

WE'RE CANCELING CABLE!
(AND OTHER EMPTY THREATS)

A COMEDY REVUE

BY
MICHAEL KAPLAN

ORIGINAL SONGS

BY
MICHAEL KAPLAN & MARK PIETRI

This revue is intended for two men and two women with a live pianist.

Set dressings can be at a minimum, with props as noted in each scene.

The order of scenes reflects the flow of the first production, and was recommended by my director, Jill Turnbow. Subsequent productions may shuffle things as they see fit.

Your Son in the Movies was reconfigured as a series of four quick videos that were played intermittently between scenes. Ryan Lloyd managed to digitally insert one of our actors into clips from all four films, and the results were hysterical. An excellent alternative to the sketch as I've written it.

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All Our Saturdays (Song)

A soft spotlight hits Tom on a dark stage.

TOM

(sings)

There's a sun breaking over the mountains
There is dew in a gentle cascade
I can smell fast and fine the aroma of pine

(beat)

And Power Berry Diet Gatorade.

The lights come on full, revealing ROSE standing near TOM on the sidelines, COLLEEN on his other side, and PHIL sitting silently in a camping chair staring straight ahead.

ROSE

That's YOUR ball, ROY! I know you WANT IT!

TOM

Defense, fellas!

COLLEEN

(almost pleadingly)

Evan, look up sweetie!

Tom turns to the audience and sings.

TOM

(sings)

All my Saturdays!
Standing on the side
All my Saturdays!
Each one occupied
All my Saturdays!
Coffee's got no kick.
All my Saturdays!
Can't we call in sick?

(glancing at Colleen)

We used to lie in bed until ten
Do you think we'll ever do it again?
Every club, every sport
Cuts our happy time short

And I have to report
 In a haze
 On my Saturdays!

COLLEEN
 Oh my god, Evan just fell down.

TOM
 They all fall down. It's no big deal.

COLLEEN
 He might think it's a big deal.

TOM
 Sweetie, he's having fun.

COLLEEN
 How can you be sure?

TOM
(momentarily stumped)
 It's a fun game. They all have fun.

She looks out at the field skeptically.

COLLEEN
(sings)
 There's a boy who is hanging his head...

TOM
(quickly interjecting)
 He's on the other team, you don't have to worry about him.

COLLEEN
(sings)
 He just kicked the ball over the line.

TOM
(interjecting again)
 "Out of bounds," totally normal.

COLLEEN
(sings)
 It's so hard to remain—I feel every kid's pain
 Especially that one kid who's mine!

All his Saturdays!
 Running like he's scared
 All his Saturdays!
 We're so unprepared
 All his Saturdays!
 He had a little cough
 All his Saturdays!
 (alarmed, pointing)
 His shin guard's coming off!

He should be home watching cartoons
 Instead of knocking knees with these goons
 We give sunscreen and water
 To each son and daughter
 Then send them to slaughter
 And pray!
 On their Saturday!
 (speaking)
 I need to take a little walk.

*As Colleen exits, Rose "crab-walks" sideways
 towards Tom, following the action on the field.*

ROSE
 ROY! NOBODY TAKES THAT BALL! NOBODY!

TOM
 Roy's doing great.

ROSE
 (proudly)
 He's got field sense, he knows where he is.

TOM
 (calling)
 Evan, look where you are!

ROSE
 Yeah, that's not going to help.
 (suddenly screaming)
 CENTER, ROY! CENTER! CENTER! CENTER!!

TOM
 (helpfully)
 Center, Evan!

ROSE

(mutters)

Yeah, that's not where he's supposed to be.

She moves back in the other direction as Colleen returns in a mild panic. And...in case you've forgotten about Phil...he continues to sit wordlessly, watching the action.

COLLEEN

Janet Arzo says Billy came out of the game because he thinks the grapes made him sick.

TOM

Oh. Wow.

(pause)

What?

COLLEEN

Did we have snack?

TOM

After snack.

COLLEEN

Then who brought the grapes?

TOM

We brought the grapes.

COLLEEN

You brought bad grapes?!

TOM

How can grapes be bad? They go right to raisins, there's no bad stage.

COLLEEN

Did you wash them?

TOM

Yes. No.

(beat)

You always tell me I do it wrong, so I left them out for you.

COLLEEN

Does anyone know? That it's us?

TOM

Snack Mom. Snack Mom knows.

COLLEEN

Are there any left?

*Tom grabs the remaining grapes from the cooler
and makes a move for...*

COLLEEN

Not the trash!

(off his look)

It means we know.

Panicked, he looks for another hiding place.

COLLEEN

Tom!

*He stuffs the bag of grapes in the pouch of his
sweatshirt. A WHISTLE blows.*

COLLEEN

Oh no, time out!

ROSE

Roy!! HYDRATE!!

(She goes marching off to the side)

COLLEEN

Where's Evan's water?

*Tom grabs the cooler and he and Colleen follow
Rose. They all exit—or FREEZE—off to the
side.*

Pause. Phil suddenly leaps to his feet.

PHIL

(sings)

I hate soccer!
I just can't take it
I hate soccer!
Why should I fake it?
The game's a giant bore
And there's never any score
But every blessed weekend they just drag me back for
more
I hate soccer!

(speaking to the audience)

I grew up with baseball. And basketball. And football.
And none of those were pointless. By that I mean: you
ACTUALLY SCORED POINTS. But now...

(sings)

There's always soccer!
It's got no season
I hate soccer!
Oh sure, it's treason.
Cause none of you confess it
You just stand there and repress it
Well someone needs to grow a pair and finally express it:
FUCK SOCCER!!

*He slumps back into his chair as another
WHISTLE blows and Tom, Rose, and Colleen
enter again.*

*Rose and Colleen are in the middle of an
argument.*

ROSE

(sings)

Your son should never ever skip a practice.

COLLEEN

(speaking)

Sometimes he doesn't want to put his shoes on.

ROSE

(sings)

It's up to you to motivate your kid.

COLLEEN

I think we need to listen to *them* a little more.

ROSE

(sings)

You pack the proper food, then you fix his attitude
To respect the game the way I always did!

COLLEEN

Oh. Did you play?

ROSE

Did I play!?

(sings – impassioned)

All those Saturdays!
Best in my High School
All those Saturdays!
Time can be so cruel
All those Saturdays!
Blisters on each heel
All those Saturdays!
Sisters on the field.

Trophies that filled up the hall
A left foot that murdered the ball
Now my boy is a threat
And he charges the net
But his teammates all get
In the way!
And RUIN my Saturday!

(speaking)

If you don't teach him to respect the game, he's not going
to respect his life.

COLLEEN

How can you make that leap?

ROSE

How can you NOT? You think boys wake up one day
and just figure out how to live?

She walks away, leaving Colleen fuming. But then...

COLLEEN

(sings to Tom)

Oh my god, our Goalie just threw up!
What if they kick Evan off the team?

TOM

(sings, reassuring her)

I'm gonna take the rap
And they'll give my wrist a slap
(to himself)
Although kicking off would kind of be a dream...

ROSE

(suddenly shrieking)

Go! GO!!

COLLEEN

Yes!

TOM

Evan, PASS IT!

COLLEEN

He passed it!

ROSE

ROY! THERE'S THE LEFT FOOT, BABY!!

The three of them are jubilant, high-fiving one another. Rose tries to high-five Phil, but ends up patting him on the head instead.

EVERYONE

(sings)

All our Saturdays!
Look at them high-five.
All our Saturdays!
God, they're so alive!
All our Saturdays!
A moment we can toast
(pulling out their phones)
All our Saturdays!
Hang on while I post.

COLLEEN

(sings)

Evan made the pass of the game.

TOM

(sings)

I finally remember why I came.

ROSE

(sings)

Watch the way that my guy's
Gonna bring home the prize

PHIL

(sings)

And then watch how my eyes
Start to glaze

EVERYONE

(sings)

All our Saturdays!

ROSE

(nattering at Colleen)

Good things happen when they practice—see?

EVERYONE

(sings)

All our Saturdays!

ROSE

I have the name of a great coach who can work with
Evan...

EVERYONE

(sings)

ALL OUR SATUR—

Before she can hand the paper to Colleen...

TOM

Here. Have a grape.

ROSE

Ooh. Thank you!

She pops it in her mouth. Colleen gives Tom a little hug as everyone sings:

EVERYONE

(sings)

ALL OUR SATURDAYS!!

Black out.

Talk To Your Kids

DAD

So look, I saw the paper you brought home from school. I guess we should have a family talk, but we can start without mommy. Why don't you ask me some questions and I'll tell the truth.

Yes. I've done drugs. What would you like to know about that?

Okay. Good question. Yes. I have tried cocaine drugs.

Well, it was the 90's. Everyone was taking cocaine drugs and making incredible amounts of money and I was no different except for the money part.

It made you feel like you could do anything. Like take this chair in your hands and rip it like a phone book. Or rip a phone book, that's not easy either. But it was mainly the mental ripping of things, I always. . . there were a few times I had to write stupid, stupid financial reports and presentations, and without cocaine drugs I would never have slam-dunked those deadlines.

Well the problem is, you'd feel dark and gloomy once it was over. Like you remember SpongeBob—after too many triple gooberberry sundaes? With his face all smushed in? That happens.

Ah. Yes. I've tried marijuana drugs.

Well, some people eat it, in a cake or a brownie. But most people smoke it. They roll it up in little cigarettes or put it in a pipe, or maybe even wear gravity boots upside down in a doorway while their roommate holds a six-foot water pipe with crème de menthe in the base and a double carburetor on the chamber. But only once you're 18.

You know how you and Jake ride your bikes on that little ramp in our backyard and you talk about how you try to get *sick air* underneath for two or three seconds? The first time I tried marijuana drugs it was like there was *sick air* between me and everything. Also orange juice tasted like a miracle.

Well, I did. I liked it very much. My top ten Fun Moments in college—some of them—there was marijuana drugs or LSD drugs or—

Ooh, that's not something that's going to come up in your program so much. It's very old school. What happens is someone sells you a very powerful little piece of paper. Like a corner of a magic paper—um, wait—just...

(His kid is clearly interrupting with questions.)

Okay...

A *dealer* is somebody you buy the drugs from. Sometimes they're nice. I had a dealer named Paine who was very nice. Sometimes they're too nice. Sometimes they want to be your friend when it's not about being friends, it's about doing the business. I mean, you trade Lego with Liam, but you're not going to build every Star Wars ship with Liam. Am I right?

The first time I tried LSD drugs for the longest while nothing happened. And then, I was standing in the quad, and I became very aware of the birds. Like there was a little tension building up between me and them. And I was afraid I was going to pop the birds, just like the princess in *Shrek*, if I kept thinking about it. So I started spinning, slowly on the grass. And suddenly I was riding on a great silver spear—not really riding, this was like a super special dream—and the spear flew over the lawn and over the dining hall and impregnated a shining, ornate shield, much like the myth of Quetzalcoatl which I was studying that semester. And I realized right then, first and most—I was glad I was over 18—and also that if I ever got married and had children I didn't want to be called dad or daddy or father—I wanted a name that would remind me of my connection to the unlimited magnificence of *all creation*. Which is why you and your sister call me Quetzal. And thank you for doing that, I know sometimes you get teased.

Well, sometimes the *can* be scary. I never got scared. But one time I started laughing because there were verbs.

I don't take drugs anymore. And, the main thing you should know: if you do it when you're young and you start doing it every day--if you start doing it every day at any point--then you'll be like a 13 year-old trapped in a grown up body for the rest of your life. You probably heard Mommy say that. But: I never did it every day. Four days a week, maybe tops.

Okay. Yeah, we can watch SpongeBob now. For sure. Let me go get a beer.

Lights fade.

First Practice

Paul has a bat and baseballs (made of foam rubber or light plastic) at his feet. Josh enters.

JOSH

Hey. You Paul?

PAUL

Yeah.

JOSH

I'm Josh Kurtie, your assistant coach.

PAUL

(shaking hands)

Great. Hi. Who's your kid?

JOSH

Corey. The big one, really burning the ball.

PAUL

Cool.

JOSH

You coached before?

PAUL

No. It was kind of an agreement. If I coached, Zachary would play.

JOSH

(nods)

Can't do it without daddy.

PAUL

No. That's not what I said.

JOSH

Kind of was. What you said.

PAUL
How about you, you coached before?

JOSH
Oh sure. I was coach last year.

PAUL
But not this year?

JOSH
Well, they asked me to take a little break.

PAUL
Who? The league?

JOSH
Yeah, whatever.

PAUL
Can I ask why?

JOSH
I don't know. Some mom got all twisted about the
batting order. And there was another guy. I don't even
remember.

(Pause)

They told me this year, just help. So here I am.

They shake hands again.

PAUL
Great. Okay. Once the boys get their arms warm—

JOSH
HUDDLE UP!

PAUL
Not yet.

JOSH
FREEZE!
(pause)
Ha! Corey! You moved! Take a lap!

PAUL

No laps.

JOSH

He needs a lap. He's an animal.

PAUL

Let's—let's just bring it in.

JOSH

HUDDLE UP!

Paul addresses the kids, as though they were standing right in front of them.

PAUL

Guys, I'm Coach Paul. This is Coach Josh. This season is gonna be about two things. Improving your game--

JOSH

And beating every team at least once.

PAUL

No.

JOSH

Mercy rule, whenever possible. You get them 11—zip, the ump calls it after 4. They get an early shower, you guys Tastee Freeze from yours truly. Take that to the bank, gentlemen.

PAUL

(quietly)

I'm the coach.

JOSH

LISTEN TO COACH!

(beat)

All yours, chief.

PAUL

Look, if we win. That's fine. It's fun to win. But that's not "the mission." Our mission is to Have Fun, and for each of you to be the best player you can—

JOSH

ZIP IT, COREY! Or it's an Alpo burrito for you, mister!

(to Paul)

All yours.

PAUL

I. I was...

JOSH

Like Coach was saying. Most of you have no natural talent. Zippo. Zippo instinct. And the only possible way you're gonna look like ballplayers and not debate geek losers is to LISTEN TO COACH!

(He claps his hands like crazy, exhorting the audience to do the same)

All yours.

PAUL

Actually, I was on the debate team.

JOSH

See? Coach was a debate geek! But he was a grinder, he fought his way out. EVERYONE DO A LAP!

PAUL

No laps.

JOSH

FREEZE!

(pause)

HA! Zachary, do a LAP!

PAUL

NO laps.

JOSH

Daddy says never mind. All better.

PAUL

Okay, we're gonna do an infield drill. Tyler, Smitty take third. Corey, Jordan, over to shortstop.

JOSH

YOU HUSTLE OUT THERE, MISTER!

PAUL

Zach, Andrew take second. You three trade off at first. Okay, play's to first, then bring it home.

Paul hits a ball into the audience. Improvise chatter as they both point in the direction of first base.

JOSH

First base, first base, FIRST BASE, FIRST BASE. The base, the base, the base that comes first. For crying out loud. WHAT WAS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE?

PAUL

Hey, that was a nice try.

JOSH

Okay, here's a little drill I came up with, help you with your throws to first base. Okay? What you've got to do, you gotta think: the first baseman is the most heinous, evil person in the world. And they have done something that you will never forgive, they killed your dog, they stole your X Box, and you are going to burn the ball through their chest—and kill them with one throw.

PAUL

You guys, just bring it home. Throw it to Coach Josh.

JOSH

Oh, so I'm the heinous one.

PAUL

No. Just mixing it up. Okay, Jordan!

Paul hits the ball. Josh immediately under hands him the next one before he's ready and it bounces off his shoulder. The two men improvise as an audience member throws the ball to Josh.

JOSH

Burn it, BURN IT, right here, buddy.

(catches it)

What's with the noodle arm?

Paul hits another. Josh under hands the next ball off his chest.

PAUL

(to audience member making throw)

Okay, nice peg!

JOSH

Yeah, for tee-ball.

Paul hits another. Josh under hands a ball off his chest.

PAUL

Will you cut it out?!

The throw comes in to Josh.

JOSH

That's an out. If he starts running tomorrow.

Paul hits another.

JOSH

Corey, get the glove down. Get the glove down. You know why you don't get the glove down? You're scared of the ball. You're scared of the dirt. You're scared of your goddamn life!

PAUL

Look, can I say something?

JOSH

HUDDLE UP!

PAUL

No, just to you.

JOSH

GET BACK THERE!!

PAUL

Um. You're just coming on a little strong here.

JOSH

Hey, sure. Fine. If you want more of a touchy-huggy practice, maybe we can knit a banner for the other team.

PAUL

Just take it down a notch.

He hits another ball into the audience. Josh hums inanely to himself.

JOSH

Lolly, lolly, lolly...
(mock impressed)
Oooh, big boy throw.

PAUL

Look, this isn't going to work out.

JOSH

You firing me?

PAUL

I'm asking you to step down.

JOSH

Not gonna happen. You firing me?

PAUL

Well, I don't know. Let me call Greg tonight and talk to him, maybe some of the parents.

JOSH

I need an answer right now. Cause I'm going to pull Corey and we'll go to the Padres or the Yankees and kick some ass.

PAUL

(getting ready to fungo a ball)
I'm not deciding right now.

JOSH

HUSTLE IN! We're gonna take a vote.

Tense pause.

PAUL

This is a bad idea.

JOSH

It's called democracy.

PAUL

It's not supposed to be a democracy. That's why there's a coach.

JOSH

Let the boys vote.

PAUL

Okay. All right. Boys, Coach Josh and me, we're not getting along so great. So we're gonna have a quick vote to see which one stays. You can have me, you can have Coach Josh. If you want me, raise your hand.

Pause.

JOSH

I'd like a recount.

PAUL

It was unanimous.

(to the team)

Okay, everyone back to position!

JOSH

TAKE A LAP, COREY!

PAUL

No. Corey. Take first base.

They stare at each other.

JOSH

You got something you need to say to me?

PAUL

Not really.

JOSH

Cause you don't tell it to Greg. Or the parents. You say it to me. I'm here right now.

PAUL

(sighs)

You ride your son. You embarrass him in front of the other kids. You obviously have control issues and anger issues and I'm not going to let you ruin his time or my son's time or anybody's because you don't know how to get real help.

Josh takes a step closer. And another. He's barely audible.

JOSH

Maybe you should be my coach.

PAUL

We're done. Okay?

JOSH

(softer)

Seriously. Would you be my coach?

PAUL

I have no idea what you're saying.

JOSH

That was really good. Please.

Pause.

PAUL

I'm not a professional.

JOSH

No. You're better.

PAUL

Josh. It's not a great use of my time.

Josh just looks at him.

PAUL

Fine. I want you to sit over there, watch practice, and only say nice things.

Josh hesitates.

PAUL

Otherwise, beat it.

JOSH

Okay. I'm on it.

PAUL

(calling)

Play's to me!

He hits the ball into the audience, and waits for the throw to come back.

JOSH

(trying hard)

Allll right. Way to take your time. Way to savor the play!

Paul hits another one, waits for the throw.

JOSH

Nice skipping. Just like a rock. That was fun.

The lights fade.

Opening Night

As applause from the previous piece carries over, a Mom quiets everybody.

MOM

Oh my gosh, was that *fantastic*? Let's have another round of applause for the kids, they are just awesome and gorgeous and must be ready to drop down dead after all that—look at them!

(she waits for applause)

So many of you wondered, why six months? Screamed at me! You know who you are. Six months to rehearse one show—how could we possibly sustain it? And I think you found the answer tonight, am I right? Whooo! Thank you!

Before I mention some very special people, I have to tell you: only at a charter elementary school like OakGlow could I get a chance to stage my most favorite musical story—ever. This was the first time we tried to pull off something spectacular, instead of all the Montessori moms ganging up and putting on one of those sweet, sloppy sing-alongs about seeds and fish and recycling. Well not tonight! Tonight we hit the big time, baby! Hahahaha.

I want to start by honoring the sacrifices of my own family. My husband Larry, who, when I first said I had the opportunity to step up and direct the OakGlow play and I could pick it and it would be *Wizard of Oz* but it would take me away practically every weeknight for months and months looked at me and said, ‘whatever.’ And that was the key, I think: *whatever* crazy thought or inspiration came into our heads, we just ran with it. And I want to thank Cassie, my own little Judy Garland, who so graciously backed down under some really uncalled for pressure and relinquished the role of Dorothy and took the part of Glinda, and I just want to say how proud I am, that she forgave me and forgave Emma Sandkins, and started eating again, and how great was that ‘Over the Rainbow’ duet? That was Cassie’s idea! She’s a powerhouse, I’m telling you.

I want to quickly mention Jason Yount, who might have been the most adorable Scarecrow I’ve ever seen. Seriously. He was a talent and a treat to watch and the sweetest 3rd grader to work with, and I am just so sorry that somewhere around that very stressful fifth month when we were doing full run-throughs every other night he just . . . wasn’t happy anymore. It was too much, and I sat with his parents and we thought—*they* thought, I’m your old-fashioned show-must-go-on gal—they felt it was best for Jason if he pulled out. And I’m

sorry you didn't get to see all his fine, funny work, although we have some wonderful audition footage we'll be including as a Special Feature in the DVD. Which, don't forget, can be ordered tonight in the lobby at a \$5 discount.

And thank you Minnie! Sweet, never-say-boo Minnie Ardell, who sewed three dozen Munchkin hats and the lion's tail AND that incredible felt Oz head and who never told anyone until tonight that she had left her husband and was doing all that stitch work in her car. A Jetta, if you can believe that! Give it up to Minnie!

And Carl Schenper, for those thrilling stage effects! Whether it was dry ice, egg cartons, sparklers, Carl was ablaze with ideas and it was a privilege to warm ourselves by his bonfire. Okay I'll stop, he's totally blushing! So am I.

And of course, there's Jeannie Dover. Jeannie was like my sister, my soul mate . . . okay, I'm not gonna cry, I told myself no. But very early on we sat down and realized, oh my God, we're putting on *Wizard*. How are we doing this? And Jeannie and I went out to dinner and had a couple drinks (times three—hahaha) and we came back here and got up and just . . . did the show. Whole show, soup to nuts, 2 1/2 hours, let it fly. And honest to God, I have never done anything more empowering in my life. And that became our method, once a week, out here and doing *Wiz*, JUST US. Nailing it. And when little Jason Yount blew up with the tic and the stutter, it was like: who else am I tapping to play Scarecrow? And I'm not sure who was more excited tonight seeing Jeannie up here—me, or her parents, who flew in from Scottsdale.

I'll wrap up, I know it's almost 11:30, and these kids are wiped, but a big shout-out to the Man in Charge, Principal Roy Mearns, who was such a constant support in our fundraising efforts with the bake sale, the wrapping paper, the personalized teddy bears, and all that caramel corn that went bad in the heat and Roy had to make refunds out of his own pocket. The man walks the talk, you know what I'm saying? And a million thanks to all of you who bought \$15 muffins at intermission and please, we have plenty-plenty left so buy a muffin and a DVD, not only to pay off Roy's credit cards, but to pump up next year's war chest. Who's getting psyched for *Evita*?!

Lights fade.

How To Argue With Your 12 Year-Old

Lights up on Father and Daughter, frozen in position. The Narrator can either be onstage, or a Live Voice on the Sound System.

NARRATOR

How To Argue With Your 12 year-old.

DAUGHTER

I'm not going to guitar lesson.

The Father looks up from whatever he's doing. Throughout the scene, PowerPoint-style projections appear on the back wall, highlighting terms and strategies.

NARRATOR

Why argue at all? Because you believe in logic. You are the caretaker of your family's follow-through. You haven't won a fight in fourteen years. So what are your options? There's *Vindictive*.

FATHER

Fine. You owe your teacher sixty dollars.

NARRATOR

Tyrannical.

FATHER

That's it, I'm unplugging the Wii.

NARRATOR

Or the more insidious *Daddy Cluster Bomb*.

FATHER

If you practiced a little more, you wouldn't be afraid to go.

NARRATOR

All of these have their pitfalls: she may start crying, your wife rushes in, they pin you like a tag-team. Let's ramp up gradually.

FATHER

You're going.

DAUGHTER

Why? Why do I have to?

NARRATOR

You had this discussion last month. Do you remember the excellent answer you gave?

The Father shakes his head.

NARRATOR

That's okay. You're growing old and your brain is turning to hummus and it happens to everyone. Rather than give your daughter any sense of momentum, slap the ball right back. When in doubt, change the ground beneath her feet.

FATHER

Because it's your job. We all have jobs in this family.

DAUGHTER

I don't want this job!

NARRATOR

Excellent. You are no longer talking about guitar lessons but metaphorical employment.

FATHER

We all do jobs we don't want. I don't want to cook your dinner, but I'm going to when we come back.

DAUGHTER

Fine. I'll eat at McDonald's.

FATHER

No, McDonald's is crap and eating crap is not going to solve anything unless they have a special on McMusic Lessons.

DAUGHTER

You're so mean.

FATHER

I'm not mean.

DAUGHTER

You let Jason skip soccer all the time!

NARRATOR

This is a classic move, known as the *Sororital Split*. There is now a 30% chance you'll take the bait and put the other child on trial. Be careful! You may want to say:

FATHER

This is not about Jason, this is about you!

NARRATOR

But that gets you:

DAUGHTER

That's right you never think he does ANYTHING wrong.

NARRATOR

Be creative. Be surprising.

FATHER

Jason almost died this morning.

NARRATOR

Nice.

DAUGHTER

How?

FATHER

Ask him when you get back from guitar.

She has no immediate response. The Narrator beams.

NARRATOR

An inventive parent is a healthy parent.

DAUGHTER

Why do we have to go TODAY? It's such a bad time for me.

The Father is momentarily stumped. He glances at the Narrator.

NARRATOR

Remember: you are the repository of your child's words and deeds and the sole curator of every glaring contradiction that might come in handy. Dig.

The Father brightens.

FATHER

We already moved this lesson so you could go to Aubrey's party.

DAUGHTER

Why is that my fault?

NARRATOR

Ah. Here we have the *Mazzini Offense*, named for Ellen Mazzini who could shift blame so artfully that her parents let her have shrimp cocktail and chocolate milk for dinner six nights in a row. Your daughter is trying to cast you as a tyrant. Step to the left.

FATHER

Why do you *act* like it's your fault?

DAUGHTER

Ha ha ha.

NARRATOR

This, of course, is the infamous *Ha Ha Ha*. Just keep going.

FATHER

Look, you chose guitar. You were the one who said you wanted to switch from piano to guitar, that you thought that would be a better instrument for you.

DAUGHTER

Yeah, I KNOW.

NARRATOR

Notice the use of the *P-tON*, or Preteen Omniscient Narrator: a tone that reminds you there is nothing on

God's green earth she hasn't already thought of and, oh by the way, you are old and screamingly irrelevant. The good news: this is the last gasp before surrender.

FATHER

Well now that you've made that commitment I need to help you keep it. And honor it. Otherwise it's meaningless--and we are not meaningless people.

NARRATOR

Quick note. Once your child is, say, 15: don't go there.

DAUGHTER

Fine. If I go you have to give me five dollars.

NARRATOR

Yes! The naked act of desperation. She needs something to claim as a partial victory. Choose your terms of surrender carefully.

FATHER

You can have five dollars if you NEED five dollars for something RIGHT NOW. You don't get five dollars for going to a lesson you're supposed to go to anyway. Otherwise you can give me five dollars for driving you there.

DAUGHTER

Then I'll hitchhike.

FATHER

And you'll be grounded for the rest of the year. Which will certainly give you time to practice.

NARRATIVE

Burn!

DAUGHTER

(running off)

MOMMMMM! Dad's being mean!!!

The Father starts to take a triumphant stance.

NARRATOR

Game...Set—

MOTHER

(off-stage)

Richard! What the hell did you say?!

NARRATOR

At this point, you're on your own.

*The Father's expression turns to pure panic.
Blackout.*

Teen Lullaby (song)

A daughter sleeps, head in her Mom's lap.

MOTHER

So many years since you fell asleep
Resting on my shoulder
The lullabies of youth don't keep
Let's try one a little bit older...

Sweet lullaby music begins to play.

Don't make the mistakes that I made
Like dating a narcissist teen
Don't set yourself up to be waylaid
By girls who are vapid and mean

Stop pushing your stepfather's buttons
Don't show too much flesh freshman year
Don't eat like a run-away glutton
Or ask your Aunt Bev to buy beer.

Don't make me behave like my mother
All worry—and never a breather
Don't verbally torture your brother
Don't physically torture him either.

Don't friend total strangers on Facebook
Or text 'til your thumb gets a crack
Don't say my behavior is "casebook"
And remember: you're not really black.

Become the woman you're meant to be
And be happy with who you are
Fulfill your divine destiny
And never get into a car.

Sleep my darling girl sleep
My child so bold, so alive
No need to wake your pretty head
'til, oh...you're twenty-five.

Lights fade.

Your Son in the Movies

A teenage boy sits in a chair, working a laptop.

NARRATOR

If Your Teenage Son Were in Famous Movies.

(beat)

Lord of the Rings...

Gandalf appears.

GANDALF

Look to my coming on the first light of the fifth day, at dawn look to the east.

Pause.

SON

Wait, what?

NARRATOR

Star Wars...

A disembodied voice rings out.

OBI-WAN

Luke... Luke! You will go to the Dagobah system. There you will learn from Yoda, the Jedi Master who instructed me.

Longer pause.

SON

Wait, what?

NARRATOR

The Shawshank Redemption...

An agitated Andy Dufresne crouches by the Boy.

ANDY

If you ever get out of here, do me a favor. There's a big hayfield up near Buxton. It's got a long rock wall with a

big oak tree at the north end. It's like something out of a Robert Frost poem. It's where I asked my wife to marry me. We went there for a picnic and made love under that oak and I asked and she said yes. Promise me, Red. If you ever get out... find that spot. At the base of that wall, you'll find a rock that has no earthly business in a Maine hayfield. Piece of black, volcanic glass. There's something buried under it I want you to have.

Enormous pause.

SON

Wait, what?

NARRATOR

The Wizard of Oz...

Glinda appears.

GLINDA

Just click your heels three times and say, There's No Place Like Home. There's No Place Like Home.

Pause. The Boy heaves a sigh.

SON

Do I have to do it NOW?

Blackout.

Message From the Superintendent

SUPERINTENDENT

Good eve—

(an immediate burst of feedback over the sound system)

Good evening, welcome to Back to School Night. Most of you know me, I'm Dr. (Pam/Ben) Wentworth, I've been your Interim School Superintendent for the past twenty-seven months.

Before I address some changes in the new school year, I wanted to share a bright spot of news. Our district has learned we will be receiving a community block grant of \$47,000 to upgrade the road in front of the school. The board met and after public input we've decided to buy \$12,000 worth of recycled tire bricks, and with the remaining \$35,000 reinstate 10th grade World Studies and offer Senior Shop Class for an exciting one-time double-credit project. Of laying recycled tire bricks.

I have also been asked to help pre-test some of the special slogans the State of California is considering for this upcoming school year.

*A logo is projected on a screen: **LLWC***

Let's Learn What We Can.

*Another logo appears: **SSmSSm***

Street Smart is School Smart.

*And another: **$E=mc^{1/2}$***

Education is Meeting the Child Halfway. And really, the one that I think speaks to the heart of our program...

4@D

Four a day. That's this year's challenge: 4 facts. 4 ideas. Every day. Then go home. For the first 10 minutes of each class, students will learn the daily idea. For the second 10 minutes they will practice it. For the remaining 25 minutes the teacher will go on a micro-furlough, a student council member will be put in charge, and self-directed quiet study will allow students to review the daily idea.

Now some basic scheduling and curriculum changes.

The curriculum and schedules are projected on the screen.

To best use our shrinking resources, we have created two revolving modules. The first, *Open Door*, offers Grammar, Reading, Vocabulary, and a mandatory Mental Health evaluation which will trigger a government fund that we will mainly use to pay for Grammar, Reading and Vocabulary.

The second module, *Bright Arrow*, will cover Mathematics, Green Biology, and a 3-week training on Germ Prevention through a grant from the Center for Disease Control.

Mondays will become *Open Door*, Tuesdays and Thursdays are *Bright Arrow*. On Fridays students will spend 1st and 2nd period in the *Open Door Foreign Language Elective Conference Call*. They will need to key in their student number and remain on the line for a live, real time lesson. 3rd period will be self-directed P.E. on the honor system. 4th period is early lunch. 5th period is *Bright Arrow Inter-Community Study Hall* and letter-writing to our local assemblyman, state senator and the Governor, and 6th period is bake sale.

We have a wonderful staff of dedicated teachers, and they will be assigned either a micro-furlough, venti furlough, furlough maxima or termination with a side of furlough.

In the past we've tried early release and then we settled on late start, this year we're going to work with a combination of both and release the children early on Tuesdays at 1:00 and then have them return for a late start on Thursday at 10:15, with Wednesday being *Open Door Home Study* until December, then becoming *Bright Arrow Intuitive Learning* in January/February, then becoming *Open Door No Boundaries* for three months, at which point I think we're to summer. Aren't we? Well, don't quote me on that.

We are transitioning several of our most senior teachers into *Curriculum Mentors*, and they will be working with each of you to prepare your family for *Open Door Home Study*. Basically, we want you to evaluate your child and then decide which of their special interests or hobbies or compulsive behavior might have some academic value. Music. Acronym Management. Body Awareness. Accelerated Body Awareness. Their lives are full of wonderful possibilities.

Several other cost-saving matters. The water fountains will be turned off on Tuesdays. And commencement will be held online. I know this is a blow for some of you traditionalists, but the kids have a great time picking out their avatars for the cyber-ceremony.

I am eager to address all your questions and concerns, although I am currently on a split week administrative leave with a side of furlough. But you can find me at the Starbucks in the Marigold Center on Wednesday and Thursday mornings, working on my rock opera. In the meantime, please remember these take-aways:

The logos appear in rapid sequence.

4@D - Four a Day

LLWC – Let’s Learn What we Can

SSmSSm – Street Smart is School Smart

E=mc^{1/2} - Education is Meeting the child halfway

And what the hell, one of my own for a little boost of morale...

*A slide that is clearly hand-written and different from all the others appears: **MsNfBs***

My School is Not a Flaming Bag of Shit. Let’s have a great, great year. Thank you.

Blackout.

Parent-Teacher Conference

TEACHER
Mr. and Mrs. Grant.

MOM
Hi.

DAD
Roger.

TEACHER
Sit down. Would you like a persimmons cookie?
(they politely pass)
Warm apple cider with a hint of ginger?

MOM
No thank you.

TEACHER
Well, all right. Let's talk about Eddie.
(beat)
We are having a *wonderful* time. Eddie is just so open to all the experiences of the classroom. Colors, numbers, music, words, tactile sensory expression, expression AND comprehension.

MOM
I told you.

DAD
What?

MOM
Roger doesn't think Eddie listens, but a lot of times it's about how we say things.

DAD
Why don't we get to this stuff later. After we've heard from Mrs. Marshkil.

TEACHER

Deborah (*Deh-bore-ah*).

DAD

I'm going to let D—Deborah speak.

(pause)

So. Back to Eddie.

TEACHER

I love to watch him with the other children, he has such a good sense of boundaries, of wanting to help but not overhelp, never do the work for someone else but always, always encourage. It's like having a second teacher in the room. Have you found that, at home?

The two of them look momentarily stumped.

MOM

Little glimpses.

DAD

At home, he pretty much wants us to do everything.

TEACHER

It's not unusual. For this age. He's taking his cues from you, all the time.

MOM

(a touch anxious)

That's what I keep saying.

DAD

Are we supposed to be giving him chores? He's in kindergarten, right?

TEACHER

You give him *options*.

MOM

Exactly.

TEACHER

You put paint and clay and corn starch and a screwdriver and wood and dirty dishes all on the table. Put them all out, see what he chooses.

MOM
Every time I do, you say it's a big mess!

DAD
Can we not...

TEACHER
Let's all have some cider.

DAD
Good call.

*She pours three cups. They each take a sip.
Mom and Dad wait.*

TEACHER
Well. I really have no other issues. He's a delight. He's sociable. He's a help with the younger kids. He gets frustrated sometimes with math, but that's not unusual. For this age.

DAD
Great to hear.

MOM
Sometimes I wonder if we're doing a good job.

TEACHER
Of course you are.

MOM
I keep thinking I went back to work so soon...

DAD
It's only part-time.

MOM
But the disruption—he's our oldest. You really think you're going to break the first one.

TEACHER
We all make mistakes.

MOM
I know, I--

TEACHER

Your love is his safety net.

MOM

Right.

TEACHER

And his love is your greatest achievement.

Mom and Dad have a warm, almost wet moment.

TEACHER

Anything you'd like to ask about?

MOM

Well, reading. I guess.

TEACHER

Oh, he's doing very well. He might even be a little ahead of the curve.

DAD

He's dyslexic.

MOM

He doesn't read at all.

TEACHER

Well, he does in his own way.

MOM

We can't get him to pick up a book. Ever.

TEACHER

That's not unusual. For this age.

Pause.

MOM

You have no idea who he is.

DAD

Honey...

TEACHER
Of course I do.

MOM
What's his favorite game?

TEACHER
Duck duck goose.

MOM
What's his nickname?

TEACHER
Edsel.

MOM
No one calls him that.

TEACHER
I hear it all the time.

MOM
From who?

TEACHER
Bradley.

MOM
Who?!

TEACHER
Ryan.

Mom gets the class photo.

MOM
Which one is Eddie?

DAD
Okay, let's ratchet this down—

MOM
Don't tell me to ratchet! Where is he?

The Teacher points.

MOM

That's Taylor.

TEACHER

Well, they're practically inseparable.

MOM

Taylor?!

DAD

It was an honest mistake.

MOM

Look, we pay thousands of dollars for this preschool.

DAD

Point taken. Okay.

MOM

How can you not know who he is?!!

Pause.

TEACHER

When I'm with the children, we are all in the moment. All together. Names matter, but they don't matter—not nearly as much as colors and numbers and tap-tap-tapping on the tambourine.

MOM

No, I think names matter a lot.

TEACHER

And what's your name?

MOM

Cherie.

TEACHER

Did they call you Cherie Pine Tree?

MOM

Not once.

TEACHER
 Did they call you Cherie Bumblebee?
(tapping on knees)
 Cherie—Cherie—Bumblebee.

MOM
(losing it)
 They called me Cherie Peepee and I DIDN'T LIKE IT.

DAD
 Honey, shhh.

TEACHER
 We all make mistakes.

MOM
 You made the mistake!

DAD
 I don't think we need a scapegoat here...

TEACHER
(softly)
 Your love is his safety net.

DAD
 She knows that. Definitely.

TEACHER
 And his love is your greatest accomplishment.

MOM
 Tell us something that can only be about him.

TEACHER
 He's a wonderful kid.

MOM
(pushing the photo at her)
 Only about him!!

Pause.

TEACHER
 Well, he had such a good time with his grandparents.

Bullshit. MOM

Cherie! DAD

TEACHER
He's really hoping you'll make that trip to Disneyland.

MOM
Still bluffing.

Pause.

TEACHER
He just goes on and on about his daddy's stories.

Pause. They both look at Dad. He slowly melts.

DAD
Really?

MOM
Damn it, Roger.

DAD
All of them? Or the ones about the Possum Family? It's like our family, but possums—we saw one in the garage.

TEACHER
All of them.

The Dad is glowing. The Teacher turns to the Mom.

He says he wishes he could have more fun with his
momma.

The Mom sees red.

MOM
That is a cheap, CHEAP—
(trying to compose herself)
I don't believe for a second—

(furious)
 You have no right...
(quietly)
 I used to be fun.

TEACHER

We all make mistakes.

DAD

What mistake!? She's the best mother I've ever seen.

Mom is touched by this.

TEACHER

Your love is his safety net.
(beat)
 And his love is your greatest achievement.

The two parents embrace.

DAD

Thank you, Mrs. Marshkil.

TEACHER

Deborah. Even the children call me Deborah.

MOM

Deborah. Thank you.

DAD

And for the delicious cider.

TEACHER

You're very welcome. Good night, Roger. Good night,
 Cherie.

MOM

(to Dad, as they walk out)
 You think I'm fun, don't you?

DAD

Cherie, Cherie, fun as can be...

They exit. The Teacher is left at her desk. She taps her knees.

TEACHER

Cherie, Cherie,
Cherie pee-pee!

She giggles to herself as the lights fade.

My Stupid Cholesterol

MAN

The hardest thing about high cholesterol is lying to my mother. Because she suspects. She knows a lifelong flirtation with the Frito Lay Corporation is not leading anywhere good. So when she asks me, every 3 or 4 months, I slide into the universal defensive stance of the adult child: which is vague and peppy.

(as if talking to his Mother)

“Life is fine, it’s all good, I can’t remember a single detail. My cholesterol is good, it’s great. I forget, 90. 98. I have no head for numbers.”

It was not 98. It was pushing 200. I would bump into my doctor at the farmers market on Saturday mornings, and a heavy silence would hang between us. He knew, I knew. He wanted me to take Lipitor. I wanted to down a bunch of fish oil and red bean yeast and sprinkle oatmeal on everything, except maybe pastrami. I’d see Dr. Fossey at the farmer’s market and I’d grip my bag of spinach up high and he’d nod grimly and a little voice inside me would say “he knows you’re going to die.”

After 4 months my LDL’s had gone down 5 points and I was having little fish oil belches in the middle of the afternoon. Like sucking on a halibut lifesaver. So one morning I made an appointment and surrendered to the Church of Lipitor.

I like taking pills. I’m a good pill taker. My morning is well-ordered and repetitive, and there was simply no problem popping that statin once a day. 7:00 in the morning. Before I walked the dogs. Pop the pill, walk the dogs. Until that morning, when the leash felt like hot barbed wire in the palm of my hand.

Believe me, I was ready for the side effects. I had expected the gas, the constipation, the sudden muscle pain. But not the rash.

The rash was a suckerpunch. It began in the spaces between my fingers and marched up my arm, determined to plant a flag in my elbow like Iwo Jima. Only the left arm. I could have run off with the circus as half man, half lobster boy.

Dr. Fossey had put a lot of energy into pushing the statin. And he knew our relationship was on the bubble. So he wasn’t going to let a

little rash knock us off balance. He gave me an antibiotic called Ery-tab and a cortisone cream with an anti-fungal agent.

I like taking pills. 1 Lipitor, 2 Erytabs, then I'd grease my arm and palm and fingers with the anti-fungal cortisone until my left side looked like a honey-glazed ham. And the rash started to fade, right on schedule: but then the headaches began. Deep pain, ancestral pain, like a throbbing from the old country, the dull ache that Noah must have felt around day 35. It would start in my ear, and then goose-step to the base of my neck, with this sound that, I don't know, was the sound I always imagined the giant Nutcracker would make if he chomped on a Volkswagon.

I know what you're thinking. Time to quit Lipitor. But come on. If I stopped now, what was accomplished? Every side effect has an answer. Every answer has a side effect. My doctor was showing no fear, why should I?

We continued the cream, switched from Ery-tab to Tripurim, held steady with the Lipitor, but after another week the migraines brought me to my knees in the middle of a brunch with my parents. My wife and daughter had to help me to the car. When I told my mother it was side effects from Lipitor, she looked somewhat pleased.

I pitched up at Dr. Fossey's without an appointment and screamed at everybody. He wasn't there. I was sluffed off on Dr. Pragerman, who prescribed Fioricet for the headaches, and suggested we switch out the statins, trying two-week trials with Altoprev and then Zocor.

Four pills: 1 Altoprev, 2 Tripurim and 1 Fioricet. No more ointment, the rash was gone, although my shoulder felt all waxy and locked up. I guess by now I had multiple treatments jostling to be alpha-med in my blood stream. One night I woke up and couldn't find my skin. And there were two days when the lining of my cheeks felt like very sharp corduroy, and I could only take liquids.

One particularly dark day, when I looked at my son over breakfast and saw an angry piñata threatening me with a spoon, I got a surprise call from Dr. Fossey. He wanted a progress report, he suggested I drop by his office at the end of the day. And that was when Dr. Fossey pulled back the wizard's curtain. He invited me to participate in a drug trial called Syntavac. Syntavac was a complementary steroid-thingy designed as a sort of statin accessory. Every side effect has an answer, every answer has a side effect, but Syntavac was designed to stop the crazy carousel. And give you a big stuffed bear in the process.

Okay. 1 Zocor, 2 Tripurim, 1 Fioricet, 2 Syntavac, maybe a little spritz of ointment for good luck, and walk the dogs. My shoulder unlocked and un-waxed, the migraines stopped, my LDL's were ticking steadily downward. Life was suddenly hopeful again. And the unexpected, vivid night vision was a really sweet bonus.

One morning, after walking the dogs, I spotted a door in my backyard. Not the gate along the side, more like a perforation in the air, with a knob. Part of me understood this was a hallucination, but it's not like it evaporated once I called it by name. So I turned the knob. And stepped in.

You can believe this or not.

I was in a world of sumptuous colors and beautiful smells and these little, lovely, sexy people who just wanted to climb on me and worship me and pleasure me. It was the most ecstatic hour of my life. They called me Man Mountain and nuzzled and cuddled and asked if I would consider becoming lord master of the realm. I could come and go whenever I chose. And they were right. I stepped back into my yard and the door was still there. And only I could find it.

1 Zocor, 2 Tripurim, 1 Fioricet, 2 Syntavac, a double espresso, a whiff of ointment, walk the dogs, take the kids to school, wait for my wife to leave the house, and then bang—through the door. This was a world of order, with laws and rules and sweet, sweet little people who worshipped the Man Mountain. I taught them how to irrigate their gardens. I brought them rice, which they had never had before and rocked their world. I gave them my son's old onesies and they would parade around their little unnamed realm. One day they brought me to meet the Overlord and, well, it was Dr. Fossey. I mean I'm pretty sure. He winked at me and laughed when I said this was better than the Farmers Market. He took a little blood and sent me away with a bouquet of flowers.

And then one afternoon, in the middle of a guided meditation/dog pile...my leg had a spasm. Three of my little friends went flying sideways. Very shaken up. I apologized, I laughed it off, but it happened again. Uncontrollable leg tremors. We would be in the middle of a cuddle or an anointing, and suddenly my leg would kick out. I destroyed a pagoda. I broke a child's collarbone. They looked at me with terror in their eyes. And they pushed me through the door and, sobbing, pleaded with me to change my ways and come back. Come back quickly. When it was safe.

Dr. Fossey explained the spasms were a minor side effect of a dramatic drop in my LDL's, and I was obviously doing great. Great? I could see the chess moves unfolding. The Overlord would never be as well-loved as Man Mountain. Suck it, Fossey! When I tried to choke him he dropped me from his patient list.

Dr. Praguerman agreed to meet me off-site, after hours, with a month's worth of Skelaxin. I took six that night. With the morning light I bounded into the backyard. But when I opened the floating door I saw a flat, harsh world full of broken toys and angry smells.

I went off the Skelaxin. The pretty happy world came back, but I was spasming three times as much. They stood in the doorway, crying, barring my way. We couldn't be together until I found the perfect balance. But how? Three of one, four of another, half a...I needed my wee cuddles and revels and jigs. I haven't even told you about the jigs, these dances that—well never mind. I had to backtrack. Rebuild my chemistry.

No pills. A salami omelet. Hash browns. A chocolate croissant chaser. I gained 8 pounds in five days. I got puffy, with dark rings under my eyes. I could feel my LDL's stamping and roaring inside my arteries. I was ready to be worshipped again.

But the door was gone. I searched my backyard. My neighbors' yards. The park across the street. It was floating somewhere, waiting for my hand.

I joined Dr. Fossey's gym. Went up to him by the treadmills. He pretended not to know anything about it. I asked for more Syntavac, but he said I was disqualified from the trial because of erratic dosing. I tried to tell him: I'm very good at taking pills. And sorry about the choking. But he'd already put his iPod on.

I've stopped everything. My cholesterol is off the charts.

(sticking a leg in the air)

And look how steady. Like a rock. I am a rock. Just waiting for a sign. Man Mountain: All is Forgiven.

My mother called yesterday. I told her things are good. Never been better.

Lights fade.

Scorecard (song)

A mom, with a baseball hat, comes forward. The song starts at an easy clip, but should build to a breakneck pace.

MOM

You're looking at a baseball mom
A gal who knows what's what
I know the rules, the names, the plays,
I've got a bleacher butt.

The players all have numbers
You can always check their shirt
The parents come with bupkis
Some I.D. wouldn't hurt!

I'm bad with names and faces
And I hate to make mistakes
So when the chitchat starts to flow
I kinda get the shakes

You gotta have a system
A slick mnemonic plan
I can't go through the season
Calling everybody "Man."

*Bring your game to the game
Bring your game to the game
Every boy's got a momma
Every momma's got a name
Gotta bring some game to the game!*

The 3rd base coach is Stu
The manager is Dan
Stu comes in a little can
Which gets us pretty close to Dan.
Stu in a can—and Dan's the can!

Tommy is our biggest bat
His parents: Analise and Pat
Analise like "any lease"
Like in a housing crunch.
Pat like Pat—how hard is that?

Pat like push like punch.

Then there's Kim—that's a smile
 Kim, thank God, I've know a while
 Kim and Chuck,
 Chuck and Kim,
 Loving her, liking him.
 Chuck & Kim
 Kim and Chuck
 She'll help me out if I get stuck.

A bunch of dads who want to schmooze
 Gotta build a tight Who's Whose
 Vince is easy, like Van Gogh
 He hacked his ear off just for show
 And Paul could be like...Paul Cetenne?
 Gauzain? Rosanne?
 I'll start again.
 Vince, the guy who lost his ear
 Paul like Paulie Girl—the beer
 Barry like a Big Black Bear
 Rick is slick, he has no hair.

*Bring your game to the game
 Bring your game to the game
 Your boy could be the pitcher
 But the pitcher comes up lame
 If you don't bring your game to the game!*

There's Karen, Kaitlin, Chris, and Kate
 I cannot keep those ladies straight
 Kaitlin's big and loud and sweet
 You know the woman likes to eat
 Chris is cross, she's never light
 Not the one I want to slight
 Chris-cross and Kaitlin Carnivore
 So far we're batting 2 for 4!

Then there's Karen, so reminds me
 Of this girl who sat behind me
 And looked like someone from that show
 I used to watch...
 Oh, I don't know.

Karen.
 Karen.

Tragically barren?
 She's got a boy, his name is Kyle
 Karen-not-barren but bless-ed with child.

Kate is late. Her boy is Norm.
 He never has his uniform
 An unmade bed for all to see
 I liked the woman instantly.

Oh—and there's Marie, she smells like spray
 A secret smoker giveaway
 A little chimney, no control
 Chim-chim-Marie, Chim-chim-Marie—I'm on a roll!

*Bring your game to the game
 Bring your game to the game
 Your son can be an all star
 But you're in the Hall of Shame
 If you don't bring some game to the game*

A lovely lady named Phylene (*PHY-leen*)
 Made the snack list for the team
 I know Phylene (*PHU-leen*), I've got it down
 I even waved at her downtown
 I know her name, I don't announce it
 Still not sure how you pronounce it.
 Phy-leen, Phuh-leen?
 Phu-leen, Phy-leen?
 Oh god, it makes me want to scream.
 I can't just guess and maybe fail
 I say her name when I exhale
 (after a breath)
 Hey Ph'leen, Ph'leen, Ph'leen...
 I try to land it in between.

Ready?
 Are we ready?
 Batter up!
 Play ball!
 Don't choke and forget them all.

1st inning: Pretty boring,
 Their team does a lot of scoring.
 3 walks, a hit, a crazy throw
 A couple turns and says Hello.

(greeting)

Chim-chim Marie!

(to audience)

Oh, I'm so sure.

She's never brought a guy before

A brand new name and face? No fair.

Oh wait, it's Barry Big Black Bear

And next to him...

(beat)

It's not quite flowing...

(internal)

Bald

Smooth

Nude

Hairless

Shiny

Slick

Rick

(out loud)

Rick, how's it going!?

2nd inning: 4 to 1.

We got our one on a bunt home run

Someone taps me on the hair

I smile and quickly suck in air

(exhaling and greeting)

Hi Ph'lene!

(to audience)

She's got a sheet

Of what we're gonna bring to eat

End of season celebration

End of season? Jubilation!

I'm gonna hit the finish line!

Give me that! I'm bringing wine!

Once you sign it, pass it down

(exhales)

"Sure Ph'lene." I look around

It's her. Who I already know.

Chuck and...

(pause)

(Ummmmm) and Chuck...

Chuck and....

(pause)

God, just my luck.

I'll try her in a little while

There's Karen-not-barren bless-ed with child

“Karen! Sign it, would you please? Then pass it on to...”

(beat – then, internal)

Housing

Housing market

Mortgage

Lease

Any lease

(out loud)

Analise!

Bring your game to the game

Bring your game to the game

Every boy has a father

Who you don't get to rename

Gotta bring your game to the game!

5th inning: now I rot

It's killing me that I forgot

You know who: Chuck and...

Chuck and...

I know her name! You heard me say it

I should be able to replay it.

The mind sometimes, you must deceive

Just relax and then retrieve

By the way: the score is broke

19-18, not a joke.

Last inning! At the plate

Son of Always Late Late Kate!

He gets a walk, two men are on

Up to bat: my little Ron.

We tie with 1, we win with 2

(suddenly)

Chuck and...

(pause)

My mind is goo.

Ronnie swings. Oh what a shot!

On a line, it can't be caught

24 to 23,

The boys mob him, the rest mob me...

She turns every which way, accepting accolades

Thank you Chris-cross, how bout that?

Vince No Ear and PunchPushPAT

LateLate KateKate on the scene,

Black Bear Barry

(a quick exhale)

Yo Ph'lene!

Stu in a can and Dan's the Can

ChimChimMARIE—wait! Who's that man?

St. Paulie Girl! And Slicky Ricky,

Karen-not-barren and...

(she turns right...dead pause)

Chuck and...

Huhhh-muhhhh and Chuck,

Chuck and...

(pause)

OH JESUS FUCK!

My eyes get red

My voice a croak

My system just

Went up in smoke

I'm done, I'm hosed, who gives a damn?

I'm calling everybody "Man!"

Lost my game at the game

Blew the game at the game

Ronnie holds his head up high

Momma can't meet any eye

Cause she lost her game at the—KIM!!

KIM!

It's Chuck and Kim!

She's still here, loading up her Kia

"Hey KIM! Good game! KIM, hope to see ya!"

She waves and gives a little squeak:

"Soccer season starts next week!"

She gives a silent scream, but rallies to sing...

Bring your game to the game

Bring your game to the game

You'll stumble and you'll mumble

And you'll wish you never came

If you don't bring your game to the game!

IF YOU DON'T BRING YOUR GAME TO THE GAME!

Lights black out.

Carpool

A Dad sits in the car, waiting. His Son, 13, enters texting. He gets in the back seat.

SON
Hey.

DAD
You wanna sit up here?

SON
No.

Pause.

DAD
How was your day?

SON
Good.

DAD
Anything new? Different. Funny?

SON
No.

DAD
What'd you have for lunch?

SON
Pizza. Little salad.

DAD
Who did you eat with?

SON
Dad.

DAD
I'm just poking around. I'm trying—

SON

Stop being a stalker.

Pause.

SON

Hey, can we get some balsa wood?

DAD

Absolutely. When do you need it? For what?

SON

Never mind.

His Daughter and her friend, Katie, enter and make for the back seat as well.

DAD

Hey.

DAUGHTER

Hi.

(to her Brother)

Go sit in front.

SON

I want to play Slugbug.

DAUGHTER

Dad!

DAD

Work it out.

KATIE

What's Slugbug?

DAUGHTER

It's this stupid game. Whoever sees a car first—

SON

A Volkswagon!

DAUGHTER

Gets to punch someone.

SON

Slug! It's called Slugbug.

Whatever.

She gets in. Katie gets in. The Daughter hands her Dad a piece of paper.

DAD

What's this?

DAUGHTER

I don't know. Something stupid.

KATIE

(showing her phone to the Daughter)

Such a liar.

DAUGHTER

Total liar. Tell her I saw her. I'm texting Dinah.

DAD

Why do I have to talk to Mrs. Bavaqua?

SON

Ellen. Something really funny happened in Mr. Damon's class.

DAD

Why do I have to talk to Mrs. Bavaqua?!

SON

You're interrupting, dad.

DAD

No. I asked *before* you.

DAUGHTER

Dad, I don't know. She just lost it.

KATIE

She is such a Nazi.

DAD

Katie. That word is pretty offensive.

DAUGHTER

Offensive to you.

DAD

Offensive to people.

KATIE

I'm sorry. I didn't mean it like Jewish.

DAD

That's fine.

DAUGHTER

Now my dad thinks you're stupid.

DAD

You don't know what I'm thinking.

DAUGHTER

What? Whenever you sa--

SON

Green one!

He punches his sister in the shoulder.

DAUGHTER

Ow. Quit it!

DAD

Why don't you tell me why you're in trouble.

KATIE

(showing Daughter her phone)

She is so busted.

DAUGHTER

You should tell Sarah.

KATIE

I'm telling Sarah and Diego.

DAD

Tell me what happened with Mrs. Bavaqua.

DAUGHTER

It's retarded. She was just—

DAD

That is a word I've asked you not to use.

DAUGHTER

Fine it was *fucked up*.

DAD

Ellen!

SON

(punching)

Black one!

DAUGHTER

God damnit!

DAD

We're canceling cable. I swear.

KATIE

Sarah says Diego saw them 5th period.

DAD

Katie, not now.

KATIE

Sorry.

DAD

Tell me what happened.

DAUGHTER

Wait a minute.

She's texting intently. Katie reads over her shoulder and then lets out a little gasp.

DAUGHTER

I know, right?

(to Dad)

She was on some random power trip, like suddenly we couldn't do things everybody does all the time anyway.

DAD

Can you be more specific?

The girls are looking at each other's phones and cackling.

DAD

Ellen. What were you doing?

DAUGHTER

Texting. Okay? Oh my god, we were texting. Now we'll never be a super-achieving California school or whatever.

DAD

So she took your phone?

DAUGHTER

Mine and Katie's.

KATIE

And Sarah's.

DAUGHTER

And we didn't get them back til after 6th period.

SON

Hunter mooned the substitute teacher and she totally turned around and saw him.

DAD

So what did you do?

SON

I didn't do anything. I laughed my ass off.

DAD

No. Ellen. What did you do?

Pause.

DAUGHTER

I said may I please be excused.

(long pause)

I said her class was bogus and I was walking out and like half the class followed me.

DAD

You staged a walkout?

SON

Cool.

DAUGHTER

I didn't *stage* anything, it just happened like that.

KATIE

It was very uplifting. Like civil rights.

DAD

It was nothing like civil rights.

DAUGHTER

See? My dad thinks you're really stupid.

DAD

You will STOP!

SON

(punching hard)

Yellow one!

DAUGHTER

OW! You are so dead!

She hits back viciously.

SON

No punch-backs! That's the rule.

DAUGHTER

New rule. Suck my balls, piss-head.

DAD

Okay! Can we not say things like that!?

DAUGHTER

I already said it.

DAD

Can we not say things like that. EVER. EVER! Or I'm going to unplug cable. And we're done with *South Park*. We're done with *Family Guy*.

DAUGHTER

Dad, you're not going to unplug cable.

SON

They're on Hulu anyway.

DAUGHTER

Plus mom will freak out.

Katie shows Daughter her phone.

DAUGHTER

Dad can you drop us off at Katie's house?

DAD

No. I'm thinking you two need to be separated.

DAUGHTER

Dad, we're like supposed to do a history project right now.

DAD

Fine. Split up the work, figure it out. Do it separately.

DAUGHTER

You can't put all this extra pressure on us!

DAD

You put it on by mouthing off to Mrs. Bevaqua. And having your big civil rights rally.

KATIE

I'm sorry I got that wrong.

SON

(punching)

White one!

DAUGHTER

Ow! Dickhead!

It's a full-fledged battle in the back. Katie takes one on the forehead.

KATIE

OW!

DAD

Brian! BRIAN!! Get up here. Climb over. Climb over now.

SON

Fine. Let me fart first.

(beat)

Okay. See ya.

He climbs over into the front.

DAUGHTER

Oh god. You're SO GROSS!

KATIE

Mr. Landsman. Please don't punish Ellen just because I offended you. I really need to work on this with her.

DAD

As soon as it's turned in you need to spend some time apart.

DAUGHTER

Fine. Good luck remembering that.

DAD

Oh, I'll remember.

The girls start to get out.

KATIE

Thank you so much for the ride.

DAUGHTER

Thanks, dad.

DAD

Come right home. Soon as you're done.

DAUGHTER

I don't know when we'll be done.

DAD

SOON as you're done.

*They walk away. Father and son drive in silence
for a good long pause.*

DAD

(giving him a light-hearted punch)

Red one!

SON

(furious)

God! Dad!

*He rubs his wound, incensed. Baffled, Dad
drives on. Lights fade.*

F*#%ed It Up (song)

The Ensemble is onstage throughout this number, either lit on cue or moving into the action as appropriate.

2nd Actress is on the floor, working on a coloring book. 1st Actress walks over to the PIANIST.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

Did you practice today?

The Pianist nods.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

Did you?!

Looking caught, he starts to play the piano.

Satisfied, 1st Actress shifts her gaze to 2nd Actress. She smiles to herself and turns to the audience.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

(sings)

The simple key to parenting
Is model what you want
Choose your battles, Let it Flow,
Embrace the Nonchalant.
Look at Me:
Owning Mom
Look at Her:
Feel the Calm.

It's not a day for rushing her
It's not a day for shushing her
I'm absolutely crushing her—

(She stops, sheepish.)

Ha. Sorry.

(resumes singing)

Crushing IT.
I finally found my steady stride

My always at the ready stride
 Someone throw confetti stride
 Cause all the pieces fit.
 And now I'll take a breath and savor
 Every...little...precious b--

2ND ACTRESS (KID)

(speaks)
 Momma?

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

Yeah?

2ND ACTRESS (KID)

2nd Actor got in trouble today.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

Why?

2ND ACTRESS (KID)

He said the F word.

(beat)
 Momma, what's the F word?

Pause.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

That is a *very* bad word.

(beat)
 For something *very* beautiful.

(beat)
 Which you have to be *very*, *VERY* careful about.

2nd Actress looks utterly confused. (exits)

1st Actress heaves a sigh, and steps forward to sing to the audience.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

I was doing all right,
 I was gathering steam
 But then I Fucked it Up, I Fucked it Up, I Fucked it up
 again!
 I was feeling my oats
 I was Momma Supreme
 But then I Fucked it Up, I Fucked it Up again!

1st Actress retreats to the side, as the other 3 play a scene. 2nd Actress and 1st Actor are in a heated dispute. 1st Actor conceals something in his hands.

I saw it! 2ND ACTRESS (KID)

I caught it! 1ST ACTOR (KID)

You wouldn't if I didn't see it. 2ND ACTRESS (KID)

You wouldn't cause I DID IT. 1ST ACTOR (KID)

What's the problem? 2ND ACTOR (DAD)

I saw the lizard! 2ND ACTRESS (KID)

I caught the lizard! 1ST ACTOR (KID)

He should share. 2ND ACTRESS (KID)

It's my turn for as long as I want. 1ST ACTOR (KID)

That's not fair! 2ND ACTRESS (KID)

SHE'S NOT FAIR! 1ST ACTOR (KID)

Daaaaaad! 2ND ACTRESS (KID)

2ND ACTOR (DAD)
(summoning his inner Solomon)
 If we really want to be fair...maybe we need to cut the lizard in half.

He waits for this to sink in.

2ND ACTRESS & 1ST ACTOR (KIDS)

That would be AWESOME!!

2ND ACTRESS (KID)

I'll get the scissors!

1ST ACTOR (KID)

I call scissors!!!

They both race away. 2nd Actor looks at 1st Actress, who gives a sympathetic shrug. He turns to the audience.

2ND ACTOR (DAD)

I was quick on my feet
Feeling terribly smart
But then I Messed Them Up, Messed Them Up, Messed
Them Up some more!
My authentic best self
Spoke direct from the heart
But then I Messed Them Up, I Messed Them Up some
more.

1st Actress joins him in the middle of the stage.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

How's she ever gonna be a judge?
When I can't forgive a single grudge?

2ND ACTOR (DAD)

How's he ever gonna graduate?
All I ever do is vacillate.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

How's he ever gonna find himself
When I push him too far?

1ST ACTRESS & 2ND ACTOR (DAD & MOM)

Put another nickel in the therapy jar!

2nd Actor moves to the side, as 1st Actress, unable to help herself, comes to the front of the stage to confide in the audience.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

Now when I said “crushing it,” you all know I didn’t mean Her Spirit or some Big Dream. I was talking about the Mom Thing. I mean, it’s not a *thing*—it’s a very beautiful, evolving—I DIDN’T CRUSH ANYONE, give me some credit here!

The other 3 begin a new scene, and she moves away. 2nd Actor, (now a kid) very upset, confronts his parents.

2ND ACTOR (KID)

Dad! I was racing with Jason and I tripped and he said he still won and I lost, but I didn’t lose, I TRIPPED! I only tripped, I didn’t LOSE! Right, mom?

2nd Actress looks at 1st Actor (now parents).

2ND ACTRESS (MOM)

Sweetie, your dad knows all about sports.

1st Actor looks like a deer caught in headlights.

1ST ACTOR (DAD)

Well, um, you did lose. But you tried your best. And when you try your best...

(no idea where he’s going)

It’s not even losing. It’s like a secret tie. And you can live with that, right? I mean, look at Daddy. I lost a bunch—a whole bunch of times, but I got used to it, I got pretty happy with it. That’s the key. You can get *pretty happy* with just about—

His son is confused. His wife is giving him the stink eye. He breaks off, singing to the audience.

1ST ACTOR (DAD)

I’ve been keeping it real
I’ve been telling my truth
But I just Drag ‘Em Down, Drag ‘Em Down, Drag ‘Em
Down again!
Every lesson I give

Punches holes in their youth
And I just Drag ‘Em Down, Drag ‘Em Down again!

2nd Actress joins him.

2ND ACTRESS (MOM)

How’s she ever gonna be a mom
When I’m acting like a ticking bomb?

1ST ACTOR (DAD)

How’s he ever gonna get a clue
When I never have the follow-through?

2ND ACTRESS (MOM)

Did I give my daughter good advice?
Am I leaving a scar?

2ND ACTRESS & 1ST ACTOR (MOM & DAD)

PUT ANOTHER DOLLAR IN THE THERAPY JAR!

1st Actress suddenly bolts forward to talk to the audience again.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

Maybe a little crushing wouldn’t be so bad! Okay? I’m not saying hit anybody—I’m not!—but we coddle them, we give them trophies for blowing their noses, maybe just once we should—

1ST ACTOR (KID)

MOM!!!!!!

2ND ACTOR (KID)

MOMMMMMM!!!

*1st Actress turns to look at the two Actors.
They’ve both picked up Super Soakers.*

1ST ACTOR (KID)

We wanna have a squirt fight but my gun leaks!

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

Put the guns back! You’re not playing with guns today.
(trying to inspire them)
You’re going to use your imaginations and make up something wonderful.

Pause. They both drop the guns.

2ND ACTOR (KID)
Call of Duty!

1ST ACTOR (KID)
Grand Theft!!

They race away.

2ND ACTOR (KID)
Call of Duty!!!

1ST ACTOR (KID)
Grand Theft!!!

1st Actress shrugs at the audience and sings.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)
I was getting strung out
I was losing my mind
Now I just Let it Go, Let it Go, I Let it Go at last!
I was hard on myself...

2nd Actor joins her.

2ND ACTOR (DAD)
But the secret we find:

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)
Is to Let it Go, Let it Go...

2ND ACTOR (DAD)
Don't Give a Shit, Don't Give a Shit...

1st Actor joins the singing.

1ST ACTOR (DAD)
We find the calm, we find the calm...

2ND ACTOR (DAD) & 1ST ACTRESS (MOM)
Inner peace, inner peace—

*2nd Actress (now an insolent Teenager)
interrupts the singing.*

2ND ACTRESS (TEEN)

Hey dad?

1ST ACTOR (DAD)

Yeah?

2ND ACTRESS (TEEN)

Matthew's coming over and he wants me to try this weed
he just got, but I'm gonna close the door to my bedroom
cause mom hates the smell.

Pause.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

(singing, coaching him)

Just let it go, let it go...

1ST ACTOR (DAD)

(tentatively)

Let it go, let it go...

1ST ACTRESS (MOM) & 2ND ACTOR (DAD)

(trying to encourage him)

Inner peace, inner peace...

1ST ACTOR (DAD)

Freaking out, freaking out...!

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

(overlapping)

I fucked it up, I fucked it up...

2ND ACTOR (DAD)

(joining in)

They're breaking bad, they're
breaking bad...

2ND ACTRESS (MOM)

(completing the round)

I made it worse, I made it
worse...

ALL FOUR (PARENTS)

I broke the kids...
I ruined their night...
I fed them junk...
I made them fight...
I pampered them...
I'm wound too tight...

The music abruptly stops. Everyone looks at the Pianist.

PIANIST

I don't want to play this any more.

1ST ACTRESS (MOM)

(patiently)

This is mommy's song. We're going to play mommy's song to the end.

PIANIST

(whining)

Whyyyyyyy?

ALL FOUR (PARENTS)

BECAUSE WE SAID SO!

(they finish the song)

But tomorrow we can try to get it right!

Black out.