

OLD SCHOOL

A lazy teenager gets schooled on the old ways of life when his Great Grandfather takes him on a special journey.

FADE IN:

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Rap music blares from behind a door. CONNIE MORGAN (35), beautiful black woman, scowls as she walks up the stairs.

She knocks on the door, seconds later it opens. In the doorway stands a defiant DESHAWN MORGAN (15). His baggy jeans hang so low it's a mystery how they stay up.

CONNIE

Why you got that music so loud
Deshawn? I told you Great Grand
Pops isn't feeling well.

DESHAWN

I don't see what the big deal is.
He can't hear nothin' anyway.

He goes to shut the door, she slides her foot in to stop it.

CONNIE

Maybe you could pay him a visit?

She ignores his dramatic exhale and opens the door.

INT. GREAT GRAND POP'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

In bed propped up by pillows, WILLIE MORGAN (95), smiles as he listens to old jazz music that plays from a radio.

He doesn't hear a knock on the door but hears the creak as it opens. Deshawn enters. Willie scans his appearance, scowls.

WILLIE

Pull up your trousers boy.

Deshawn's shoulders slouch as he obeys. Willie points to a chair. Deshawn sits, forces a smile.

DESHAWN

So how you feelin' Pops?

WILLIE

I feel ninety five so, bad. You
got a job yet? And why I don't
hear you play the trumpet no more?

DESHAWN

I practice at school twice a week.
And I'm only fifteen. I don't need
a job yet.

WILLIE

I had five jobs when I was your
age. And you ain't never gonna be
great only playing twice a week.

(MORE)

WILLIE (CONT'D)
 You gotta work hard. Play all the
 time. Like these boys.

Willie nods toward the radio. Deshawn shrugs him off.

DESHAWN
 I'm pretty good. Anyway, I'm not
 into that old school stuff.

Wounded, Willie's eyes drift to a framed photo of himself in
 his late teens, trumpet in hand, beautiful girl on his arm.

WILLIE
 You hear that Rose? Old school.
 Or maybe just, old fool.

Remorseful, Deshawn opens his mouth to say something but
 Willie turns his head and closes his eyes.

Deshawn quietly gets up and shuts off the light.

INT. DESHAWN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Under the covers, Deshawn moves restlessly in his sleep.

MALE VOICE (V.O.)
 Hey kid. Wake up! Kid!

EXT. SIDEWALK - HARLEM, NEW YORK - DUSK - 1930'S

Flat on his back Deshawn's eyes flutter open. He squints,
 tries to focus. Standing over him is Willie Morgan (15ish).

YOUNG WILLIE
 You alright kid?

Willie helps him up, sits him on a bench next to a MAN
 reading a newspaper, feet propped on a stained wooden box.

Eyes wide in disbelief, Deshawn stares at the building before
 him, the COTTON CLUB. With amazement he takes in his
 surroundings: the fashion, the transportation. . .

YOUNG WILLIE (CONT'D)
 Ain't from the city, are ya boy?

Deshawn studies Willie's face.

DESHAWN
 I. . .ah. . .are you. . .Willie?

YOUNG WILLIE
 Yeah. How you know? Oh yeah. You
 must be the new dishwasher.

Willie finishes buffing the Man's shoes, opens the box and
 places the rag and polish next to a beat up trumpet.

The Man inspects his work, tosses Willie a coin then leaves.

YOUNG WILLIE (CONT'D)
Well let's go. Lots of work to do.

Deshawn follows Willie down the busy sidewalk. They turn the corner and head down an alley.

The sound of jazz music gets louder as they approach the back entrance of the Cotton Club.

INT. KITCHEN - COTTON CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

Willie puts down his shoe shine box then grabs a dirty apron. Deshawn stands frozen. Willie shoots him a frustrated look.

YOUNG WILLIE
You here to work? Get an apron on!

Deshawn quickly reaches for an apron and puts it on.

INT. KITCHEN - COTTON CLUB - NIGHT

At the sinks, Deshawn scrubs dishes. He looks defeated as Willie enters with another full bus pan of dirty glasses.

YOUNG WILLIE
(laughs)
The night's just started my friend.

DESHAWN
What time do we stop?

YOUNG WILLIE
We stop when they tell us to stop.

DESHAWN
How many jobs you got Willie?

Annoyed, Willie opens kitchen door, music blares.

YOUNG WILLIE
I got two. Now get back to work
before you have zero.

Willie leaves. Deshawn resumes his work.

DESHAWN
(mumbles)
I knew he didn't have no five jobs.

INT. COTTON CLUB - LATER

A band of all black musicians plays, people dance and drink.

The song ends and the band leader DUKE ELLINGTON (30), steps forward. The crowd applauds. He scans the room.

DUKE ELLINGTON
Hey Big John! Bring up the kid!

Across the smoke filled room stands BIG JOHN (30's). He waves, heads to the kitchen door and pokes his head in.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Steam rises from the hot water where the boys are busy doing dishes. They turn around when the door opens.

BIG JOHN
Hey, kid. Duke is asking for ya.

Excited, Willie rips off his apron, grabs his shine box and follows Big John out the door.

Not sure what to do, Deshawn slightly opens the kitchen door and watches as Willie jumps on stage.

DUKE ELLINGTON
Our next song features Young Willie Morgan! We call him Butterfly.

The crowd claps as Duke cues the band. Willie puts the trumpet to his lips.

Deshawn closes the door, looks around and grabs a bus pan.

INT. COTTON CLUB - CONTINUOUS

Bus pan in tow, Deshawn watches Willie play as he goes from table to table collecting dirty glasses.

Willie begins his solo, Deshawn stands mesmerized. A TALL BLACK MAN standing next to him yells out.

TALL BLACK MAN
Play it Butterfly!

DESHAWN
Why they call him butterfly?!

The man looks at Deshawn, places his glass in the bus pan.

TALL BLACK MAN
Cus his sound is as gentle as butterfly wings. Can you hear it?

Deshawn listens. Willie has amazing style and the crowd loves him.

Suddenly the trumpet wails and holds a long, high pitched note.

INT. DESHAWN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The high pitched wail of a siren wakes Deshawn. A few seconds later there is a commotion downstairs.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS - MOMENTS LATER

Deshawn stands on the steps, watches as paramedics rush in. He looks over to his Mother who cries at Willie's door.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Jazz music plays mixing with the murmur of conversation as PEOPLE dressed in black mingle.

Connie approaches a solemn Deshawn who sits alone.

CONNIE
This is a celebration of Pop's
life. Why you just sitting here?

Deshawn shrugs. No response.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
He didn't have much but he left you
something. It's on the porch.

EXT. FRONT PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Deshawn's eyes widen when he spots Willie's shoe shine box.

He opens it carefully, inside is polish, dirty rags and a beat up trumpet. Connie stands behind him.

CONNIE
It'll be nice to have an extra.
That looks pretty beat up though.

DESHAWN
I've seen this before.

CONNIE
Not sure how. It's been up in
Great Aunt Mae's attic forever.

He carefully removes it, cleans the mouth piece with his shirt. Connie smiles and walks back in the house.

DESHAWN
I dedicate this old school number
to Butterfly Willie Morgan.

As he brings the trumpet to his lips a butterfly lands on the porch rail.

FADE OUT.