

Taking It Slow

by  
Adam Dachis

First Draft

Unrevised copy

Adam Dachis  
8 Museum Way, #412, Cambridge MA 02141  
617-500-0315

EXT. NEWHOUSE HOUSEHOLD - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A quaint home in a neighborhood of other quaint homes, complete with painted wood fences, sidewalk and driveways but just enough trash on the street to feel the city nearby.

INT. NEWHOUSE HOUSEHOLD - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THELLIA Newhouse (49), busily dressed with frizzled hair, paces with an open book in front of classic wooden furniture. A short-haired young man, tall, and thinly framed, looks up at his mother, listening intently. A pencil rests delicately on his large ear. This is ELLIOT Newhouse (17). He appears to have been dressed by his mother.

THELLIA

...and so the brave Mr. Booth sacrificed his life for President Lincoln so President Lincoln could run off with his gay lover and live a peaceful life.

ELLIOT

That sounds a lot like World War II, Ma.

THELLIA

How do you figure?

ELLIOT

Well, it was almost the same thing with Hitler.

THELLIA

That's right, but Hitler was--

ELLIOT

Hitler was evil, I know.

THELLIA

History demonstrates that there are two ways to be gay.

ELLIOT

I know, Ma.

THELLIA

I can't say it enough. I don't want you to turn out to be one of the evil gays.

ELLIOT

Ma, for the last time, I'm not gay.

THELLIA

Then what are you keepin' in that shoebox, huh? What are you so afraid to show your mother?

ELLIOT

It's nothing, Ma, I swear. I just want some privacy. That's all President Lincoln wanted.

THELLIA

Yes, I supposed you're right.

Elliot fiddles with his hands a bit.

ELLIOT

Ma, do you think, maybe, we could go out today?

THELLIA

Did you finish your arithmetic?

ELLIOT

I only have two problems left.

THELLIA

Well if you can finish it up right quick you can come to the grocery store with me.

ELLIOT

Yeah, I just have some algebra left.

THELLIA

Okay, you get that done and I'll take you with, but I am not buying you chili.

ELLIOT

Aw, Ma.

THELLIA

Listen Elliot, we've had this discussion already.

ELLIOT

Fine.

Elliot pouts and pulls out a notebook wedged in the seat cushion beneath him and grabs the pencil on his ear as Thellia heads through the doorway and into the kitchen.

INSERT: ELLIOT'S NOTEBOOK

A number of calculus problems are solved incorrectly. There are two left. Elliot begins to solve it quickly, subtracting where he should add, multiplying where she should divide, and vice-versa.

BACK TO SCENE.

Elliot continues to "solve" the problems furiously as Thellia walks in, dangling the car keys by a limp wrist at the side of her head.

THELLIA  
You about ready?

ELLIOT  
Ma, that was like two seconds, hold on.

THELLIA  
If you want to go out, you have 30 seconds.

INSERT: ELLIOT'S NOTEBOOK

Elliot quickly solves the final problem perfectly wrong, doing all of his math backwards.

BACK TO SCENE.

Elliot slams the pencil down on the notebook and looks up.

ELLIOT  
Done!

THELLIA  
That's my boy. Let's go.

Elliot quickly stuff the notebook back between the seat's edge and the seat cushion, letting his pencil fall on the floor. He walks over to Thellia, ignoring it.

THELLIA (CONT'D)  
Elliot, we're going out. You ought to look dignified.

Elliot rolls his eyes and heads back for the pencil.

INT. CAR - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Elliot sits upright with his hands in his lap as he and Thellia listen to an old 1920s instrumental recording. Thellia HUMS along with it.

Every few seconds, Elliot begins to make eye contact with his mother but quickly shifts back to looking straight out the window.

THELLIA

Are you watching for cats, Elliot?

ELLIOT

Yes, Ma.

THELLIA

I ran over a tabby last weekend.  
Could've used your eyes.

ELLIOT

I'm sorry, Ma.

THELLIA

Don't be sorry. You were home  
studying like a good boy, and that  
cat knows it. Learning's the most  
important thing in the whole wide  
world.

ELLIOT

I know, Ma. Actually...

THELLIA

What, actually?

ELLIOT

Actually, I was thinking.

THELLIA

That's good, thinking's good.

ELLIOT

I was thinking that, uhm, maybe if,  
well, if I went to school with...

THELLIA

You go to school. You go to school  
in your living room. That's why  
you're so much smarter than  
everyone else.

ELLIOT

But I've never met anyone else.

THELLIA

And it's for the best. This is a  
cruel world, we live in.

ELLIOT

But Ma, I've hardly seen it. I want to know what else is out there.

THELLIA

I'll think about it.

ELLIOT

You always say that.

THELLIA

I have a lot of thinking to do.

ELLIOT

No kidding.

THELLIA

Watch your mouth, young man.

ELLIOT

Sorry.

Elliot looks down.

Suddenly there's the car jumps up and there's a THUMP. A cat SCREAMS.

THELLIA

Darn it, Elliot!

INT. CAR - STILL - GROCERY STORE PARKING LOT - LATER

Thellia removes the keys from the car and begins to exit while Elliot pouts in the passenger's seat, still buckled in.

THELLIA

Now you don't move a foot, you hear? You sit here and think about that poor cat.

Elliot nods slightly, trying not to shake the few tears that have escaped from their scarce ledge of an eyelid.

Thelia exits and Elliot waits until his mother is out of site. He quickly turns the hand crank to roll down the window to look around.

A few HIGH SCHOOL KIDS walk by. One is DAVEY JONES (17), football star. Another is his cheerleader girlfriend, MARY BETH SUEPARKINS (14). Last is their really Jewish friend, SHMULI KETUBAH (17).

MARY BETH  
Hey, isn't that the weird kid?

DAVEY  
I think so.

SHMULI  
I heard his mother's meshugine.

MARY BETH  
Oh Shmuli!

Elliot notices the kids from the car window and waves.

ELLIOT  
Hi! I'm Elliot!

MARY BETH  
Oh my god, he's talking to us.  
What do we do?

SHMULI  
Stop utzing me, I'm not a machine!

DAVEY  
Let's bark at him.

Davey and Mary Beth begin to BARK. Shmuli just shakes his head.

Elliot smiles.

ELLIOT  
That's the sound a woof makes!

Davey and Mary Beth stop in awe.

SHMULI  
That poor shlemazl.

MARY BETH  
Shmuli, what are you talking about?

SHMULI (TO DAVEY)  
Oy, she doesn't understand me.  
Some girl you have, David.

DAVEY  
Give her a break, she's still in junior high.

INT. GROCERY STORE

Thellia shops around in the canned goods section and notices the chili. She picks it up.

THELLIA

Feh.

GLADYS Bergman (54), a colorful woman, approaches from down the aisle. She waves as she waddles.

GLADYS

Thellia, is that you?

Thellia shoves the can back in the wall and grabs the shopping cart firmly.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Thellia?

Thellia makes a barrier between herself and Gladys with the cart.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Thellia, it's me, Gladys! Gladys Bergman. Did you go deaf? How's your boy? How old is he now? I bet he's handsome. You know, I'm lonely these days.

THELLIA

Hi Gladys.

GLADYS

Thellia, how are you?

THELLIA

Mighty fine. I'm in a bit of a hurry, though.

GLADYS

Why's that?

THELLIA

I left something in the car. I don't want it to overheat.

GLADYS

It wouldn't be your Elliot, would it? I don't think he could get any hotter.

THELLIA

I have to be going. Please excuse me.

GLADYS

Oh, you're always teachin' him!  
Let me for a change!

EXT. GROCERY STORE - PARKING LOT

Davey slides his butt up to the window. Elliot observes.

ELLIOT

I don't see anything but fabric.

DAVEY (O.C.)

Look closer.

ELLIOT

What am I looking for?

Davey FARTS. Elliot flinches a little.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Hold on, I think something came out.

Elliot grabs a pair of scissors from inside the car and sticks them in Davey's butt.

Davey jumps and slams his head into the car in front of him.

DAVEY

Dude, what the hell?!

ELLIOT

Something came out, I was trying to put it back.

Mary Beth GIGGLES.

DAVEY

What the hell is wrong with you?

Meanwhile, Thellia hurries out of the grocery store with a number of bags on each arm.

ELLIOT

Nothing?

MARY BETH

Come on Davey, let's just go.

DAVEY  
No! This kid just stuck a pair of  
scissors up my ass!

Davey stands up and the scissors are sticking out.

SHMULI  
Azoy geit es!

MARY BETH  
I think it's sexy.

DAVEY  
You think that freak is sexy?!

MARY BETH  
No, baby, you are. You're so  
adventurous.

DAVEY  
(smiles)  
Oh yeah?

MARY BETH  
Oh yeah.

Davey and Mary Beth start making out in front of the car.  
Thellia approaches and begins to smack them with the grocery  
bag.

THELLIA  
You get away from my car you  
delinquents!

ELLIOT  
But, Ma!

THELLIA  
No buts!

DAVEY  
Yeah, really.

INT. NEWHOUSE HOUSEHOLD - ELLIOT'S ROOM - LATER

Thellia stands livid in the doorway.

Elliot sulks on the bed.

THELLIA  
This is why you can't go to school!  
Do you understand now?! These kids  
will make fun of you!

ELLIOT

It's because they don't know me!  
If they knew me, I bet they'd like  
me...

THELLIA

That's not how the world works.

ELLIOT

Well maybe I'd know if I could see  
it for once!

THELLIA

One day you'll see that everything  
I do is for your own good.

ELLIOT

I think you mean *your* own good.

THELLIA

(matter of fact)  
Isn't that what I said?

ELLIOT

Yes, but I meant you're doing it  
for yourself and not me. Coming  
from me, "your" is indicative of  
you and not me, just as it was  
indicative of me and not you when  
you said "your".

THELLIA

What?

ELLIOT

Nevermind!

Thellia GRUNTS and SLAMS the door shut.

Elliot puts his head in his hands and slides off his bed on  
to the ground.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

She doesn't understand me...

Elliot looks over at a hole in the wall five inches in  
circumference. He waits a moment.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Hello? Are you there?

GLADYS (O.S.)

Hold on a minute.

ELLIOT  
Okay. Do, you need some help,  
Magic Fingers?

GLADYS (O.S.)  
Nah, I'm all right darling.

ELLIOT  
I'm really upset about Ma.

Suddenly, three of Gladys' fingers poke through the hole in the wall and wiggle.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
Oh, there you are!

GLADYS (O.S.)  
Yep, there I am. You ought to be  
more patient.

ELLIOT  
But you're the only one who  
listens.

GLADYS (O.S.)  
I'd like to do a lot more than  
listen, but I think you're too big  
for this hole.

Elliot GIGGLES.

ELLIOT  
Well of course I am! Only a mouse  
could fit through that hole.

GLADYS (O.S.)  
Elliot, there comes a time in a  
young man's life when he needs to  
stop being a minor and start being  
legal.

ELLIOT  
I don't understand.

GLADYS (O.S.)  
The legal age of consent in this  
state is seventeen. You have to  
stop being...

ELLIOT  
Ten.

GLADYS (O.S.)  
Ten, and start being seventeen.

ELLIOT

But how am I going to do that?

GLADYS (O.S.)

I have a secret to tell you,  
Elliot. You really are seventeen.

ELLIOT

What?

GLADYS (O.S.)

Your mother's been lying to you.

ELLIOT

Why would she lie, Magic Fingers?

GLADYS (O.S.)

She's trying to keep you here. You  
need to go to school so everyone  
knows how old you really are.

ELLIOT

But how?

GLADYS

With magic. Just sneak out  
tomorrow at 6:00am and catch the  
school bus on 23rd and Oakwood  
Lane.

ELLIOT

Where's that?

GLADYS

Jesus, do I have to freakin' spell  
it out for you, Elliot?! Look it  
up on MapQuest.

ELLIOT

Sorry.

GLADYS

Get on the bus and I'll take care  
of the rest. Just ask the nice old  
lady at the office for directions  
to your first class.

INT. HAYWOOD HIGH - FRONT OFFICE

Gladys sits behind the front desk at the office, tapping her  
"magic fingers" lightly across its Formica countertop as she  
reads the paper.

GLADYS

What?

Gladys puts her paper down and smiles as she sees Elliot's timid face. He has his dignified pencil on one ear and is carrying a plastic grocery bag full of supplies, including his favorite notebook from the seat cushion.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Oh, hello there! What can I do for you?

ELLIOT

You sound familiar.

GLADYS

Elizabeth Taylor, right?

ELLIOT

Elizabeth who?

GLADYS

Nevermind. How can I help you young man?

ELLIOT

I don't know where to go.

GLADYS

Is today your first day?

ELLIOT

It sure is.

GLADYS

Well let me get you your schedule, then.

ELLIOT

Okay.

GLADYS

How old are you?

ELLIOT

Um..te...I'm seventeen.

GLADYS

Really? Well you must be a senior.

Gladys pulls a piece of paper from the desk and hands it to Elliot.

GLADYS (CONT'D)  
Here you are then.

ELLIOT  
Neat!

Gladys hops off her stool and comes up behind Elliot. She leans around him and points to a room number on the sheet.

GLADYS  
You just go in the door with that number on it. If you see a one, that's the first floor. If you see a two, that's the second floor, okay?

ELLIOT  
Okay.

Gladys pats Elliot on the butt.

GLADYS  
Off you go!

INT. HAYWOOD HIGH - FIRST FLOOR - HALLWAY

Elliot wanders the hall, STUDENTS ignoring him as he passes by.

STUDENT 1  
Who *isn't* the new kid?

STUDENT 2  
Oh my god, that's, like, so profound.

STUDENT 1  
You suck.

STUDENT 2  
I hate you.

STUDENT 1  
Yeah, but, like, not for real.

STUDENT 2  
Please. I totally hate you for real reasons like you're an idiot and you suck.

They LAUGH.

Elliot checks the door on his right and then enters.

INT. HAYWOOD HIGH - FIRST FLOOR - ENGLISH CLASS

A forty-year-old professor, MR. LARSIE, stands statuesque as breathes in the literary art of some novel writer.

The class filters in.

ELLIOT  
Is this English?

Mr. Larsie looks down on Elliot.

MR. LARSIE  
You must be new.

INT. HAYWOOD HIGH - FIRST FLOOR - ENGLISH CLASS - LATER

Mr. Larsie sits at his desk.

MR. LARSIE  
I have to leave early for football practice.

KYLE, a football jock, raises his hand.

MR. LARSIE (CONT'D)  
Yes, Kyle.

KYLE  
The outdoors beckon with limitless exuberance as I frolic to the field to wrestle with my masculine, virile team mates and later, with little care or planning, toss a nerd into a potted plant for seeming gay.

MR. LARSIE  
Very provocative Kyle. Next, "I have to go to the bathroom. No, I really have to go to the bathroom. It's number two."

TOBY, a nerd with a bruised face slowly raises his hand, looking to Kyle for approval.

MR. LARSIE (CONT'D)  
Yes, Toby.

TOBY  
(nervous)  
I have to make brown. No, really, I have to make brown real bad.

MR. LARSIE

That's not very creative, Toby.  
You fail.

TOBY

Okay.

MR. LARSIE

Would anyone else like to try?

LUCY, a pretty girl with culturally significant black-framed glasses raises her hand. Elliot stares back at her from his seat up front.

MR. LARSIE (CONT'D)

Anyone else?

SHARIF raises his hand.

MR. LARSIE (CONT'D)

Yes, Sharif.

SHARIF

I have to make mahogany. Actually,  
since it's the winter, it's more of  
an oak.

MR. LARSIE

Fine, Lucy, show us how it's done.

Lucy smiles. Elliot notices. Their eyes meet. Her words are like song.

LUCY

As I stared into his eyes it  
reminded me of the beauty in his  
digestive tract and the day we  
spent in the school bathroom,  
against all odds, appreciating even  
the worst of each other as if it  
were the best.

INT. HAYWOOD HIGH - FIRST FLOOR - HALLWAY - LATER

Elliot waits as Lucy exits.

ELLIOT

Hi.

LUCY

Hi.

She keeps walking. Elliot follows.

ELLIOT  
I thought what you said in class  
today was...umm...

He stares at the two students he saw in the hall earlier.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
...like, really profound.

LUCY  
Yeah?

ELLIOT  
Yeah.

LUCY  
I've heard about you, all holed up  
at home your whole life.

ELLIOT  
Holed up?

LUCY  
Yeah. What's your next class?

ELLIOT  
Math. With Mrs. Culinus.

LUCY  
Me too. I'll show you where it is.

INT. HAYWOOD HIGH - THIRD FLOOR - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Lucy is about to enter when she stands in front of the  
doorway, blocking Elliot.

LUCY  
There's one thing you should know.  
There are some nasty people in this  
class.

Elliot looks behind her and sees Mary Beth, Davey, and  
Shmuli.

ELLIOT  
Hey, but my friends are here too!  
Hi guys!

Mary Beth giggles.

MARY BETH  
Hi Elliot.

Davey BARKS.

SHMULI

Oy vey.

They enter the classroom.

INT. HAYWOOD HIGH - FIRST FLOOR - MATH CLASS

Lucy crosses her arms.

LUCY

Those are your friends?

ELLIOT

Yeah, I met them at the super market.

LUCY

Elliot, these guys are not your friends.

MARY BETH

Don't be so rude, Juicy Lucy. We accept all kinds of people--even retards.

LUCY

He's not a retard.

ELLIOT

What's a retard?

MARY BETH

Oh you know. Like Bruno.

LUCY

Who is Bruno?

MARY BETH

Never mind. Just don't play with him.

DAVEY

Enough, guys. We can deal with this later. This is math class, it's time to get serious.

The beautiful MRS. Elizabeth CULINUS, a ripely curvaceous and German-accented math teacher slaps her ruler against the board.

MRS. CULINUS

Thank you Davey. Now, kidlets, we shall start. What is two plus two?

DAVEY

Four!

MRS. CULINUS

That is only a problem if you are playing golf. Ha ha. Now we work. Who can make algebra work? New child, your name.

Elliot gulps.

ELLIOT

Elliot, m'am.

MRS. CULINUS

Do I look like like I have two Ms and an A in my name? I am Culinus, boy. Commit this to memory. Then do math.

ELLIOT

Okay.

MRS. CULINUS

Come now.

Elliot stands up and heads to the board. Mrs. Culinus hands off the chalk and pats him on the butt.

Elliot begins to work the math problem and does so very quickly. Of course, he answers the equation with the brand of math he learned from his mother.

MRS. CULINUS (CONT'D)

Interesting, but wrong! Sit!

ELLIOT

No, I'm sure that's the right answer.

MRS. CULINUS

I am sure it is not the right answer.

ELLIOT

I checked it in my head. It is correct.

MRS. CULINUS

No you are wrong. Sit down.

ELLIOT  
I am not wrong!

Mrs. Culinus cringes and crosses her arms.

MRS. CULINUS  
Young man, send yourself to the  
principal's office at once!

ELLIOT  
What's that?

MRS. CULINUS  
Oh my, it's worse than I thought...

INT. HAYWOOD HIGH - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Mrs. Culinus paces around the room while the principal,  
DAYMOND Edwards and Elliot sit, looking up at her.

MRS. CULINUS  
He's a special boy, Daymond.

ELLIOT  
Thank you.

MRS. CULINUS  
That was not a compliment.

ELLIOT  
But my mother says that.

MRS. CULINUS  
Your mother means it in a different  
way.  
(turns to Daymond)  
Do you see what I'm talking about?  
He doesn't know his head from  
his...you know!

ELLIOT  
I don't know.

MRS. CULINUS  
It's very frustrating.

DAYMOND  
What are you suggesting, Elizabeth?

ELLIOT  
Why do you call each other by first  
names but I can't?

Mrs. Culinus groans.

MRS. CULINUS  
He's retarded. What do you think?

ELLIOT  
Retarded?