCOLM
(horrified)

What?

HAL
Malcolm is special? In a good way?

LOIS
They have a separate program for
gifted children that has advanced
textbooks, and special teachers, and
all kinds of good things they don't
want to waste on normal kids.
(smiles to Malcolm)
You start on Monday.

REESE
(dismayed)
You're gonna put him in Krelboyne
class?

MALCOLM
Mom, no. I don't want to.

LOIS
What are you talking about? Of course
you do.

MALCOLM
No. I want to stay in my own class.
I don't want to be a Krelboyne.

REESE
Mom, seriously. Krelboynes get their
butts kicked.

LOIS
Stop right there. There is nothing
wrong with being smart. And there's
nothing wrong with being cut from the
herd. It makes you the one buffalo
that isn't there when the Indians run
the rest of them off the cliff.

MALCOLM
(to camera)

Huh?

(then)
Mom, this isn't fair. If I don't want
to go, why do I have to?

LOIS
Because it isn't just up to you. We
have to do what's best for you.

DEWEY

Is Malcolm going to Alabama?

LOIS

Of course not. And stop playing with yourself.

MALCOLM

Mom, please. Don't make me. Please!

HAL

Malcolm, calm down.

MALCOLM

But it isn't fair!

LOIS

Of course it's not fair. It's the first time anyone in this family's ever been given an edge, and you're not going to waste it.

MALCOLM

(pleading)

Dad?

LOIS

Honey?

Hal looks at them both uncomfortably.

HAL

(to Lois)

Look, honey, maybe if...

(to Malcolm)

Malcolm, if you just ...

(to Reese)

Why is there never any iced tea in this pitcher? I make a batch every morning and it's gone by the time I get home!

MALCOLM

(starts to cry)

I want a better family.

Malcolm RUNS OFF.

LOIS

Malcolm...

(then - to Hal)

... Go get yogurt.

Lois FOLLOWS MALCOLM OUT of the kitchen.

CUT TO:

INT. MALCOLM'S ROOM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Malcolm is lying on his bed, still crying. LOIS COMES IN. She sits next to him, RUBS HIS BACK for a while. Then;

MALCOLM

Mom, I don't want to go to special class. People think I'm weird enough already.

LOIS

I know.

MALCOLM

I like where I am. I want to stay.

LOIS

That's because you don't understand the world yet. Sweetie, life doesn't give you a lot of chances to move up, even if you deserve it. Just look at your dad and me.

(pets his head)

Malcolm, I'm proud of you. You boys are so lucky, you have so many gifts other kids don't have. And I don't just mean Stevie Kenarban, either. Look at the Parker boys across the street. They may be healthy, but honest to god, they're the ugliest little boys ever born. They look like boiled beets. Don't you think?

Malcolm nods.

LOIS

And those Henderson kids, that electrocuted their dog trying to get free cable? How smart could they be? And your friend Richard?

MALCOLM

He's not ugly or dumb.

LOIS

Yes, but he's very effeminate.

(softly)

Just remember. Any kid that makes fun of you is a creepy little loser who'll end up working in a car wash.

PAUSE. Then;

MALCOLM

(to camera)

This shouldn't make me feel better,
but it does.

Lois gets up, heads for the door.

LOIS

(smiles)

You'll be okay, sweetie. If you don't
make a big deal out of it, no one else
will.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - A COUPLE DAYS LATER

MISS HOGAN stands behind Malcolm as she talks to the class.
Malcolm looks ill.

MISS HOGAN

... And I just can't say enough about
how proud I am of Malcolm getting into
the gifted program.

(then)

Now, I'm sure some of the more small-
minded among you are picturing all the
great things Malcolm will have that we
never will, and thinking, "We deserve
that as much as he does." Well, guess
what? We don't. Malcolm may not look
different than the rest of us, but he
is. Very different. In his brain.
And I think he deserves some
recognition for that.

Miss Hogan APPLAUDS, gestures for the kids to join in.
They do, half-heartedly, except for SPATH, who CLAPS
ENTHUSIASTICALLY with a wicked grin on his face. Malcolm
looks over at JULIE. She looks back at him.

JULIE

Eye.

Malcolm BURIES HIS FACE IN HIS HANDS. We;

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SPECIAL CLASS - LATER

Malcolm STILL HAS HIS FACE BURIED IN HIS HANDS.

CAROLINE (O.S.)
 Today we start a new unit on the
 Peloponnesian war. I think everyone's
 really gonna like it. ...Malcolm?

WIDEN TO REVEAL

Malcolm's new classroom. It's a lot nicer than his old
 one. Malcolm sits next to Stevie. As Malcolm looks up:

CAROLINE
 You okay?

A class full of EXTREMELY WEIRD KIDS IS STARING AT MALCOLM.
 They look like they'd be more at home in a Fellini movie.

MALCOLM
 Uh, yeah. Fine.

Caroline turns away. The KIDS CONTINUE TO STARE AT HIM.
 After a moment;

MALCOLM
 Stop staring at me.

The kids reluctantly TURN BACK to their studies.

MALCOLM
 (to Stevie)
 Why do they keep doing that?

STEVIE
 You're... new.

MALCOLM
 (getting worked up)
 Oh great, so I'm the freak of the
 freak show?

A KID with ERASERHEAD-TYPE HAIR and tiny eyes leans over.

ERASERHEAD
 Pi to fifty places, mark-set-go.
 (rapid-fire)
 Three-point-one-four-one-five-nine-
 two-six-five-three-five-eight-nine --

MALCOLM
 Turn away, or I swear to God I'll kill
 you.

Eraserhead shrugs and turns away.

STEVIE

Just... chill... out.

MALCOLM

Don't tell me to chill out, you chill out. No one can live like this.

STEVIE

I'm... okay.

MALCOLM

Oh sure, you're okay because it doesn't make any difference to you! You've always been a freak. But I used to be normal!

(then - to camera)

Wait. Who just said that?

(to Stevie)

You're gonna take that the wrong way, aren't you?

STEVIE

You... suck.

Stevie turns his back to Malcolm. Malcolm has no idea what to do.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - A WHILE LATER

It's lunch time. All the KIDS are outside, eating. MALCOLM sits at a table by himself, angrily chewing a sandwich.

CAMERA GOES OVERHEAD

We see the kids have formed a LARGE, PERFECTLY CIRCULAR "ZONE OF AVOIDANCE" around him.

BACK ON MALCOLM

MALCOLM

(to camera - grim)

Around here being smart is exactly like being radioactive.

CAMERA GOES OVERHEAD AGAIN

As Malcolm SHIFTS POSITION a few inches, then SHIFTS BACK. THE "ZONE OF AVOIDANCE" MOVES WITH HIM.

BACK ON MALCOLM

MALCOLM

(to camera)

Nothing that happens to me is ever fair.

He looks across the yard and sees;

STEVIE

Sitting by himself with his lunch on his lap.

BACK ON MALCOLM

Feeling guilty. He thinks for a moment. Then he picks up his lunch bag and starts WALKING OVER to Stevie.

MALCOLM

(to camera)

I can't believe I'm doing this...

(then)

Stevie?

Stevie looks up, surprised.

STEVIE

What?

Malcolm hesitates, sees all the other kids looking at him.

MALCOLM

Look, I... I...

Just then, an EMPTY MILK CARTON sails through the air and BOUNCES OFF MALCOLM'S HEAD. As the kids all LAUGH, Malcolm whips around and sees SPATH, laughing and skinning palms with his cronies. Malcolm THROWS DOWN HIS LUNCH BAG, blind with rage.

MALCOLM

(yells)

Hey Spath, why don't you stop being such an asshole?

SILENCE. Everyone looks at Malcolm, stunned. Malcolm looks around, equally stunned. After a moment, Spath smiles. He has his excuse. He gets to his feet.

SPATH

What'd you call me?

MALCOLM

You heard me. I don't care any more, Spath. Okay? I just don't care. All you ever do is make everybody miserable, except for your little monkey-slaves, who by the way only pretend to like you. They hate you as much as everyone else does, and you're just too busy being mean and stupid to ever figure it out.

(to camera)

I keep trying to run but my legs won't work.

(then)

Mom was right. They are important.

SPATH

(to his cronies)

Wow... I don't know about you, but the Krelboyne really hurt my feelings.

The CRONIES LAUGH as Spath saunters over. At the same time, STEVIE ROLLS UP behind Malcolm.

STEVIE

Hey...

MALCOLM

(quickly)

Go away, Stevie.

Stevie stops. Spath glances over at Stevie. Then;

SPATH

(to Malcolm - quietly)

It's good you two are friends. He won't mind sharing his wheelchair.

BEAT. Then;

MALCOLM

(to camera)

Okay. This is where finally something good happens, so we're gonna slow down and make it last as long as possible.

As Malcolm turns back to face Spath, we;

GO TO SLOW MOTION

Spath starts to bring up his fists. Malcolm looks around desperately, then grabs a PUDDING CUP AND SHOVES IT IN SPATH'S FACE. It BURSTS OPEN, covering Spath's face with goo. As SPATH STAGGERS BACK;

MALCOLM

Stands there a moment, amazed. Then he realizes this is his chance and TURNS TO RUN as;

SPATH

Scrapes pudding from his eyes with one hand and REACHES OUT with the other as;

MALCOLM

Gets about a step before SPATH CATCHES HIM BY THE SHIRT and SPINS HIM AROUND and;

SPATH

Takes a WILD, BLIND SWING at Malcolm, who manages to DUCK the blow, which sends Spath STUMBLING with his fist out, right into;

STEVIE

Who has no time to move out of the way as;

SPATH

Sees where he's headed and TRIES TO STOP but can't and;

ALL THE OTHER KIDS

Stare in horror as;

SPATH'S FIST

Just barely, barely TAPS Stevie on the chin.

BACK TO REAL-TIME

As ALL THE KIDS GASP. Malcolm turns to see Spath looking at Stevie with guilty horror. ONE OF HIS CRONIES pipes up;

CRONY

Dude... You hit a cripple.

ON STEVIE

He looks around, realizes what's going on. He locks eyes with Malcolm for an instant, then TIPS HIS OWN WHEELCHAIR OVER. It falls to the ground with a CRASH. More GASPS from the crowd.

SPATH

No, I wasn't trying to... I mean, come on, I wouldn't...

The kids all AD-LIB THEIR DISGUST at Spath and rush to HELP STEVIE BACK UP.

KID

(running off)

I'm telling.

ANOTHER KID

(same)

Me too.

SPATH

But I didn't mean... Stevie, I'm sorry!

Malcolm joins the other kids CROWDING AROUND STEVIE. HE GROANS THEATRICALY as they put him back in his chair and dust him off. Then he looks over at Malcolm and breaks into a GIANT, SHIT-EATING GRIN. Malcolm smiles back as we:

CUT TO:

EXT. MALCOLM'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

It's a beautiful day. We hear BIRDS CHIRPING. Malcolm is out in his driveway. He has a length of rope in his hands.

MALCOLM

(to camera)

... So then the Principal comes out, and everyone's all talking at once, and the story he puts together is Spath attacked Stevie for his lunch, and I'm like this hero that stepped in to defend him. It was beautiful.

(then)

Okay, it wasn't funny when Spath started crying.

(then)

No wait, it was.

Malcolm looks over at the base of a tree, where SOME BIRDS are busy grabbing tufts from A LARGE MOUND OF BODY HAIR.

MALCOLM

Is that gross, or cool?

(then)

I guess you work with what they give you.

Malcolm goes behind his dad's car and TIES THE ROPE TO THE BACK BUMPER.

MALCOLM

Like having to go to special class. I just gotta figure a way to make it okay. It's weird though, finding out I'm a genius.

He ties the other end of the rope tightly AROUND HIS CHEST. Off-camera we hear the FRONT DOOR OPEN.

MALCOLM

My mom says people like me owe the rest of the world something. But I don't think that's fair. It's not like I asked to be super-intelligent.

Malcolm grabs his SKATEBOARD and CROUCHES behind the car as HAL comes around the front and GETS BEHIND THE WHEEL. He doesn't see Malcolm.

MALCOLM

But I'm not gonna let it bother me. Hey, I'm just a kid. Things can only get better.

He gives us a thumbs-up as HAL STARTS THE ENGINE and we;

GO TO BLACK:

THE END