

SLUSH PILE

Written by

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FADE IN ON:

INT. MAXWELL'S ROOM - DAY

An EYE magnified through glass. Clear liquid ripples inside - distorts the view even more.

What's the eye examining? This close, who knows?

Though it's definitely not focused on what's behind them: a tiny, monkish room.

SCIENCE POSTERS clutter every wall. "Glamour" shots of Einstein, Hawking, Neil de Grasse, Michio Kaku and more.

COMPLICATED EQUATIONS cover a WHITEBOARD, too. Some circled. Others smeared or partially erased.

The eye blinks. A small hand hovers over glass. Its sprinkles beige PARTICLES onto the liquid's surface.

A chin lifts for a better view. Magnifies a MOUTH now.

MOUTH

Yum-yums, sleepy heads. Open wide!

TWO BABY TURTLES dart upwards. Gobble food, drag it down.

The mouth smiles. The finger sprinkles more particles. A pudgy finger pokes the tank's surface.

Causes "turtle chow" and water waves to merge.

MOUTH

They're the same, different angles.
Charlies, you see it, right?

An unseen door flies open. BAM!

The tanks' liquid jostles. Charlies' owner jumps!

ALEXANDRA FARADAY (30s) lingers in the doorway, mom irritation on her face. Reflected further by impatient hands on her hips.

ALEXANDRA

You've been here 4 hours straight!
You know what inactivity like that
does to growing boys?

The owner of the eye, finger and mouth - MAXWELL FARADAY (8) - fidgets. Soft and earnest, Maxwell's innocence personified - swamped in Richard Feynman shirt.

MAXWELL

(recites robotically)

'Exposure to the sun aids the human body's ability to manufacture Vitamin D. Vitamin D deficiency in children can cause dental deformities, rickets, muscle cramps and short stature.'

ALEXANDRA

Which is why you should emerge from this room this century, Maxwell. And abbreviate the science lecture for once!

Alexandra eyes the turtle tank. Excess powder swirls on top.

ALEXANDRA

Overfeeding your pets again?

MAXWELL

The Charlies were showing me waves and particles have duality. They have symmetry, too -

Alexandra crouches down eye level with the tank, near her son. The turtles skim through swirling liquid for more goodies.

ALEXANDRA

That one's got spirit. I like him best. Though it's hard to distinguish these cuties otherwise.

MAXWELL

That's Charlie 2. Can't you tell? Charlie 1's the one with dots.

ALEXANDRA

Why not give them *different* names? Maybe - call that one "Spot"?

MAXWELL

Spot's what you call dogs. The Charlies are reptiles. 1 and 2 are different names, Mom!

"Mom" ruffles Maxwell's hair. She casts an eyes around her sons' room: finds clutter everywhere. Wadded up paper with MORE equations. So proliferated you can't see the floor.

ALEXANDRA
 (mutters to herself)
 Pace yourself, Alexandra. One
 maternal battle at a time.

She takes Maxwell's arm - gently guides him towards the door.

ALEXANDRA
 Whatever species they are -

MAXWELL
 - and genus.

ALEXANDRA
 First things first. We don't want
 the Charlies getting fat. Or you
 too skinny, Mister. So let's you
 and me head for the dining room. I
 made your favorite: Mac N' Cheese.

MAXWELL
 But Mom, I gotta mail something!

ALEXANDRA
 You "gotta" eat. Come with me.

Reluctantly over-powered, Maxwell stomps out the door.

INT. MAXWELL'S KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The boy scarfs down Mac and Cheese. Alexandra looks thrilled
 he's eating *something*. But concerned he might choke.

Outside the window: CHILDREN play ball across the street.
 Focused on his meals, Maxwell doesn't care.

ALEXANDRA
 Baby, not so fast. I don't serve
 Mac n' Cheese every day. Savor the
 experience while it lasts.

MAXWELL
 (chewing, mouth full)
 I can eat Velveeta every day. It's
 not a law like Gravity. Rule's like
 that are man-made!

ALEXANDRA
 It's Mom-made, and it stays. You'll
 eat nutritiously six days a week.
 As long as you abide under my roof,
 you're duty bound to give me that!

Irritated, Maxwell grabs a cheesy shell, and drops it in his soda glass. Captivated, he watches the pasta swirl around.

MAXWELL

Everything has a position. Hmm.

ALEXANDRA

No playing with your Pepsi. From now on young man, you drink milk!

She whisks the polluted glass away. Maxwell pushes back his chair, jumps to his feet.

MAXWELL

I'm full, Mom. Are you satisfied?

ALEXANDRA

You're the stickler for words, Son. Define "satisfied" to me.

MAXWELL

I wanna go back to my room. I was in the middle of something.

Alexandra stares wistfully out the window at other children.

ALEXANDRA

Instead of entombing yourself like a Imhotep's mummy, why don't you play outside for once? With them?

MAXWELL

(frowns)

They don't like me. Just like Daddy.

ALEXANDRA

Sweetheart, don't say those things. It wasn't you.

MAXWELL

Bobby says I'm... different.

ALEXANDRA

You're different: in a special way. But that doesn't mean you and Bobby can't have fun.

Maxwell eases towards his room. Fishes for some "escape."

MAXWELL

If I'm Vitamin D deficient and play outside, I could fracture bones.

ALEXANDRA

Or - build up a better immune system and make friends. Please?

It's a Mexican standoff. One Maxwell knows he can't win.

MAXWELL

Lemme finish my letter, then I'll go?

ALEXANDRA

Fine. Five minutes, then you're out that door.

MAXWELL

Thanks, Mom!

Maxwell beams and runs.

INT. MAXWELL'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Maxwell sits cross legged on the floor - envelope, notepad and newspaper in his tiny lap.

Looking up, he checks on the Charlies. The little reptiles float languidly in their tank.

MAXWELL

You don't have a mom that bosses you around.

Scribbled EQUATIONS cover every inch of Max's notepad. Folding paper carefully, he stuffs it in the envelope. Licks it shut. Winces at the taste.

And addresses the outside:

From: Maxwell Faraday.

To: Dr. Jose Plank, Physics Dept, Sizemore Tech.

Maxwell glances at his newspaper; a local rag.

INSERT: A photo of DR. JOSE PLANK (30s). A poster of Feynman smiles behind the scientist - the same pic Maxwell has.

A meek article headline stands out: "Local Physicist explains the Double Slit Experiment to High Schoolers."

Maxwell prods the picture of Plank.

MAXWELL

Mom doesn't understand. You will.

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)
 Maxwell, get a move-on! We're past
 the five minute mark, pushing ten!

Maxwell hugs the envelope to his chest, leaps up.

MAXWELL
 Okay, Mom. Lemme mail this first.
 (to the Charlies)
 Don't get lonely. I'll be back!

QUICK MONTAGE

- Maxwell runs out. The other kids see him; turn away.
- On the porch, Alexandra sees - frowns.
- Maxwell run to a mailbox, shoves his envelope through a slot. A SOCCER BALL bounces off metal; inches from Max's head.
- Maxwell picks up the soccer ball, rotates it. Seems *terribly* fascinated with the sphere.
- Maxwell returns the ball. BOBBY (7) snatches it.

BOBBY
 Gimme that!

The kids all stick their tongues out, run away.

INT. DR. ERWIN PLANK'S OFFICE - DAYS LATER

As messy as Max's room. Equations and wadded paper here, too.

Dr. Plank scribbles even more equations in a book.

The Feynman poster watches over his shoulder. Inside a toy tank, a PLASTIC FISH bobs up and down on his desk.

Plank doesn't notice. His formulas have him engrossed.

JOSE
 If the particle wasn't random, this
might make sense!

SLAM. The door flies open. Plank (like Maxwell) jumps!

It's DR. ERWIN BOHR (50s). Based on his lab coat, he's Physics department, too. Though the suit underneath screams: Administrator! As does the sneer on his face.

Bohr tosses mail on Plank's desk; derails his colleague's train of thought.

JOSE

Hey, I was getting inspired!

ERWIN

First things first: inspire yourself with bills instead!

Jose sighs, leafs through.

JOSE

Con Ed goes to budgeting. An American Express application? For now, out of my league.

Next: Maxwell's envelope. Jose flashes it at Erwin.

JOSE

Look - I got fan mail! I think.

ERWIN

Who wrote that, a kid?

JOSE

Let's research your theory and find out.

Jose slits it open, side-eyes Erwin. Multi-Tasks.

JOSE

About group drinks tonight -

ERWIN

That invitation was for head honchos only. No offense, but you're a theoretical grunt. Elegant cuisine's... not your style.

Jose's face falls. But lights up when he sees what's inside Maxwell's "gift". He squints at the boy's equations.

JOSE

The rate of change of magnetic flux is *what*? Whoever wrote this got the "N" wrong. Wait. But if one plays with the assumption here -

ERWIN

Gimme that!

Erwin grabs Maxwell's note; reads. Jose grabs for the correspondence. Erwin scoffs, plays "keep-a-way".

ERWIN

This is insane gibberish.

JOSE

Not necessarily -

ERWIN

You getting crush letters at work?

Erwin laughs. He rips Maxwell's letter up, and scatters it across Jose's desk. Panicked, Jose lunges at the confetti. Bits fly everywhere. It's a mess.

Erwin shrugs, strides arrogantly towards the door.

ERWIN

You wanna play with jigsaw puzzles instead of work? No wonder our budget's limited. Which is fine - more cocktails at Nicky's for me!

SLAM. Erwin exits. Desperate, Jose run to the center of the room - scoops up bits of Maxwell's letter on his knees.

And tries to piece it together with Scotch Tape. Bits of formula catch his eye.

JOSE

Whoever wrote this is brilliant!
Whoever sent *this* - to me?

His eyes slip to Maxwell's envelope on the desk. The return address is still intact. Jose Stares at the bobbing "fish" on his desk - smiles.

JOSE

"Charlie", screw cocktail hour.
It's time you and I made some real friends!

EXT. MAXWELL'S HOUSE - LATER - EVENING

Maxwell walks away from Bobby and his soccer playing pals. Another social rejection - again.

Alexandra watches from the porch. Embarrassment and tears glitter in her eyes.

ALEXANDRA

Maxwell, dinner's getting cold!

A rusty KIA pulls up to the curb. Jose at the wheel. Still in his lab jacket, the scientist approaches - awkward.

JOSE
Uh, is this the Faraday residence?

ALEXANDRA
It is. What do you want?

JOSE
I'm looking for Maxwell Faraday.

Jose flashes the taped up letter at Alexandra. The parts he reassembled successfully, at least.

JOSE
Are you his wife?

ALEXANDRA
No. His mother.

Jose glances at her finger. There's no ring.

ALEXANDRA
Maxwell's dad and I are divorced.

Despite himself, Jose smiles. Maxwell reaches the porch, and lingers near his Mom.

JOSE
This is Maxwell Faraday? How old are you, seven?

MAXWELL
That was last year. Now I'm eight!

ALEXANDRA
Sir - exactly who are you?

Maxwell spots the correspondence in Jose's hand, perks up.

JOSE
Dr. Jose Plank: that's my letter!

ALEXANDRA
Dr. Plank? What business do you have with my son?

JOSE
(grins)
I think I'd like a few moments with Maxwell, if you don't mind.

MAXWELL
Mom - please?!?

Alexandra raises an eyebrow, but opens the door.

ALEXANDRA

OK, but I'm staying right beside him. And we've got a dog that bites.

The three walk inside. The door closes, but their conversation remains crystal clear.

MAXWELL

Mom, you didn't let me have a dog. That's why I have turtles now!

JOSE (O.S.)

Maxwell, I read your letter. Did you know you have a special mind?

MAXWELL (O.S.)

Mom says so. I agree.

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)

Would you like something to drink, Jose?

JOSE (O.S.)

Pepsi would be fine, Ma'am.

MAXWELL (O.S.)

You want some of my Mac and Cheese?

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)

I don't know if Dr. Plank is in the mood for dinner, Max

JOSE (O.S.)

You've got Velveeta? How'd you know? That's my fav!

Chairs scrape back from an unseen kitchen table.

JOSE (O.S.)

Maxwell, tell me what you think about Spin Dynamics and GUT theory.

ALEXANDRA (O.S.)

A science question for my son? Beware: once Maxwell starts, he never stops.

Outside, Bobby and his friends continue their soccer game.

But based on enthusiastic laughter at the Faraday residence, far more *interesting* conversation takes place inside...

FINAL FADE OUT: