

HOW TO TIE A TIE

by

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CURRENT DRAFT

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FADE IN:

DAYLIGHT. Flying over rolling hills... Rooftops breaking the tree line... Finding the houses of a blue-collar mill town all packed in rows... Closing in on a single house...

On a single window...

**1 EXT. BEDROOM WINDOW - NIGHT 1**

THROUGH the window, we find a WALL CALENDAR. Days crossed off with an "X". A single word scribbled tomorrow: "HOMECOMING", and then --

A JOLT- CURIOUS BROWN EYES FLICKING, TRACKING MOVEMENT -- A CAN OF SODA PLACED ON A TABLE AT A DINER -- A MAN TAKING A SEAT ACROSS FROM A BOY -- A CADILLAC TRUCK SPEEDING OFF --

**2 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT 2**

BLOODY FINGERS scraping -- prying at an EARLOBE and -- TINK, TINK -- a DIAMOND STUDED EARRING hits porcelain -- twirling out ribbons of blood as it disappears down the drain when --

We look to the mirror, finding DOMINIQUE GREEN staring back. Dominique looks to be about 18 with copper-toned skin and, behind pain, a sweet boyish face.

And pain it is. Blood starts where his tears stop, streaming down both sides of his neck, staining his shirt...

He's just ripped out his earrings.

CUT TO:

THE CALENDAR. The black X's vanishing day-by-day, sending us back until "HOMECOMING" is a week away...

A WALL OF SOUND, BUILDING and BUILDING and we are-

**3 EXT. FRONT PORCH - DAY 3**

-where Dominique shoots to his feet. Earrings glistening in the sunlight here. Eyes wild and excited as a CAR SCREAMS down the suburban street...

And it just passes through.

He plops back down on the stoop, adjusting the PILLOW and DUFFEL BAG beside him, leaning into it.

WILLIAM (handsome, black, 40s), turns off the engine of the CLASSIC CAR in the driveway, and flashes Dominique a proud smile so warm it's almost contagious.

WILLIAM

Told you I'd get my granddaddy's car running for you. Just in time, too.

DOMINIQUE

Thought you were busy.

WILLIAM

I am busy. But we make time for what's important, don't we?

Dominique dismisses him with a weak smile. William shrugs, climbing into the passenger seat of the BLACK VOLVO backing out of the driveway.

Window goes down and we meet CAROL: a pretty, black, forty-something woman giving Dominique a once-over and a polite smile behind the wheel.

CAROL

Sure you ain't comin, baby?

A sadness starts in Dominique's eyes, but he hides it well.

DOMINIQUE

Nah. I'm good.

CAROL

You know how he is, Nique. He ain't shit --

WILLIAM

(a whisper)

-- Hey- hey- hey- You can't say that to him --

CAROL

-- Say what? --

WILLIAM

-- You just shouldn't tell him how  
to feel about his dad --

CAROL

-- Darnell.

WILLIAM

-- Whatever we're calling him -- I'm  
saying you shouldn't tell the kid  
how to feel about him. He has to  
figure that out for himself.

(leans over her seat)

It'll be alright, my man. Call if  
you need anything, okay?

Dominique looks at William, looks away, and ignores him completely. Carol watches the boy, not much else she can do. She pulls out and drives off. The moment their car vanishes around the corner, Dominique grabs his bags and stomps into-

**4 INT. DOMINIQUE'S BEDROOM - DAY**

**4**

Tidy room. KAYNE WEST and MICHAEL JACKSON POSTERS. DJ  
TURNTABLES and SOUND MIXERS.

Dominique talks on the phone -- pacing. We don't hear the  
other side of the conversation.

DOMINIQUE (O.S.)

No... nah, he never showed...

Dominique hears LAUGHING. Following it to the window blinds,  
peeks through, finding HIS NEIGHBOR and NEIGHBOR'S YOUNG SON  
playing catch in the yard. He closes the blinds.

DOMINIQUE (CONT'D)

...I don't know, maybe like a month  
or two... Yeah... I mean, I didn't  
want him to, just... seeing if he  
would, ya know?

CUT TO:

**5 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

**5**

TWO GIGGLING SHADOWS APPEAR IN THE LIVING ROOM DOORWAY. Carol  
stumbles into the house buzzed just enough to squeal out a  
girlish giggle as William closes the door behind her.

CAROL

How many is too many?

WILLIAM  
 However many you had.

Carol just laughs. She takes William's hand and begins to sing "Drunk in Love" by Beyoncé --

CAROL  
 I been drinkin'. I been drinkin'.

They share a tender moment as William spins her around and she playfully lets her head fall into his chest. She allows her eyes to close in the safety of his arms.

She finishes the song softly, replacing the word "drunk" with "I'm".

CAROL (CONT'D)  
 I'm in love.

William kisses her forehead and squeezes her close, but something catches his eye: Dominique's bag and pillow.

**6 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS**

**6**

William -- following Dominique's voice down the hallway -- stopping just shy of his door -- starting to knock, but --

DOMINIQUE (O.S.)  
 ...no... I mean I don't really  
 care... It's not like I ever really  
 had a real dad anyway...

William stares blankly, defeat in his eyes. He walks away.

**7 INT. DOMINIQUE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

**7**

Dominique slashes an "X" through today's date on the calendar. Five days until Homecoming.

DOMINIQUE  
 ...yeah coming up pretty soon...  
 nah, not yet... Wait -- like, with  
 you?

**8 INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

**8**

Carol lies in bed. TV light flickers against her face: the evening news. William comes from the bathroom brushing his teeth, mouth full of toothpaste --

WILLIAM

(muffled)  
Why deren't hem lik em?

CAROL  
What?

William leans back into the bathroom, spits. Comes back.

WILLIAM  
Why doesn't he like me?

CAROL  
(lost- motions to the TV)  
The president?

**9 INT. DOMINIQUE'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

**9**

Dominique -- grabbing a pre-tied tie from his closet -- pulling it over his head -- untying the knot -- trying to tie a new one in the mirror as --

DOMINIQUE  
You're asking me to go to Homecoming... Like, with you? Like together? Like... As dates?

**10 INT. PARENT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

**10**

The two of them in mid conversation, it's not heated, but has the potential to get there --

WILLIAM  
Dominique.

CAROL  
-- stop it. He does too like you.

WILLIAM  
Got a funny way of showing it.

CAROL  
What's that supposed to mean?

WILLIAM  
He just said he's never had a real dad.

CAROL  
Maybe he hasn't.

WILLIAM  
What's that supposed to mean?

**11 INT. DOMINIQUE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS****11**

DOMINIQUE

Ok. Yeah... I mean: yes... Yes, I'll go... Yes. With you...

There is a beat. Dominique's tie is a jumbled mess.

DOMINIQUE (CONT'D)

...no. I just... I just realized I have absolutely no idea how to tie a tie.

CUT TO:

BLACKNESS. CLEAR GOO sludges in, sizzling white and we are-

**12 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING****12**

-where William fries eggs. He picks up the remote and flips through the channels.

Carol closes her laptop, begins stuffing it into her bag -- freezing when she sees Bugs Bunny pop out behind Elmer Fudd on the TV.

CAROL

Shit -- I forgot my eye appointment.

William looks up, noticing the TV.

WILLIAM

Rabbits. Carrots. Good for your eyes. Eye appointment.

CAROL

Is that how that just worked?

WILLIAM

I want a motorcycle.

CAROL

William.

WILLIAM

We can afford it.

CAROL

Now you know that's not why.

Dominique's feet hammer down the stairs -- backpack over his shoulder -- he's not stopping --

WILLIAM

Did you know, that for every 100,000 accidents, only 72 are fatal?

CAROL

(to Dominique)

Mornin', baby.

(to William)

And that's 5 times more than cars.

WILLIAM

Tell your mom we can afford it.

Dominique kisses Carol on the cheek as he passes.

DOMINIQUE

We can afford it, mom.

CAROL

That's not why.

WILLIAM

Bees in your bed again?

He shrugs at William.

DOMINIQUE

Afford what?

WILLIAM

Only way I could move that fast this early is if I woke up with bees in my bed.

DOMINIQUE

(on his way out)

I gotta get to school. What can we afford?

CAROL

A motorcycle.

DOMINIQUE

Don't those kill people at like 5 times the rate of cars?

CAROL

Five point five.

WILLIAM

Yeah, but I made breakfast.

DOMINIQUE

(not stopping)

Nice. Bet it's good.

And the back door closes behind Dominique. William shrugs to Carol, as if to say "I'm trying." Carol shrugs back, as if to say "I know."

CAROL  
I think maybe you should want something else.

William scrapes the eggs into the trash.

WILLIAM  
No kidding.

**13 INT. CAR - MORNING**

**13**

Dominique behind the wheel. JUSTIN (17) a quiet, handsome and athletic "boy next door", rides shotgun.

ERIC (17), an odd and boisterous concoction of both nerd and jock, sits alone, centered in the back seat.

DOMINIQUE  
I mean -- I don't know. Is that what you're supposed to do?

A voice from the car's handsfree phone:

BECKY (PHONE)  
What -- Match? Yeah, but like, you gotta keep it classic. Classic is classy, ya know? Like do like navy and white or maybe like a burnt, like earthy orange.

Dominique flinches -- Eric is tapping punches into his shoulder, pulling on a RED FEDORA and holding up a matching RED TIE with an excited whisper --

ERIC  
Hoe's clean, right?

Dominique smiles and nods as they pull up to a suburban house. Eric begins to pull something out of his backpack --

BECKY (PHONE)  
Don't come like just doing like soooo much, ya know?  
(MORE)

BECKY (PHONE) (CONT'D)

Like a red tie -- and a red cane --  
and oh my god -- like a red fedora -  
- it's just too extra.

Eric quickly slides the RED PIMP CANE back into his bag.

Door opens. BECKY slides in next to Eric, hangs up her phone, but doesn't stop talking --

BECKY (CONT'D)  
-- and you just know someone's still  
gonna show up dressed like that  
lookin' goofy as hell, swearin' on  
everything they look good.

She spins to Eric, her face screaming "Ew" the moment she sees his fedora.

ERIC  
What? It'll look good.

Becky turns back. Sinks into the seat.

BECKY  
The lies we tell...

Dominique just laughs as they go.

**14 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY**

**14**

Dominique, Justin, Becky, and Eric at their desks, scattered amongst other students in the classroom. TEACHER'S VOICE droning on.

Dominique's phone buzzes. He checks it surreptitiously --

FROM: DAD

"What time school out? Dinner?" He pockets the phone.

A JOLT- CURIOUS BROWN EYES FLICKING, TRACKING MOVEMENT -- A CAN OF SODA PLACED ON A TABLE --

**15 INT. DINER - DAY**

**15**

Dominique sits alone in a booth. Sips a can of soda -- nothing left. Taps the empty can on the table...

Just noticing a CADILLAC TRUCK parking outside, he sits up -- stiffens a little as --

TIME CUT:

-- a man enters the diner. This is DARNELL. He's thirty or forty-something, charming, funny, and far too good-looking to not be ambitious. And he's coming in smiling --

DOMINIQUE

Ay dad!

DARNELL

My man!

They exchange an intricate, rehearsed handshake.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

Yo, I'm sorry about yesterday, lil' man. Got caught up in some bullshit. Had to handle some business.

DOMINIQUE

Yeah, no. It's fine -- it's fine -- I figured it (was important if-)

DARNELL

(over)

How's your moms?

DOMINIQUE

She's good. (Just been-)

DARNELL

She still workin' out?

Strange question.

DOMINIQUE

I- I think so, yeah. DARNELL Mmm. Mmm. Mmm. She know she bad. Still makin' all that money, too ain't she?

DOMINIQUE

I mean, she still has (the same job-

DARNELL

Hold up. Yo. What the fuck is in your ear?

Dominique laughs.

DOMINIQUE

They're just some studs, dad.

DARNELL

(playfully--)

Just some studs. That's what they  
call bull-dikes, lil' man. Some  
fuckin' studs.

(dead serious now)

That's what you tryin' to tell  
people about yourself?

Dominique freezes. Silent. Eyes anywhere but on Darnell.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

You a faggot? Huh? I'm asking you-

(PUNCHES THE TABLE)

That's how you look, little nigga!  
Like you a motherfuckin' sissy!

Dominique doesn't say a word. Doesn't move an inch.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

Look, real talk -- I don't care  
about the new style, naw I'm sayin?  
I don't care what Lil' Naynay and  
them is doin' on Instagram. I can't  
be seen with you until you take that  
soft shit out your ear.

(tears start in  
Dominique's eyes)

Nigga, really? You 'bout to cry lil'  
nigga?

Darnell shoots to his feet -- LUNGES at the boy -- and  
everything about this moment says he's gonna do it, he's  
gonna hit him. Dominique cowers.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

MAN THE FUCK UP!

And just like that, Darnell leaves the way he came. But  
Darnell wasn't quiet and the diner wasn't empty. All eyes  
fall on Dominique.

Dominique's gaze falls to the table -- staying quiet --  
staying small --

A young server approaches the booth. Name tag reads JUSTIN  
and we suddenly recognize him as the quiet kid in the car. He  
saw it all... Forces a smile... Just trying to help...

JUSTIN

I think they're dope.

DOMINIQUE

...

JUSTIN

The studs.  
 (then)  
 Are you- can I get you something  
 else? On me. It's (on me-)

DOMINIQUE  
 (over)  
 Just the check.

JUSTIN  
 You think I'd let you pay after  
 that?

As Justin starts to take a seat in the booth, Dominique  
 shoots to his feet and stomps out. Justin never sits.

CUT TO:

**16 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**

**16**

Deja vu: Dominique in the mirror. Blood trailing down his  
 neck, staining his shirt. It's the opening scene. We stay  
 with him longer here.

Long enough that he SCREAMS. Long enough that he bashes the  
 mirror with his fist and stares at his SHATTERED REFLECTION.

CUT TO:

THE CALENDAR. HOMECOMING IS TOMORROW.

**17 INT. DOMINIQUE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

**17**

Dominique on the floor with his back against his bed and --

DOMINIQUE  
 (into phone)  
 No, I... I'm... I'm sorry... I can't  
 go... No... Look -- because I don't  
 fuckin' want to, okay!?

He hangs up. Tosses his phone and --

CAROL (O.S.)  
 Baby?

He looks up to find his mother there in the doorway.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
 Someone had a day.

He shrugs. She lingers there, physically distant yet emotionally close.

CAROL (CONT'D)

It took me a long time to learn it  
wasn't me. That it wasn't my fault.  
Wasn't anything I did...

As Carol's words continue in V.O., we-

CUT TO:

BLACKNESS. Now WHITE BATTER sludges in. Sizzles. Just starting to brown and we are-

**18 INT. KITCHEN - MORNING**

**18**

-where William flips a pancake.

CAROL (V.O.)

People just want to be acknowledged.  
They want you see them...

Dominique comes down the steps. He kisses Carol on the cheek.

WILLIAM

He's awake.

Dominique just smiles.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Aw, where'd they go?  
(nothing, then-)  
The earrings. Where'd they go?

DOMINIQUE

I took them out.

WILLIAM

Why?

Sensitive subject. Dominique shrugs.

CAROL (V.O.)

They want you to feel how they feel.  
Somebody crying just hopes you've  
been there too. WILLIAM Aw. I  
thought they were cool.  
(then, off Dominique's  
blank stare)  
They're... It's breakfa- it's food.  
They're pancakes.

DOMINIQUE  
 (taking a seat)  
 Sorry... Yeah. I know.

William slides a plate of PANCAKES in front of Dominique and smiles heartily.

CAROL (V.O.)  
 Somebody laughing just wants you in  
 on the joke.

**19 INT. BATHROOM - DAY**

**19**

Dominique's fractured reflection in the shattered mirror -- as we SMASH CUT to the insert of the diner, Carol's words become Dominique's --

CAROL (V.O.)  
 And somebody broken and screaming --

INSERT CUT: Darnell berating Dominique at the diner.

DOMINIQUE (V.O.)  
 -- Just wants you to listen...

Now Dominique wiggles his body into the cabinet under the sink -- popping off the P-Trap -- tapping it against his palm, and letting the earrings tumble out into his hand...

And he's cleaning them now -- sliding them back into his ears -- watching streaks of his reflection in the BROKEN, TAPED-UP MIRROR -- taking the mirror off the wall --

INSERT CUT: Carol embracing Dominique in his bedroom.

CAROL  
 Only hurt people hurt people, baby.

And hanging a NEW MIRROR on the wall. Finally, staring proudly at his in-tact reflection.

**20 INT. BEDROOM - DAY**

**20**

Dominique's HOMECOMING SUIT, hanging pressed on the closet door... The jumbled, UNTIED TIE draped over its shoulder...

**21 EXT. DRIVEWAY - DAY**

**21**

WILLIAM under the hood of the CLASSIC CAR -- leaning waist-deep into the engine --

DOMINIQUE

Hey.

INSERT CUT: William awake in bed. Tears filling his eyes. Carol asleep, TV light strobing against their faces.

WILLIAM

(doesn't look up)

What's up?

DOMINIQUE

Sorry. I'll come back when (you're not busy-)

William pulls himself from the car. Wiping oil from his hands. Just noticing the tie Dominique's holding.

WILLIAM

(over)

I'm not busy.

DOMINIQUE

You look busy.

WILLIAM

You look important. And what do when do when something's important?

DOMINIQUE

We make time.

WILLIAM

That's right.

DOMINIQUE

All day-

DOMINIQUE (CONT'D) WILLIAM Every day. Every day, kid.

A beat. Dominique smiles. And then he asks:

DOMINIQUE (CONT'D)

Do you know how to tie a tie?

WILLIAM

I do.

But that's it. William stands there, saying nothing else. Dominique looks around the garage -- is he really going to make him spell it out?

DOMINIQUE

Can you- could you tie this for me?

WILLIAM

Not a chance. You'll do it yourself.

Dominique nods -- figures. And he's headed for the house.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Hey, no -- no, no, no --

(then)

I mean. My dad taught me. It's my  
turn to teach you.

Dominique smiles. As they head for the house, William throws his arm over Dominique's shoulder. After a few steps, he playfully crosses his leg over and kicks him in the ass.

Dominique just laughs. And playfully kicks him back.

**22 INT. BEDROOM - DAY**

**22**

William behind Dominique, draping a tie over Dominique's shoulders. Adjusting the length. Beginning to tie it as...

**23 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

**23**

One by one, Dominique's friends arrive. DATE #1 enters, tossing Carol a polite smile.

Eric comes through the front door with his RED FEDORA, MATCHING TIE, MATCHING CANE and MATCHING DATE in tow who just so happens to be...

Becky. Sauntering in. Striking a pose -- Carol snapping their photo as --

INSERT CUT: William guiding Dominique's hands. Crossing each section of the tie. Looping it around and pulling it through.

**24 INT. BATHROOM - DAY**

**24**

Dominique in the mirror. The perfect knot. William glows, leaving him with a pat on the back.

**25 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY**

**25**

DATE #2 enters with Justin. Dominique comes down the stairs smiling -- all handshakes and hugs and selfies and --

BECKY

Okay, just lose the cane and the hat. Just for the pictures.

ERIC  
Baby, no. It's fun. We're having fun. We look good.

BECKY  
I look good. You look goofy.

CAROL  
Okay, Eric! Look at you. I wasn't ready for you to come in here hurtin' 'em like that!

Eric's eyes ignite at the compliment. As he spins to Carol, his gaze pauses at Becky to tell her "I told you so" --

ERIC  
You just want me to jailbreak your phone again, don't you?

Carol just laughs.

CAROL  
Stop it. You look good.  
(to Becky)  
He looks good.

BECKY  
Thank you, Mrs. Green.  
(to Eric)  
Don't say it.

ERIC  
I'm not.

BECKY  
You better-

ERIC  
I'm not.

CAROL  
Alright, everyone -- get with your dates... Come on... Your boutonnières... Corsages, ladies -- all that... Come on...

Date #1 pins a BOUTONNIERE onto Date #2. Becky pins one onto Eric.

ERIC  
I look good- OW!

BECKY  
Sorry, baby, did I stab you?

Dominique doesn't move as his boutonniere is affixed, then --

CAROL  
Yes. Yes. Yes. We ready?

She takes Eric's cane.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
Just for the pictures.

Eric's jaw drops. He looks at Becky. She smiles, knowing she's won, looking straight ahead.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
One... Two --

But "three" never comes. Something has given Carol pause. She tilts her head. Lowers her camera involuntarily.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
Dominique, baby. Where's your date?

William clears his throat, gesturing to Carol through gritted teeth as if to say, "Please. Shut. Up. Take the picture."

Carol looks over the couples once more, finding everyone paired up: Date #1 with Date #2. Becky with Eric. And Dominique-

With Justin.

Silence. Pressure drop. Carol freezes. She had no idea this was coming. Neither did William, but he's grinning ear to ear -- a rock -- a proud rock -- a father -- taking the news in stride -- actually saying it this time:

WILLIAM  
Carol. Honey. Take the picture.

Carol snaps out of it. Laughing it off -- pushing through --

CAROL  
One... Two... Three...

SNAP! FREEZE FRAME: The six of them, three happy couples.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
Okay, okay... Let's do just the couples... one by one...

WILLIAM  
Wait. Let me get one with my son.

William scurries over to Dominique, all smiles, throwing his arm around him as Justin hurries out of the shot.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
Where you going?  
(Justin stops)  
Let's go. You're in here too.

Justin marches back. William wraps his arms around both of them -- he's beaming and -- SNAP!

FREEZE FRAME: Dominique, William, and Justin.

**26 EXT. HOUSE - DAY**

**26**

The couples climbing into WILLIAM'S CLASSIC CAR. William and Carol, arm in arm, seeing them off from the porch.

CAROL  
Be safe! Make good choices!

DOMINIQUE  
Yeah, mom, we know. Be cool.

The car drives off. As Carol and William watch them go --

CAROL  
Did you know he (was dating a boy)--

WILLIAM  
(over)  
Nope.

CAROL  
Did it... Are you sur(prised?)

WILLIAM  
(over)  
Yep.

CAROL  
And you're- you're okay with it?

WILLIAM  
With what? Young love? Sure. Of course I'm okay with it.

He pulls her a little closer. She smiles a little brighter.

**27 INT. CAR - DAY**

**27**

Dominique: driving. Justin: shotgun.

JUSTIN  
Thought you couldn't tie it.

DOMINIQUE  
Yeah, well- now I can.

JUSTIN  
Nice. Me too. My dad showed me.

DOMINIQUE  
Yeah, mine too.

Justin's hand brushes the back of Dominique's -- their fingers coming together as they drive on and we --

PULL BACK...

Back out of the window of the car... Back above the houses... drifting high above our blue-collar mill town... Back into the tree line... Back through the endless rolling hills...

FADE OUT.