

Just Like Him

by

22\_DE03\_W17

An angry school custodian finds  
restoration in helping others.

FADE IN

EXT. CITY SKYLINE - AFTERNOON

Final school bell RINGS.

EXT. INNER CITY PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL - THURSDAY AFTERNOON

INT. HALLWAY - AFTER SCHOOL

Students stop at lockers or walk down the hallway to the bus loading area. The hallway clears quickly.

REGGIE JOHNSON, 58, African American school custodian, SWEEPS trash in hallway near the school's CLUB BULLETIN BOARD. A flyer for FRIDAY CLUB hangs with flyers for CRAFT CLUB, ANIME CLUB, MATH CLUB, CHESS CLUB, etc.

Reggie reads the club flyers and shakes his head with disdain when he sees the Friday Club flyer, which is the school's Bible club.

EMILY TAYLOR, 12, female white student, and GRAYSON GREENE, 13, male African American student, backpacks on shoulders, round the corner and walk down the hallway, toward the bulletin board.

They STOP near bulletin board.

Grayson CARRIES a couple of dismantled CARDBOARD BOXES under his arm.

EMILY  
Coming to Friday Club tomorrow?

Grayson SHRUGS.

Emily and Grayson continue WALKING down the hall. They PASS Reggie who is still sweeping.

Reggie GLARES at Grayson and the cardboard as Grayson passes by.

REGGIE  
(meanly)  
What's that, kid?

Emily and Grayson STOP, unsure whom Reggie is addressing.

Reggie MOVES toward Grayson in a menacing way. He LOOKS between Grayson's face and the dismantled cardboard boxes under his arm.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
 (angrily)  
 I asked you a question.

Grayson LOOKS at the boxes.

GRAYSON  
 These?

REGGIE  
 Yeah!

GRAYSON  
 (surprised)  
 It's cardboard. For a project.

REGGIE  
 You stealin' it?

GRAYSON  
 No! Makin' a Globe Theater.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. REGGIE'S DINING ROOM - MORNING

The dining table is piled high with GLUE, PAINT, PAINTBRUSHES, SCISSORS, and multiple sizes of cut cardboard.

Reggie and GARRETT, 10, SIT beside each other near a WINDOW. They CREATE a cardboard model of the city skyline they see outside the window. Sunlight SHINES on the city skyline outside the window.

Reggie CUTS cardboard pieces with a BOX CUTTER and HANDS the pieces to Garrett. Garrett PAINTS some pieces and GLUES others pieces onto the model city.

Reggie WATCHES his son work, then he SMILES.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. INNER CITY PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL - THURSDAY AFTERNOON

Reggie REALIZES he has been staring at Grayson.

REGGIE

Well, go on.

Emily and Grayson WALK down the hallway toward the front doors of the school.

INT. TEACHER'S LOUNGE - FRIDAY - LUNCH TIME

Some teachers stand. Some sit. Most are trying to eat and socialize quickly before their lunch is over. MR. MCCALL, 38, an African American math teacher, sits near MS. FRANKLIN, 32, an Asian-American English teacher. They eat their lunches and talk.

MR. MCCALL

Teaching Shakespeare this year?

MS. FRANKLIN

Yeah. Trying to build some background knowledge before we start "Romeo and Juliet."

Mr. McCall and Ms. Franklin both EAT a few bites.

Reggie ENTERS lounge and TAKES his lunch from the refrigerator. He SITS at a nearby table and EATS.

MR. MCCALL

You coming to Friday Club after school?

MS. FRANKLIN

Planning to be there.

Reggie GLARES at Mr. McCall.

School bell RINGS.

MS. FRANKLIN (CONT'D)

(in her best  
Shakespearean English)

"We are time's subjects, and time bids be gone."

MR. MCCALL

Shakespeare?

Ms. Franklin NODS.

Teachers and staff members quickly THROW AWAY their trash.

Ms. Franklin and Mr. McCall EXIT the teacher's lounge.

Reggie STANDS and THROWS AWAY his trash, but he keeps his cardboard lunch container.

He then DIGS in RECYCLE BIN and PULLS OUT small pieces of cardboard. He GATHERS them in a bag and EXITS the teacher's lounge.

INT. - MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH CLASSROOM - AFTER SCHOOL FRIDAY

Upbeat WORSHIP MUSIC PLAYS. Emily, Grayson, Ms. Franklin, and fifteen to twenty other students EAT snacks and TALK in groups.

A mechanical HUM is heard outside in the hallway.

Reggie purposefully uses a FLOOR POLISHER in the empty hallway outside Mr. McCall's open classroom door.

Mr. McCall SHUTS the door to block out the noise, and then WALKS to front of the classroom.

MR. MCCALL  
(loudly)  
Welcome to Friday Club, everyone,  
let's get started.

Mr. McCall lowers the MUSIC and sits in a CHAIR in the front of the classroom.

The students SIT in DESKS near the front of the room.

Ms. Franklin STANDS in the back.

MR. MCCALL (CONT'D)  
Anyone ever had a fight?

Mr. McCall PAUSES.

MR. MCCALL (CONT'D)  
Me, too.

MR. MCCALL (CONT'D)  
Here's my life. From this morning.

Mr. McCall STANDS.

MR. MCCALL (CONT'D)  
Thought I'd be nice, so I washed a  
load of clothes. I put everything  
in there...my clothes, my wife's  
clothes, the baby's clothes, soap.

Two students SHAKE their heads in EMBARRASSMENT.

Mr. McCall REACTS.

MR. MCCALL (CONT'D)  
What?

The students LAUGH.

MR. MCCALL (CONT'D)  
Now, I know. All soap is not  
created equal!

Mr. McCall PAUSES.

MR. MCCALL (CONT'D)  
It's a funny story, but I didn't  
like feeling separated from my  
wife. I called her at lunch and  
apologized.

Mr. McCall PAUSES again.

MR. MCCALL (CONT'D)  
Anyone know what that's called?

Emily RAISES her hand.

MR. MCCALL (CONT'D)  
Emily?

EMILY  
Restoration?

A series of BANGS hits the closed classroom door. It's Reggie  
and his floor polisher intentionally HITTING the door.

Mr. McCall IGNORES the loud bangs.

MR. MCCALL  
Yeah, restoration.

EMILY  
But why doesn't it ever last?

Emily WALKS to a WINDOW in the back of the classroom and  
LOOKS OUT over the blighted inner city with its rundown,  
empty buildings.

Emily TURNS AROUND to face to Mr. McCall.

EMILY (CONT'D)  
Where's the restoration here?

Mr. McCall PICKS UP a Bible.

Emily WALKS back to her seat.

MR. MCCALL

This book answers that question.

On her way back to her desk, Emily accidentally SPILLS her SODA onto the floor.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Ms. Franklin WALKS to the door and opens it. She WAVES to Reggie. The HUM of the floor sweeper STOPS.

MS. FRANKLIN

(to Reggie)

Got any more paper towels?

Reggie WALKS down hall to a large storage closet.

Ms. Franklin FOLLOWS Reggie.

Reggie UNLOCKS the storage closet, almost closing the door behind him.

INT. JANITOR CLOSET - FRIDAY AFTERNOON

He GRABS a PACK of paper towels and a BOTTLE of cleaning spray.

A CARDBOARD MODEL of their city SITS on a table in the storage closet amongst bottles of mops, buckets, and old vacuum cleaners. Beside the model city, there's a PHOTOGRAPH of Garrett. All the city's buildings are PAINTED and VIBRANT. There are tiny colorful flowers and plants in front of the cardboard school.

Ms. Franklin GLANCES into the closet, but she cannot see much.

Reggie MOVES toward the door with cleaning supplies. He HANDS cleaning supplies to Ms. Franklin.

MS. FRANKLIN

Was that cardboard in there?

At first, Reggie IGNORES her question, then he decides to answer it.

Reggie CLOSES and LOCKS closet door.

Reggie and Ms. Franklin WALK back toward Mr. McCall's classroom.

REGGIE

Yeah.

MS. FRANKLIN

If you ever have any extra, we  
could use it.

Mr. McCall WALKS down the hall and MEETS Reggie and Ms.  
Franklin.

MR. MCCALL

We got it all cleaned up.

Grayson WALKS into hallway and SPEAKS to Mr. McCall.

GRAYSON

(In a rush)

We need more paper towels. Spilled  
my drink, too.

Reggie NOTICES Grayson.

REGGIE

C'mon, kid.

Reggie and Grayson WALK back down the hall.

Reggie UNLOCKS and OPENS the closet door. He ENTERS the  
closet and PICKS UP another pack of paper towels. He STARTS  
TO HAND the pack of paper towels to Grayson, but then he  
PAUSES.

Grayson SEES the cardboard city from the doorway. He also  
SEES stacks of cardboard on shelves and leaning against one  
of the walls. Then, Grayson NOTICES the photograph of  
Garrett.

Grayson LOOKS at Reggie, then back at the photograph. Then,  
Grayson LOOKS at the cardboard city.

GRAYSON

Is that your son?

Reggie, still HOLDING pack of paper towels, LOOKS down at the  
floor. He has finally let someone ENTER his private world.

Reggie SLOWLY NODS.

Grayson LOOKS again at cardboard city.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)

You build that?

Reggie NODS and slowly FACES Grayson.



Grayson MOVES closer to the cardboard city.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)  
Looks just like the city, but  
better.

Grayson REACHES OUT and TOUCHES various cardboard buildings,  
signs, cars, etc.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)  
You make other stuff?

Reggie PUTS DOWN the pack of paper towels and MOVES toward  
the cardboard city.

REGGIE  
Used to.

Reggie PICKS UP the photograph of Garrett. He HOLDS it next  
to Grayson. The resemblance between the two is striking.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
Man!

Grayson LOOKS at photograph.

GRAYSON  
Who's that?

Reggie HESITATES, then decides to SPEAK.

REGGIE  
My son. Garrett.

GRAYSON  
Cool.

REGGIE  
We used to, you know....

GRAYSON  
Build stuff?

Reggie's mood LIGHTENS as he REMEMBERS Garrett.

REGGIE  
We couldn't wait for trash day. All  
that stuff people get rid of.  
Bicycle wheels, remote control  
cars, wooden shelves....

Reggie is ANIMATED.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
One time, we built a skatecycle!

GRAYSON  
A what?

REGGIE  
(Excited)  
Part skateboard, part bicycle. I'll  
show you.

Reggie GRABS a PAD OF PAPER and a PENCIL from a shelf. He  
then SKETCHES a rough skatecycle.

GRAYSON  
That's cool!

GRAYSON (CONT'D)  
(Changing the subject)  
How old is he?

With that question, Reggie CLOSES DOWN again. Grief OVERCOMES  
Reggie. Tears FORM in his eyes. He PUTS DOWN the pad and  
paper.

REGGIE  
(softly)  
Was he.

Grayson TAKES his cue from Reggie and STOPS asking questions.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
(Softly)  
He'd be about your age now.

Reggie LOOKS again at the photograph and then at Grayson.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
You look just like him.

Grayson REALIZES Reggie's son is dead.

Reggie and Grayson SHARE a quiet moment of reverence as  
Reggie SHOWS Grayson the photograph of his son.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Mr. McCall POKES his head out of the door of his classroom.

MR. MCCALL  
(loudly)  
Got those paper towels?

INT. JANITOR'S CLOSET - FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Reggie PUTS DOWN the photograph and EXITS his world of memories. He RETURNS to the present world. He still HOLDS the pack of paper towels, which he HANDS to Grayson.

REGGIE  
(Gruffly)  
Go clean up that spill.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - FRIDAY AFTERNOON

Grayson EXITS the closet and WALKS down the hallway toward Mr. McCall's classroom.

Reggie ENTERS the closet again, but then he RETURNS to the hallway.

REGGIE  
Hey, kid!

Grayson TURNS AROUND.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
You finish yet?

Grayson GIVES Reggie a "What? I'm goin'" look.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
Nah, man. That globe thing.

Grayson PAUSES for a moment. He is SURPRISED Reggie would ask him about his Globe Theater project.

Grayson SHAKES his head.

Reggie MOVES slightly toward Grayson.

REGGIE (CONT'D)  
Need help?

GRAYSON  
Can't get the balcony right.

Reggie SEES the floor polisher still outside Mr. McCall's classroom. He WALKS toward it, which is also near where Grayson is standing.

Reggie UNPLUGS floor sweeper and COILS the cord around the handle.

REGGIE  
(Softly)  
I've made a balcony before.

Grayson PAUSES for a moment.

Reggie WAITS beside floor polisher.

GRAYSON  
You got Popsicle sticks?

Reggie nods.

REGGIE  
Teachers give me all their stuff.

GRAYSON  
It's due Wednesday.

REGGIE  
You work on it in class?

GRAYSON  
Yeah, in Ms. Franklin's.

Reggie MOVES the floor polisher down the hallway toward the closet.

Grayson, taking his cue from Reggie, WALKS toward Mr. McCall's door. Grayson STOPS and TURNS AROUND.

GRAYSON (CONT'D)  
Mr. Reggie?

Reggie TURNS AROUND.

REGGIE  
What?

GRAYSON  
Wanna come to Friday Club?

Reggie THINKS for a moment. He NODS a few times.

He LOOKS down at the floor polisher.

REGGIE  
Wait for me. I wanna walk in with you.

FADE OUT.