

Be a Good Boy, Now

written by

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### **Cast of Characters**

JAYSON-YOUNG MAN, LATE TEENS  
MYSTERY MAN-SIXTYSOMETHING  
PROFESSIONAL RACHEL-FORTYSOMETHING  
MOTHER OF JAYSON  
WILLARD-FIFTYSOMETHING FATHER OF  
JAYSON  
VINCE-FRIEND OF JAYSON, BAD BOY  
LOU-FRIEND OF JAYSON, GOOD BOY  
KAT-GIRL WITH AN EDGE  
BETH-GIRL WHO IS STRAIGHT EDGE  
GEORGIE-THE PERSON EVERYONE KNOWS

### **Minor Characters**

MATILDA-RETIRED FARM WIFE  
ORVILLE-  
RETIRED FARMER  
LAWYER BARR-THE LOCAL  
LAWYER  
PENELOPE-BARR'S  
PARALEGAL  
ED-THE LOVABLE NEIGHBOUR  
Voices  
MR. TICE; VINCE'S CUSTOMERS; KAT'S MOM

Time: 1976

## **Scene Listing**

Act 1:

Scene 1: Perambulating Past Silver Creek

Scene 2: Friday Night Lights, Not

Scene 3: Death By Chocolate

Scene 4: The Scent of a Woman

Scene 5: Basketball and Biology

Act 2:

Scene 1: The Appeal of Jurisprudence

Scene 2: Small Town Excitement

Scene 3: Life and Death

Scene 4: Mary-Jane Mercantilism

Scene 5: Family Dynamics

Act 3:

Scene 1: Close, But No Cigar

Scene 2: Under the Influence

Scene 3: A Turning Point

Scene 4: Dance Me to the End of Love

Scene 5: Going Down River

## **Basic Set**

Zones of the Stage will be minimally resourced with quickly movable props to delineate

the following venues:

- a montage of local streets
- front of Duffy's Pool Hall
- home kitchen
- exterior loading dock of high school shop wing
- bleachers of the gym
- lawyer's office
- high school English class
- living room of Kat's housesit
- cab of a pickup truck
- entrance to Beth's house
- open expanse of the dyke by the Saugeen River
- Orville and Matilda's front porch

ACT 1:*SCENE 1 Perambulating Past Silver Creek*

*<Jayson slides on a windbreaker, zipping it up halfway and hitching up his trousers before he sets off on a perambulation around the stage>*

JAYSON

Yep, sure is a great little town. I'm born and bred here. County town, punches way above its weight class. Lots going on here, some of it darn admirable and some of it you wouldn't want your grandma to know about...

But you folks know what I mean...

*<breaks the fourth wall and gives the audience a wry smile and a raised eyebrow>*

I get out and walk this town pretty much every day. Always some kind of errand to run for my Mom, pick up the mail or the odd thing from downtown. Y'know, a quart of paint from Cuneo's, or a pound of hot dogs from Hec Walker down at the Meat Market.

I live in the West Ward, near the base of the hill where they run the go-kart derby every Summer. Y'know, it's in town, but close enough to the edge that you can feel and smell the country. Lobie's still got a horse paddock up on the corner, and you've got your pick of combines and spreaders in Moran's implement yard. So when you walk the town, you keep your eyes open to observe all kinds of interesting things.

Elmer, nice to see you...Mrs. Draymond, it's great that you're up and about after that ankle sprain.

*<Jayson nods and smiles at two unseen neighbours, ostensibly moving around in their front yards or down their driveways>*

You get to know folks in this kind of town...from church, or through friends and neighbours. I kinda feel that I know everybody in town by name, plus their dogs and cats!

Teddy, how's Lulabelle? Dogs can eat the craziest things...

*<he nods over to a neighbor, flashing a big smile, with a dog barking sound effect. He takes a few strides and then pulls up short, and peeks around an imaginary tree, his eyebrows darting while emitting a slightly smirky smile. This miming runs parallel to the sound of high heels click-clacking on an asphalt driveway>*

Man, will you look at those heels? I know it's a small town, but the ladies around here would be right at home in the big city! Her hubby's one lucky fellow!

*<all of this said in a terse stage whisper>*

Have to watch what I do or say around here, as people like to know one another's business. Equal part nosiness, equal part small town caring. Hey, Grandma Flynn!

*<yells out this last sentence, and waves over at an imaginary elder sweeping the sidewalk in front of her home>*

All my grandparents are gone, so that lovely little Irish lady more than fills the role. Sweet, no? She takes in bachelor high school teachers as boarders, and walks their dress shirts over to Slater's for dry cleaning. Even on a quiet side street like Archy there's quite a bit of life.

*<Jayson walks along in a carefree way, one hand in his pocket, one hand gesticulating to the audience>*

Things often seem the same, yet every day something different catches the eye, like a few water spiders floating by on Silver Creek. The boys working over at Cox Signs are true artists, painting a different logo every day on some truck or the other.

Here's the Post Office, man, they should never have knocked down that redstone beauty on main street. And now we're on the edge of downtown, where the pace quickens a bit. Queen's Hotel on the left, with its telltale mix of cigarette smoke and stale beer oozing out onto the sidewalk. A truly beautiful Town Hall on the right, with the cop shop and fire hall on the lower level.

*<cue sounds of the Town Hall clock hitting 3:00>*

Turn the corner and you're soon strollin' past Sparlings, the great little Mom and Pop grocery store where my Mom shops pretty much every week. Support the little guy who lives in town and hires people from town, that's her motto. A couple of cars up on the hoist at MacDuff's and a few over at Skip's, Ag and Food office over on the right, Bank of Montreal anchoring down the corner.

*<he walks along a bit further, looping around on stage, and then pulls up to a stop>*

So here we are on our main drag, Durham Street, four blocks of one of the nicest downtowns in small-town Ontario. I'm going to just pop over to the Smoke Shoppe in the Hartley House, maybe scope the latest issue of Sporting News or poach a bag of hot, roasted cashews from the concession.

But before I do that, I'm just going to pull up and drink all of this in. I've lived here all my life, and know it like the back of my hand. But I'm a year away from finishing up high school, and then things are going to change big-time.

You know that 'get a job' thing? My Mom wants me to become an ordained minister. Don't think so, way too constraining. My Dad wants me to be a meat inspector over at Packers. Government job, good benefits, no heavy lifting...but not quite what I had in mind. A couple of buddies want me to sign up for the nuclear plant over at Tiverton. Money's great, Ontario Hydro's just another way to spell job security. But something's holding me back on that front...what, I can't say. My gut tells me no to all of these options...

#### MYSTERY MAN

Gotta listen to your heart, kid...

*<an older chap steps in from the wings, dressed in a business casual fashion and smiling knowingly at the young man>*

#### JAYSON

Afternoon, mister. You new to town? I know most folks around here, and don't think we've ever crossed paths.

#### MYSTERY MAN

Yep, just got in, it's been a while since I've been back. Came in by...uh, uh...motor coach.

JAYSON

Funny, I thought the bus from down country rolled in around 9:00...

MYSTERY MAN

Listen, Jayson, there are a lot of mysteries in life, take it from me...

JAYSON

So we do know each other, or otherwise how would you know my name?

MYSTERY MAN

Yeah, yeah, I know your family.

JAYSON

My Dad's lived here for a long time and pretty much knows everyone. Small town, y'know?

MYSTERY MAN

Oh, that I know kid! See, I grew up here...

JAYSON

Oh, that's interesting...how long have you been away?

MYSTERY MAN

Well, getting close to fifty years now. Figured it was time to roll back, reconnect, maybe do some important work?

JAYSON

Funny, I was just thinking about work. I've had part-time jobs here and there...cutting grass, loading trucks over at Packers, stocking shelves at the LCBO. If you ever want to know what's going on around town, just keep your eyes and ears open at the liquor store!

MYSTERY MAN

Those part-time jobs early on are really important, kind of set you up for life, y'know?

JAYSON

Yeah, for sure.

Anyways, I've got to run up the street to do an errand for my Mom. Nice talking to you, mister, hope you have a nice stay here in the County Town.

MYSTERY MAN

For sure, kid. I'll be around, here and there. We'll probably cross paths again. And if I can ever help you, just let me know. And be a good boy, now. Y'hear?!

*<The older gentleman exits stage right, turning for a lingering and subtle wave towards the young man, who stands in the middle of the stage with a slightly furrowed brow and a shy smile sharing space on his face>*

<LIGHTS CUT TO BLACK FOR THE NECESSARY SCENE TRANSITION>

SCENE 2 FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS, NOT

GEORGIE

*<A middle aged man sits on a wooden crate underneath a 'Duffy's Pool Hall' sign. Think Red Green in terms of haberdashery, an air of casual indifference and a reality of not much going on>*

Y'know, I missed out on one of those high paying jobs over at The Point. Walk around all day with a two by four over your shoulder, looking busy for the boss man? But maybe I'm better off...at least sitting around here in front of Duffy's I can be my own man. No pretence, y'know. Life is meant to be observed, savoured even, like a fine wine. And I was young once, so I like overhearing conversations between any of the young bucks in town. Helps me keep informed of where current day thinking has evolved...

*<Jayson and Lou come into the scene, chuckling and connecting in an animated way>*

LOU

I told you football was a dead end sport, so why did you even try out? We may be gazelles on the basketball court, man, but gazelles get hunted down on the open savannah of the gridiron!

JAYSON

You're right, you're right, why didn't I listen? But the ladies just love a football player, man. At the early tryouts the stands were full of girls, all sitting on the edge of their bleacher seats and screaming blue murder. I could feel the lust in their voices, dude, and I wanted that directed at me!

LOU

So you were being driven by your loins to do something that could have got your nuts pressed back halfway to Mildmay? I should have slapped some sense into ya?

JAYSON

Yep, you would have saved me a ton of embarrassment and a load of pain. But noooo, I needed this growth opportunity!

LOU

So what actually went down?

JAYSON

I heard they were in need of players at a number of slots, so I went out to the second tryout. I had the wimpiest pair of shoulder pads on, under a practice jersey that was washed sometime in the last century. The real football dudes were wearing cleats, but had my green suede Adidas on, and the field was muddy and slippery.

LOU

Heavy body odour and elegant footwear, I like the mental picture I'm forming in my head.

JAYSON

So I stole a glance over at the bleachers, completely full of girls. And in the middle of them all, was this gal Kat, wearing a tight little sweater that made my eyes pop out.

LOU

Now this is almost starting to sound worthwhile.

Long range vision verified, clingy fabric under tension confirmed. So then what happened?

JAYSON

The coach comes out and explains a drill that will assess speed, dexterity and toughness. You have to lie down, jump up and run back to the fifteen yard line for the ball, and then turn and run it back into the end zone.

LOU

Sounds simple enough. What's the catch?

JAYSON

Each runner has to get past a dedicated tackler. The guy's lying down with his feet pointing to the end zone, helmet to helmet with you. One son of a bitch between you and success, and it just so happens to be a guy built like a fire hydrant...

LOU

Oh, no! It wasn't...

JAYSON

Yep, it was Animal. All 200 lbs of low center of gravity maliciousness, capped off with a grin that would make a dentist wince!

LOU

Okay, okay, I've got the picture. And then?

JAYSON

Not so fast, Pontiac. I was second to last in a line of a dozen guys, and got to watch one after the other get caught and stapled into the turf. Some guys were fast, some were slow, but the end result was the same.

LOU

Fair enough, buildup of quiet dread and plenty of stomach churning...

JAYSON

Check and check, good buddy. So then my whistle blew, I heard a few screams from the bleachers, and I ran back with the ball.

I circled wide, kind of on instinct, thinking I could use the full width of the field to exploit my native speed...

LOU

It's the physics of football that I've always found intriguing!

JAYSON

And y'know it's kinda working, I'm at the ten, then at the five...but running at such a wide angle that the distance to the end zone is way more than I figured! But I feel that Animal has to be kind of tuckered out after doing this close to a dozen times, so I find a hidden gear and try to take it home!

LOU

Yes, yes, yes! The bleacher crowd is on their feet, arms a'flailing, soprano voices mewling!

JAYSON

And with just two yards to go, I saw a blur on my left side...like a flipping express train roaring to meet its schedule!

LOU

Nooooo, it's Animal, upset at having to do so much work to nail another tackle, sending his piston legs into overdrive and flying into the air, taking the golden gazelle down into the dirt!

JAYSON

As if you were there, my friend. I got to see his signature fist-pump celebration from an entirely fresh angle!

GEORGIE

Just minding my own business here, boys, but you don't often hear such a detailed account of a major ass whupping!

My only question, silly as it may sound...how did those lovely ladies react?

JAYSON

A few soft groans, lots of looking away, scrunching of cute little noses and some knowing nods...which all hurt way more than the slam in the gut...

LOU

I can't believe you, man. You just had your bell rung big-time, and your first reaction is to survey the collective female response? Really shows your priorities, boss...

VINCE

*<comes out slyly from the inner recesses of the pool hall>*

Good ol' Jay-boy...just your normal red-blooded Canadian male, eh, focussing on the skirts in the bleachers! That's cool, as long as he knows the amazing Kat is totally not interested in some boring guy like him!?

JAYSON

Oh, for sure, Vince, I'm not even sure if I really know who Kat is?

VINCE

Oh, cut out the BS, everyone knows the hottest girl in school!

GEORGIE

Boys, just saying, shouldn't this particular girl be perhaps consulted on who she's romantically interested in? Y'know, Gloria Steinem and all that kind of stuff?

VINCE

Go to hell, you village idiot! If we listened to the likes of you, we'd have wooden sidewalks and this would still be part of the Queen's Bush!

WILLARD

*<a middle-aged man appears from stage right, with a serious tone to his demeanour>*

Georgie, boys, have you heard the sad news?

GEORGIE

What's happened, Will?

WILLARD

You boys know Milt O'Brien's son, Teddy?

LOU

He's a couple of years ahead of us in school, but always says hi...nice guy...

WILLARD

He got killed an hour ago. Received a brand new motorcycle for his 20th birthday a few weeks back. A 750, with far too much power. Was out in the country and went around a turn too fast. A touch of light rainfall just before the accident, so the road may have been a bit greasy. Lost control of the bike and went broadside into a big tree. Probably died on contact, which may have been a blessing.

GEORGIE

Geezus...

JAYSON

So what can we do?

WILLARD

Well, I always go around the neighborhood and take up a collection for the family. Bereaved folks need flowers. Not sure why, but they do. So you can help me with that...and one other thing.

JAYSON

What's that, Dad?

WILLARD

Stay safe, m'boy. I've already lost one son. With news like this, I don't think my heart would survive the loss of another.

<LIGHTS CUT TO BLACK FOR THE NECESSARY SCENE TRANSITION>

SCENE 3 DEATH BY CHOCOLATE

*<Jayson sits at a kitchen table, while his Mom dries dishes with a tea towel and generally fusses with kitchen tidying while having a conversation with her son>*

RACHEL

A bit more milk?

JAYSON

Nah, I'm good. Got just enough to finish off this cookie. If I had more milk, then I'd need another cookie, and then you'd ask me if I need more milk...

RACHEL

That wouldn't be such a terrible thing. A growing boy needs food, and the best food is what your Mom rustles up in her kitchen...

JAYSON

Oh, for sure, Mom. But I'm really trying to rein in the sweets. I want to have a great last year on the basketball court, and to do that I need to be a bit leaner and a whole lot fitter.

RACHEL

Please don't keep telling me it's your last year at home. That's the worst thing a Mom can hear, especially from the baby of the family!

JAYSON

I'll try to get home as often as I can, Mom. Honest, I will. Major holidays for sure. Maybe even once a month if I can swing it. But I'm going to be studying hard, y'know?

RACHEL

Yes, yes, I know. You have your whole life ahead of you, and you need to get out of this house. But it's just...hard, really hard. You see, I've always had a child around here for close to thirty years now. The idea of an empty nest makes me...makes me feel defeated.

*<the mother tears up, and turns away, lightly daubing her eyes with a dish towel>*

JAYSON

Mom, are you okay?

RACHEL

Yes, I'm fine. I really am fine. But when I get emotional, I start mulling over things, and then I feel even worse. And it goes 'round and 'round. Lots of things to give thanks for, Lord knows, but lots of things to feel sad about too.

It wasn't just the tragedy of losing your brother, it was losing my own brother, and...

*<quietly bites back more tears>*

JAYSON

And losing your Dad when you were just 17. You've had a pretty hard life, Mom.

*<stands up to hug his Mom while she continues on>*

RACHEL

My Dad was hard on us kids, but I had this hope that things might get better. Then he was gone, really before I had fully grown up.

JAYSON

Man, that would be hard...and you were like, even younger than I am now? Tell me more about my uncle...remind me what regiment he was in?

RACHEL

Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, out of Hamilton. He should never have been a soldier, and we all believed he didn't get the proper training. And who really knows what happened over there in Holland?

But one thing is certain. He never came back. And he was so vibrant, so handsome, so kind, so much fun! We were only a year apart. Losing him pretty much broke my Mom's heart. And mine too, if the truth be told.

I used to do war work in a factory down on Front Street in Toronto, and lived in a boarding house up on Avenue Road. On VE Day I had to walk all the way home as the streetcars were mobbed. Confetti was in the air, people were dancing in the streets, complete strangers were hugging and kissing one another. And in the midst of all that joy, I was the saddest person in Toronto, as I knew he would never be rolling back to Union Station on a troop train.

JAYSON

Oh, gosh, that just kills me to hear that!

*<the young man sits back down at the table, in an attempt to defuse the emotion in the kitchen>*

RACHEL

So first my Dad, then my brother, and I had no idea that within ten years I would lose a son on top of all that. And he was such a kind little fellow, as cute as a button.

JAYSON

I know, I know, I've looked at the pictures a thousand times...

RACHEL

I'll have to tell you more sometime soon, about his last day, but that's too much for one morning. My God, I don't know what's worse?! To bury one's grief and be strong and silent, or to let it out by telling the stories and crying to no end!?

*<dabs her eyes with the tea towel>*

JAYSON

Mom, I've got to run, or I'll be late for school. But if you need me to stay, I'll take the late slip and be here as long as you like.

RACHEL

No...no, just go. I'm fine, really I am. It's good to share the stories. It does help a bit. And we have something to look forward to for supper. I won a prize from last year's Little Royal Fair for my upside-down cake, and just came across the gift certificate tucked in a drawer. A steak and baked potato dinner for two down at the Queen's. How about that?

JAYSON

Just made my day! I'll be home after practice, no later than five.

*<The young man scoops up his school bag and dashes off. The mother looks longingly in the direction of his departure, and turns to the kitchen counter, humming a few bars from The White Cliffs of Dover>*

LIGHTS CUT TO BLACK FOR THE NECESSARY SCENE TRANSITION

SCENE 4 THE SCENT OF A WOMAN

*<Jayson and Vince hang out at the loading docks of the shop wing, taking in the sun on a beautiful afternoon>*

VINCE

Ah, nothing like a spare on a beautiful day! School's just not my thing...sitting at a desk, listening to some old man drone on and on. Who set up this system anyways?

JAYSON

Uh, I kind of like school. You get to learn things, and in a good class, you can expand your mind quite a bit.

VINCE

Cripes, Boy Scout, start whipping up the pancakes for the next Jamboree! Or some kind of Lutheran Youth for Christ rally, where thousands of losers just like you hold hands and sing Kumbaya!

JAYSON

OK, OK, I know I'm not Alice Cooper cool like you, Vince, but I'm not as square as you think. I only went to the Lutheran Church 'cause my Dad was raised on that out Neustadt way, and I don't even go on Sundays anymore.

VINCE

Your Dad is kind of intimidating, man, I can't see him as a choirboy. What's his story anyways, do you even know? I never hear him talk about himself...

JAYSON

Well, he started working in a furniture factory when he was 15, back in the 30s. Kind of lied his way in, as you had to be 16 to be a legit worker. Then a hired hand on a farm, and then he was the ice man here in town. Cut it in big blocks from the river, rolled them in sawdust for insulation, and stored it all in a big ice house. Then they would chop it in smaller blocks and deliver it by horse to sit in ice boxes and cool people's food.

VINCE

Wild, I knew your old man was ancient, but pre-refrigerator old, that's bloody amazing!

JAYSON

Then he was in the Royal Canadian Air Force during the war, and after that he had a whole bunch of odd jobs to keep busy. The river would flood every year, and everyone would go around in boats 'cause the water was three feet high in the downtown.

So he helped build the dyke system in the early 50s. These things tamed the mighty Saugeen, and gave everyone a great vantage point to admire the river going by.

VINCE

Air Force? Did he like fly planes and bomb the crap out of the Germans?

JAYSON

No, man, he was a truck driver. Drove a truck onto the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, full of cooks and food. The truck engine stalled in the water, and there were dozens of German planes strafing the sand. But my Dad stayed cool and got the motor running and zig-zagged onto the beach to safety.

VINCE

Hmmph, nothing like a little danger to get the heart revving!

JAYSON

Then he was in a repair and salvage unit, and they went through France and Belgium and on into Holland. Sounds kind of boring, but they were the ones who had to clean up the bodies after the battles. He buried thousands of soldiers in shallow graves, from both sides. So go ahead and make fun of him, but he's done stuff that you and I will never do!

VINCE

Alright, alright, but he just seems like a boring old bugger who drives a Canada Packers truck down to Toronto. And aren't you guys like, German? How did that work during the war, was he some kind of double agent?

JAYSON

We're Canadians, man, like sixth generation. We just have a German last name. But even the Germans hated Hitler, 'cause that guy was a maniac!

VINCE

No pushback on that, Bronco. My grandpa was in the war too, although a bit too old to go over for active service. Rode a desk at a base outside of Ottawa. Boring as hell, so he developed a bit of a taste for rye whiskey hidden in a side drawer. From all accounts, it was a pretty wild time in the evenings on the base!

JAYSON

No judgment, dude. What would we do if we were away from home and not much to do outside of work? Heck, even now, even right here, I see a lot of things that would raise your eyebrows down at the old liquor store!

VINCE

How did you score that gig, man?

JAYSON

My neighbour's son is the manager down there. He always told me that when I reached the age of majority, he'd have a part-time job for me. And as soon as my last birthday rolled around, he came right over with the paperwork.

VINCE

Free booze, right?!

JAYSON

Dreaming in technicolor, knave! This is not the A&P, where you can pinch a chocolate bar when you're on break. The provincial government controls inventory, pricing, even the clothes we wear.

VINCE

I bet I could figure out a way to get free booze if I worked there. Like don't boxes fall off the truck and bottles break? Who down at LCBO Central would notice a few more breakers happening up here in the county town?

JAYSON

Hmmm, I dunno, Vince. Besides, I really don't drink. Not even beer, and certainly not the hard stuff. My Mom was raised up on The Peninsula with tent peg evangelicals, and they frown on drinking, dancing, even card playing.

VINCE

Oh, crikey, we live on different planets, man. My cow band is like a magnet for chicks. We lubricate pretty heavily before a dance, and afterwards too. Helps the ladies lose their inhibitions, y'know what I'm saying?

JAYSON

Umm, yeah, I guess?

VINCE

Dude, you look tense. Are you getting any these days?

JAYSON

Getting what?

VINCE

No need to be coy, Roy, you know what I'm talking about! Sex!

JAYSON

No...I mean, not yet. But I've been certainly thinking about it a lot.

VINCE

There's your problem, my man. You need less thinking, and more action. More action will lead to actual results, which will lead to even more action. Positive spiral, y'know?

JAYSON

Yeah...I mean no! No one has told me how it's done, or anything much about it. What do you suggest?

VINCE

It's a way of being, dumbbell. Keep your radar up and just relax... you never know what might cross your path at any minute.

*<a young lady comes in from the right, hesitates demurely and connects briefly with Jayson. At the same time, the Mystery Man hangs at the edge of the stage in the shadows but still visible to the audience. He stays there until the end of the scene, alternating with the raising of his eyebrows and the furrowing of his brow>*

BETH

Good morning, Jayson, how are you?

JAYSON

Uh, fine, quite fine, more than quite fine! Relaxed, actually.

BETH

Good to hear...well off to class...

*<after the awkwardness, she steps off breezily with just the briefest of lookbacks>*

VINCE

Hey, hey, hey, I just saw a little bit of light at the end of a very long tunnel. Spend a little time with Missy there and your prospects could turn quickly, Maestro!

JAYSON

Are you kidding me? Beth Majors is like the most clean living girl in school! She has a personal relationship with Jesus, for good God's sake. If you wanna go camping, man, ya gotta know where to pitch your tent!

VINCE

Tut, tut, tut, Opie! That girl has a killer body! And she's maybe even kinda pretty. All I'm saying, in the right circumstances, you never know how the Holy Spirit will move someone!

JAYSON

But I don't know the first thing about how you do it, and that could just lead to a lot of embarrassment. How did you figure things out before you had, uh, done it?

VINCE

Oh, I'll admit to a lot of fumbling around back in grade nine and ten, but then I linked up with an experienced woman. Her worldly ways helped me a lot, and I was definitely a quick study!

JAYSON

What do you mean by an experienced woman? Like a prostitute?

VINCE

Awwhh, don't be silly, numbskull! As far as I can tell there is no such thing in this one-horse town. But there were plenty of women who were happy to take this manly specimen for a test drive!

JAYSON

Like who?

VINCE

Ooh, not a good practice to kiss and tell, my man.

Just keep the radar up and your eyes open and you'll be amazed at what crosses your path!

*<another young lady enters from the left, slinking more than walking, and purring more than talking>*

KAT

Hey Vincie, who's your friend?

VINCE

Friend? Friend? Oh, you mean this guy who I am just chatting with mindlessly, kinda filling time until the goddess of WDSS arrives?

KAT

Yeah, exactly. Who is this very nice fellow you just happen to be hanging out with?

JAYSON

Jayson, pleasure to...uh, very nice to, uh...nice to meet you. And your name is?

KAT

You probably know who I am. Kat, short for Katherine. But that's also my grandma's name, so I like to say Kat, like a pussycat...

JAYSON

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I've seen you around, like maybe at the football tryouts. You're not from town, right?

KAT

No, I come in on the bus from Kincardine. Kat...Kink...it's easy to remember.

VINCE

All right, little Miss Alliteration, time to run off to your English class. But maybe I can walk you to your bus later? Make some plans for the weekend?

KAT

We'll see how things unfold, Vincie. There may be some other boys who want to walk me to the bus. Or even better, drive me home in their cute little red Mustangs.

And as for the weekend, that's much too far down the road to make concrete plans. I prefer to keep my radar up and my eyes open for possibilities...

*<Kat exits to the right, while looking back at Jayson and giving him a sly smile and perhaps the slightest hint of a wink>*

JAYSON

You've certainly got a very nice girlfriend there, Vince. Nice figure, pretty, and notably confident. Well done, Sir.

VINCE

*<comes up to Jayson, with more than a hint of malice>*

This is my second warning to you, Mister. Direct your attentions to the Miss Goody Two Shoes of this burgh and we'll be just fine. But keep your eyes and your hands off Kat, or I'll smack you all the way back to Clifford!  
Y'hear?!

*<LIGHTS CUT TO BLACK FOR THE NECESSARY SCENE TRANSITION>*

#### SCENE 5 BASKETBALL AND BIOLOGY

*<Jayson and Lou sit beside each other in a gym bleacher, looking out at the audience as if they are watching a basketball game, and conversing at the same time in a conspiratorial, often under the breath manner. Sounds of referee whistles and cheerleading calls break the soundscape from time to time>*

JAYSON

I think I like watching the girls' games almost as much as playing in ours.

LOU

Well, for obvious reasons, dude. And the senior girls team is pretty darn good...

JAYSON

Yep, nothing like watching sports... playing sports is better, but when you're not playing, watching's almost as good. Not much to do around here on a Friday night! In reality, what does anybody actually do on a Friday night in this town?

LOU

Well, I'm not the best person to ask. On a Friday night my parents just want to stay home and relax, have some dinner, put the feet up, watch CKNX...

JAYSON

If my Dad ever gets a night off from Packers he goes down to the Legion. A whole bunch of war vets drowning their sorrows, smoking like chimneys. I walk by and the air coming out the door is blue...

*<The Mystery Man quietly slides into the bleacher seating, one row down and a little to the left of the two boys. He focuses on the game action, but also keeps a discreet ear in on their conversation, reacting subtly but humorously. From time to time, in appropriate gaps, he calls out to encourage the girls' team, calling them by name with "Nancy, great defence, keep up the pressure now; Great board work, Jane, lovely outlet pass; hand in the face, Caroline, watch the pick; Well done, ladies, well done!">*

LOU

*<looks out to the imaginary court and gesticulates...>*

Come on ref, she's traveling!

These refs need an eye exam! Cripes!

JAYSON

Careful, friend, these guys will be calling our game too! All you need is to get in their bad books..

LOU

Alright, alright. I'll just sit here and watch the scenery. Could be worse, right?!

JAYSON

Yeah, scenery... senior women's team, senior girl's team ? What do we call them?

LOU

I don't know man, I don't know... come on ref!

Oops, sorry, yeah these certainly aren't girls, these are definitely women...we don't need our eyes checked, right, like these refs...

JAYSON

Yeah, I hear ya! I know we're becoming young men, but what is it, like all through high school, the girls are definitely two years ahead of us guys, or more...

LOU

Yeah, that's what I was kind of hinting at... but it's weird to be discussing this out in the open, man, public conversation and all. I just can't think too much about that kind of thing or I get a little bit squirrely...

JAYSON

Yeah, same, was just talking about it to Vince... he's way ahead of us man, way ahead.. he's actually, like, doing it...

LOU

Doing it? Like doing it, doing it?

JAYSON

Well, I think so... he's in a band, all kinds of chicks hanging around, alcohol mixed in...

LOU

I live on another planet man.. I think I'm going to be a virgin until I'm 40...

JAYSON

Hmmmm, 40 year old virgin, that has a certain ring to it!

But I doubt it...you'll go to university, score high grades, find a little girlfriend, marry her, you know, you know...

LOU

Maybe...you know I was down by the river the other day over by Sacred Heart, on that road that cuts down to the picnic area off to the left?

JAYSON

Oh, yeah, yeah...

LOU

And I heard some sounds that I thought maybe there was a couple of guys wrestling? I didn't know what it was?

JAYSON

Animals?

LOU

Well, then it kind of dawned on me, you know, I happen to live in an apartment with thin walls, so what I was hearing was the unmistakable chorus of two people having it off...

JAYSON

Having what off?

LOU

God, having sex!

Way to go ladies!

So things went a bit quiet... I walked on tiptoe over to a stand of trees that offered some cover...and up ahead in the clearing some guy stood at the edge of a picnic table, jeans bunched around his ankles, ass as white as snow and turning pink from all the sunlight, and the lady, well, she was laying on her back and obviously enjoying the proceedings...

JAYSON

Well, fresh air and all...

LOU

Apparently they call it crop dusting? It was quite energetic, and after a while I realized that I actually knew them... I see the lady around town, and the guy works at the Ag Office...

JAYSON

So what's going on, they can't do it at home?

LOU

Dude, it wasn't her husband...the guy brings his grumpy wife into the restaurant from time to time, and this definitely wasn't his wife! Their little meetup in the open air might be all that could be arranged in this small town, where neighbors are always watching your comings and goings...but it kind of makes you think...

JAYSON

Woo boy, I don't know man, I've gotta change the way I look at things... I was out at the fun fair the Kiwanis Club runs up on the grounds of Brant Central...

LOU

Oh, I didn't get there this year...

JAYSON

All kinds of things going on... Crown and Anchor, fried dough, cotton candy...then off to the side, a kissing booth...

LOU

A kissing booth?

JAYSON

Yeah, something my Dad's mentioned, that were all the rage in the 30s. Young men lined up to pay for a big smacker, probably a nickel back then...today, fifty cents, and all for a good cause...

LOU

You walk up to the booth, put some coins down and you get to kiss someone? like whoever's manning the booth?

JAYSON

Well, that's the thing, it wasn't just anyone, it was this neighbor of good old Vince, and he says that she's open to doing... favours... I'm not gonna say much out here in the open, but certain favours. She had on this top that made my eyes pop out and was kind of moving her shoulders and dancing to some music, and I was thinking, oh man, I'm definitely going to spend a hard-earned buck here. But then I kinda lost my nerve for half a second, circled around the yard to create a bit of suspense, went back to the cotton candy stand and the weight guessing booth and the tea leaves reader, kind of hanging around for a few moments watching all the activity. Then I thought OK, I'm delaying the inevitable, I'm going back to this real woman with her lipstick that's so bright red it would knock your socks off, and just see what happens...

LOU

Great defence, Rita! Go on, man, don't keep me hanging here!

JAYSON

So I'm coming back into sight of the kissing booth, and lo and behold, I've been peckered! She'd gone off shift! And in her place was Geoff Robley's older sister, who's pretty enough in a tomboyish way, so I pop two quarters down and she says "Jayson, are you here to be kissed?" And I stammer back, "Yep, I've just got the fifty cents", and she says "Well, then, we're going to have to make it a good one".

Man, best fifty cents I've ever spent...

MYSTERY MAN

Young gents, good afternoon to you...

LOU

Hey Mister...

JAYSON

Hi there Sir, good to see you again, pretty good game, eh?

MYSTERY MAN

Yes, and I can't wait to watch you lads play later on...

JAYSON

Oh, that's great, it's always nice to have folks from outside the school come and watch our games...

MYSTERY MAN

Ah, I went to WDSS, was a Raider just like you guys...

LOU

You played basketball?

MYSTERY MAN

Yeah, I wasn't much to talk about on offence, but I could lock down any sniper on the other team. Some guy who habitually nailed 20 points...would hold him to 8 or so...that difference usually meant the victory...

JAYSON

Yeah, Coach says stellar defence wins games...

MYSTERY MAN

You got a great coach...

LOU

You know Scotty?

MYSTERY MAN

He's a legend! Great athlete, in both football and basketball. Great coach, great mentor for you guys. Everybody needs a mentor, especially when you're going places...

JAYSON

Yeah, I'm kind of figuring that out in fits and starts... trying to stay out of trouble I guess, and it's not easy...

MYSTERY MAN

Well kid, you're finishing high school, but you wanna have a little fun too... the question is how much and what kind?

LOU

That's good advice, thank you...

MYSTERY MAN

Listen, fellows, I hope you don't mind a word on a potentially delicate subject... I kind of overheard you discussing the applied romance side of things. We all gotta start somewhere... sometimes you just have to take the initiative, and things take care of themselves.

LOU

You heard all that?

MYSTERY MAN

Listen, kid, I've seen it all... I remember when I was your age, sometimes you just have to recognize the opportunities that are right under your nose...

JAYSON

Really?

MYSTERY MAN

Yeah, just look out on the court... a few of these young ladies have their eyes on you guys.

Probably not doing anything after the game, so just go up and float a trial balloon...

LOU

Oh man, nawww, these gals are way out of our league...

MYSTERY MAN

Two good-looking guys like you, great athletes, and good students? Any of those gals would love to be on your arm at a dance or to go see the movies in Hanover... but you gotta stick your neck out...

JAYSON

Like how?

MYSTERY MAN

Set yourself apart... see how I'm cheering them on like I've got a bullhorn, calling them by name? When they look up into the stands to see who the heck is yelling, I flash them a smile...they think it's some old dude, somebody's grandpa's calling down to them! But if I was your age, and showed that kind of enthusiasm...who knows what might happen? That's all I'll say on the matter, I'm going to just step away as I've got a few things to do before your game starts. It's been fun, fellas, and good luck with the game. Owen Sound's always a tough matchup, but you're defending homecourt. So go for it, guys, go for it!

LIGHTS GO TO BLACK FOR TRANSITION TO THE INTERLUDE

INTERLUDE BETWEEN ACTS

*<An older, retired couple sits in rocking chairs on a simulated front porch>*

MATILDA

Kinda looks like rain, dontcha think?

ORVILLE

Hmmm...maybe, but it always seems to pass us by. Lawn's dry, so we sure could use some rain...

MATILDA

Remember the days on the farm, when we would literally pray for rain?

ORVILLE

You got that right, Mama! One puts down seed, and then turns it over to a Higher Power. No rain, poor crop, you could go bust in one season.

MATILDA

But we did all right over forty years out on the South Line, dontcha think?

ORVILLE

Enough to feed us and the three kids, with a new car every five years. I think that was pretty good fishing...

MATILDA

But do you ever miss it? Do you ever think we retired into town too early?

ORVILLE

Oh, for about a second or two, then my back squawks and I am just happy to sit in this rocker, collect my pension and watch the world go by...

MATILDA

Oh, I suppose you're right. But I do miss the open space out on the farm, and the privacy...everybody here in town seems to know your business...

ORVILLE

Privacy, what do folks like us have to keep private?

MATILDA

Oh, you know, things that are relationship oriented...

ORVILLE

Now, Tillie, are you starting to feel frisky?

MATILDA

Oh, Orvie, we're not kids anymore!

ORVILLE

The stallion can still run in the paddock, m'lady! Let's go inside and see what might transpire...

MATILDA

Well, I do have a few minutes before I have to peel the potatoes for supper...

ORVILLE

OK, I'll splash on a little *eau de cologne* and you turn up that Grand Ole Opry music, just so we take it easy on the ears of all these nosy neighbours of ours...

MATILDA

Oh, Orville, you surely are the last of the hopeless romantics!

I'll see you inside, my darling!

<LIGHTS GO TO BLACK FOR THE TRANSITION TO THE SECOND ACT>

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ACT 2:

SCENE 1: THE APPEAL OF JURISPRUDENCE

<Jayson sits in a chair, reading a book at the kitchen table. Willard comes in and starts rummaging around for a quick breakfast and tea>

WILLARD

Laddie, how are ya doing?

JAYSON

All right, I guess. Looks like it could turn sunny a bit later.

WILLARD

As I always say, the last Friday of the month generally tells you what the coming month will be like. We had a beauty of a day last Friday, so I'm counting on some good weather to bring in the last of the garden.

JAYSON

Oh God, not more gardening! Most people go up to Sauble or Port for a last day at the beach, but we spend our free time digging potatoes!

WILLARD

Harvesting a good garden is a joy in life...by the way, I've got some errands to do downtown. Why don't you come along to give me a hand with the carrying?

JAYSON

I'm in the middle of this great book, and feeling kind of bagged after a busy week. Sure you really need me?

WILLARD

Well, I can probably get along alone, but it might be a bit much to carry back. I need some paint and wallpaper from Cuneo's, and then have to stop by the lawyer's office to sign some second mortgage documents. It might be good for you to see his office, as you never know what you might do down the road. Lawyering would be a clean, well-paying job. No heavy lifting, eh?

JAYSON

Sounds boring, and this is such a good book. What's a second mortgage?

WILLARD

Pop in a bookmark and I'll have you back in less than an hour. I'll explain second mortgages along the way.

*<the father and son don windbreakers and make their way around the stage, as if they are ambling towards the downtown area>*

WILLARD

I was lucky. Made a little money in the early days and saved most of it. So when we got our first house, I bought it fully in cash. But some folks aren't so lucky, or have more mouths to feed, and they need to go to a bank to get the money to buy a house. They call this a mortgage, and they sock the young family with a lot of interest payments. And sometimes the bank gets uppity and won't loan enough to buy the house outright. So they need a second mortgage to make up the difference.

JAYSON

Sounds kinda complicated...

WILLARD

A bit, but they generally go to some finance company to get the extra money, and these guys charge even higher interest. So I help some young bucks I know, who work hard and will be sure to pay it off. I charge them close to zero interest, so they can get on their feet that much quicker. But I get old man Barr to draw up some papers to sign just in case they would rather buy one of those new-fangled colour televisions than pay me back!

Alright, here's Cuneo's, but let's go to the lawyer first then pick up the paint and paper.

*<they walk through a door, and are greeted by a petite stenographer wearing an impossibly snug cashmere sweater>*

WILLARD (CONT'D)

Miss, we're here for some signatures, and a quick word with Mr. Barr.

PENELOPE

Yes, sir, he's expecting you. Go right on in. The young man can take a seat over there.

*<this is said coolly, with a flippant gesture of a well-manicured hand. Willard goes off to some inner sanctum off stage, with muffled voices emanating from this space. The boy looks around at the degrees and professional certificates on the wall, and looks over nervously from time to time at the young woman labouring over a typewriter. She extracts the sheet and puts it in a file folder and shimmies over to a file cabinet directly in front of the young man. She sports a beautiful pair of heels, and a pleated short skirt that is as form-fitting as her sweater. She looks for the appropriate place to file the folder in a slow and provocative way, and alternates between turning to him and speaking in whispery tones, and then going back to her filing.>*

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

Did you go to Chickenfest this year?

JAYSON

Uh, yeah, yes I did...

PENELOPE

Patronize the beer garden?

JAYSON

No, my Mom wouldn't allow that. She grew up kind of religious and all. Drinking, dancing, card playing--all frowned upon.

PENELOPE

Maybe they would have asked for your ID, and that would be that...

JAYSON

Oh, no problem that way, I've reached the age of majority. Work the shelves over at the LCBO...

PENELOPE

Eighteen, eh? Hmm, legal age to do a lot of things. Now what about dancing, I'm sure you've got a cute little gal who likes to get down!

JAYSON

Uh, nope, no luck on that front...

PENELOPE

No girlfriend? My, my, my, things just get more interesting by the minute...did you watch the chicken-eating contest?

JAYSON

Oh, yeah, went with my Mom, and just loved it! Big beefy guys and a few scrawny string beans, just pounding back those greasy half birds. I used to cook up at KFC, so I know my chicken!

PENELOPE

Oooh, would you call yourself a breast man, or a leg man?

*<this is emitted while bending back over to do the filing>*

JAYSON

Umm, uh, I guess...both? I even like wings and ribs...

PENELOPE

Don't be coy, Roy. I can see you're a leg man. Certainly works to my advantage.

JAYSON

Listen, Miss, you're like way out of my league...

PENELOPE

I'll cut to the chase. My boyfriend's in the Reserves, and just got sent to Gagetown for eighteen months. I live with his parents. God-fearing folks, who are boring as hell, and they watch me like a hawk. But I come to work and I'm here all day pretty much by myself. Old man Barr's in court half the time, or out golfing the other half. If I had a little high school intern, you most definitely would learn a lot about many things. What do you say?

JAYSON

Uh, I kind of get your drift, but I'm not totally sure what you mean?

PENELOPE

Listen, peanut, and listen good. I'm twenty four and my boyfriend's out of town for the long haul. I'm offering you a little work-study arrangement with a short-term benefits plan! Now don't tell me you're not interested, I could see it in your eyes when you walked in. Do any of your little high school gals wear a skirt like this?

*<at this point the lawyer and the father come out of the inner sanctum>*

LAWYER

Penelope, I hope you've been giving this young man good company?

PENELOPE

Oh yes, Mr. Barr, we've been getting along swimmingly. Jayson has even expressed an interest in the profession, and we were just discussing a possible internship arrangement.

*<the young lady scrunches her cheeks and minces back to her desk, while the father and son look on bug-eyed>*

LAWYER

Splendid, splendid. Young man, you would learn a lot under Penny's direction, as she really does love her work.

JAYSON

Oh, Sir, I can just imagine!

<LIGHTS GO TO BLACK FOR THE SCENE TRANSITION>

SCENE 2 SMALL TOWN EXCITEMENT

*<Georgie sits out in front of Duffy's Pool Hall, enjoying the day, and breaking the fourth wall>*

GEORGIE

Just a peach of day, one that needs to be enjoyed outside. With our seven month Winter and blistering hot Summer, you get maybe half a dozen perfect days a year like this!

People wonder how I can seemingly sit around all day. Well, it's quite easy, actually!

Nope, don't need to work. I have a little room above the Wunderbar, 200 a month with utilities in. No wife or steady girlfriend, so I can live with a small pocketbook. Durham Street's my entertainment, my friends, where I know everybody and everybody knows me! So what's not to like?!

Let's just keep it between us, but I'm actually a man of considerable means. I know it might not look like it, but appearances can be deceiving. Yep, there's a reason that the manager up at the CIBC jumps to attention whenever I come in. He's the only guy in town that knows my net worth, and he definitely wants me to keep my shekels in his counting-house!

So how do I generate my cash flow? Passive income, my friends. Nothing illegal, but I still like to keep it on the down-low. So, any ideas of what keeps me in silk boxer shorts? Go ahead, y'all, take a guess...let's hear it!

*<audience calls out possible cash flow sources, with Georgie adlibbing responses and declining every one>*

Nope, nope, and nope. And here I thought someone might crack the code! Okay, I'll let you in on my little secret...

Tupperware...or more precisely, Tupperware parties. Nothing in Bruce, but every Tupperware party down in Huron and over in Grey, are run by my syndicate. I have a bevy of hard-working housewives who have their friends and neighbours over for cake and a frenzy of plastic container ordering, and I walk away with half of the net profits.

Only a few phone calls a month down to Leominster, Massachusetts, and the stuff gets delivered by my delivery boys out of Kitchener to the party homes. Rinse and repeat on a regular basis, and I send out a nice Christmas card with a little bonus cheque to each of my girls.

Now this is just between you and me, because if folks around here knew about this, someone's going to want to copy ol' Georgie and then I have competition on the block. We all need Tupperware, my friends, and I am so very happy to fill this void in people's lives!

Well, now, here come two of my favourite folks!

*<Rachel and Jayson walk along a downtown street, out running errands and enjoying each other's company>*

JAYSON

Good to see you, Georgie, as always!

RACHEL

George, hope you're having a very pleasant day, just like the weather!

JAYSON

Wish we could linger for a bit, Georgie, but we're checking off a few errands on the list...

*<Georgie affably waves them on, gives a sly wink to the audience, and exits stage right as the mother and son continue to amble up and down the stage>*

RACHEL

It's such a dandy day, and all the more pleasant with you along. I'm kind of in denial, knowing this is the last year before you go away.

JAYSON

Aww, Mom, we'll get lots of good days in before that happens. I'll help you out in any way, just tell me what you need done.

RACHEL

Well, let's drop by for the mail, and then maybe we can go home and get the car over to the dealership for an oil change and filter. I'd promised Dad I would get that done a while back.

JAYSON

Sure, we can do that. Do you want to drive and I'll just tag along for the company?

RACHEL

No, I like it when you drive. I'm not so keen on being behind the wheel. Your Dad's so critical of what I'm doing or not doing when I drive, it just knots me up!

JAYSON

OK, I'll wheel it over and maybe you can drive it back. Practice makes perfect you know?

RACHEL

And maybe we can go over to the fry shack and get some chips while we wait?

JAYSON

Don't have to ask me twice!

RACHEL

Or on second thought, we could loiter around the dealership office. Bud Lidge owns the place, and I think his daughter works there after school. She's always been a nice, quiet girl. We could just pop into the office and say hi?

JAYSON

No, I don't think so, the chip wagon closes soon and we don't want to be disappointed.

RACHEL

Are you sure? She's kind of cute, and has grown into quite the healthy young woman it would appear. Might be nice for you to have a little girlfriend in the last year of high school. Somebody local, rooted, could entice you to come back home more regularly from university?

JAYSON

Oh, Mom, I'll take a rain check on that front. I think Joy Ann may already have a boyfriend, or several boyfriends. Sometimes who you think is a quiet girl can surprise ya!? OK, I'll just run in and get the mail...

*<Lou appears quickly off to their right>*

LOU

Jay! Psstt, got something to tell ya'!

JAYSON

Mom, hang on for a moment, I just need a quick word with Lou...what's up, dude?

*<the boys go off to one side of the stage, to offer a bit of separation from Rachel, who feigns indifference but listens in intently>*

LOU

I was walking out the back of the commercial wing at school, and overheard a couple of gals at their lockers. Very interesting, my man, very interesting!

JAYSON

Like what? Spill, bronco, spill! I don't have all day...

LOU

Apparently, some kind of bet was placed between one of their friends and Kat. And Kat lost!

JAYSON

So, she'll have to pony up five bucks. Why are you wasting my time, and why are you so goldarn breathless?

LOU

I forgot to tell you the stakes, dude! Whoever lost the bet would have to go skinnydipping in the Saugeen! Kind of a Truth or Dare thing. In broad daylight, in front of whoever the winning party invites!

JAYSON

Kat? With no clothes on? Swimming in the currents of my favourite river? When and where?

LOU

Four o'clock this afternoon! Upstream of the dam!

JAYSON

Nice to know, even interesting to know. But one little problem. It's by invitation only. And do you have an invitation, my friend?

LOU

No! But jeepers creepers, do you think they'll be checking tickets at the door?! Man, we gotta go! The incredible Kat, shimmying out of her clothes and going for a dip, *au naturel*! This is the kind of thing we'll be talking about for years! Years, I tell ya!

JAYSON

I hear you, man, do I hear you! But another problem, big guy. If Vince is there, he'll punch our lights out! He has basically told me that I can't even look Kat's way. He'll take on every guy who shows up, that I know!

LOU

Vince, Schminze! He may not even be there, my man. We'll come in subtly, stay back under the trees, scope out any danger. Then we go in boldly, eyes wide open!

JAYSON

Honestly, man, you are going to be the death of me! Alright, alright, but I have to let my Mom down easy, I promised her some help.

Mom, Lou here needs a bit of help...with his homework. Calculus is truly befuddling the poor guy! Could we put off the lube and filter for another day?

<LIGHTS CUT TO BLACK FOR THE NECESSARY SCENE TRANSITION>

SCENE 3 LIFE AND DEATH

*<Jayson sits on a chair, facing Beth who also sits on a chair, in what appears to be the back of a dramatic arts classroom>*

BETH

C'mon, silly, we need to get to work and nail down this dialogue!

JAYSON

I don't know, it all seems a bit lame. Contrived, even.

BETH

Look who's been reading the dictionary! Trying to impress me with your fancy lingo?

JAYSON

Naw...well, maybe. So what does Mr. Tice actually want us to do?

BETH

Work from the script, breathe some life into the lines, and start to feel the character and the dialogue in our bones.

JAYSON

But it's a dinky one act play, performed at the front of the room. I can't get excited or motivated for that. I'm a jock, I need a proper crowd to get my blood flowing.

BETH

C'mon, actors take what they get. Not every production's West Side Story. I guess playing Riff kind of spoiled you, huh?!

JAYSON

That was a once in a lifetime high, for sure, but it's this script that's fouling me up. I'm an action guy, not this cheesy romantic nonsense!

BETH

Well, you sure know how to deflate a gal! I happen to quite like romance. Most plays have some kind of romantic content, y'know. Or haven't you been paying attention in class?

JAYSON

Maybe you're right, I have been kind of sleepwalking through Tice's droning, and wondering why I ever signed up for this course.

BETH

Maybe to meet girls? To get cast in a part opposite a ravishing leading lady? To sing and dance with pure, unadulterated joy?!

JAYSON

Well, you did tell me you had a way with words... maybe we should get going, or we'll get nailed on our participation grade. Where do we start?

BETH

Let's forget the preliminary bits, and just start from the top of page two..

*<she sits up, affecting a smouldering voice>*

"It's not working out, Rodrigo. I think we need to see other people."

JAYSON

*<a bit of fumbling, looking at notes, pregnant pause at the start>*

"No, Isabella, that's preposterous, we can make things right."

*<all said unconvincingly...and the teacher's voice booms out from off-stage>*

MR. TICE

Rodrigo, come on, man! A beautiful girl is saying she's going to walk out on you! This is no time to be wooden! Show some passion, dude, and at least put your arm around her!

*<the boy puts his arm tepidly around Beth's back on her opposite shoulder, and repeats his line with a modicum of increased heat>*

Arrrggggh, not like she's your sister! Cripes, she's your lover! Put your arm around her waist, draw her close and look into her eyes!

*<the boy follows the directions gingerly, and delivers the line for a third time in a reasonable fashion>*

Okay, better, much better! Jayson, you look like you're sweating, maybe you need to take a break and finish the scene after you cool off a bit...

BETH

My, that was bordering on impressive! Whew, it does feel like someone's turned up the thermostat in here!

JAYSON

All under duress, Isabella. I just wish it would come naturally. Maybe then I could become a solid actor, or at least be more than a bit romantic?

BETH

You just have to follow your passion. Find it, pursue it, and then just stand back in amazement. What gives you the greatest joy in life?

JAYSON

Dunno...maybe, shooting pool?

BETH

Shooting pool?

JAYSON

Yeah, I know that'll sound weird to a girl. But going down to Duffy's on a Friday night, playing a few games of spots and stripes, watching the sharks play snooker on the big table, seeing the bowlers whale away in the background. The smells, the joking around, the sheer geometry of the game...that's living!

BETH

My parents say pool halls are dens of iniquity. Idleness, smoking, swearing, gambling, slothful behaviour.

JAYSON

Aw, c'mon, that's just in the movies! Have you ever met Duffy? Handsome guy, clean cut, even wears cologne! And anybody who swears, he shows them to the door in very quick fashion. Sorry, I think your parents are out of date.

BETH

Maybe, but they're generally right about things. What else do you like to do?

JAYSON

Sports, or at least one sport. The king of sports... basketball. Mr. Naismith's invention, and what a great game it is. Either playing or practicing, I am totally in the zone and loving every minute.

BETH

You guys seem to have a pretty good team?

JAYSON

Some amazing players, and an even more amazing coach. Scotty's working at turning us into young men of purpose. We wear dress jackets when we travel to out of town games, and there's no swearing on the bus. Even your folks would approve of that!

BETH

Perhaps, sounds pretty convincing. Sports as a way of learning how to live?

JAYSON

That's it! You see, I just want to live fully, have the very best life!

BETH

Isn't that what we all want?

JAYSON

I went to the funeral home the other day with my Mom. Her friend's husband had passed away, and we went to pay respects. We were standing there at the open casket, and man, I have never seen Ernie look so good! Snazzy hairdo, apple cheeks with all the makeup they had put on, sharp suit with a carnation boutonniere. But then, some horsefly came in from the floral arrangements and landed on his powdered nose. My Mom looked away, but I swear I saw that fly crawl up into Ernie's nasal cavity. And I couldn't help it, a belly laugh started to erupt right out of me. I pushed it down, ran out onto Durham Street, and started jumping and yelling and laughing my butt off! You see, I had just experienced death up close, like horsefly-up-the-nose close, and I wanted no part of it! I just wanted to live, baby!

MR. TICE

That's the kind of passion I'm talking about, Jayson!

BETH

Yes, death is a mysterious thing. My parents say that the streets of Heaven are paved with gold, and that our friends and relatives who have gone on before us will be waiting to greet us when we pass over.

JAYSON

Wow, who knows? I lost a brother before I was even born, so it would be cool to meet him one day. I've been lucky so far, haven't really had anybody close to me die. Except for Ed, my next door neighbour. Retired farmer, kindest guy I've ever known. He died when I was eight. I cried my eyes out for three days, my Mom just couldn't console me. My eight year old self wanted to see him again, walking around his yard, giving me a gentle wave and a smile.

BETH

That almost makes me want to cry...not really in keeping with the theme of our little one act play, is it? So, Rodrigo, why don't you pull your chair up a little bit closer and we can slowly explore the meaning of life?

JAYSON

Well, well, Isabella...I just knew you might come around to my way of thinking!

*<The young lady looks away in a mock display of demureness, while the young man pulls his chair in close and gives an offhand shrug in the direction of the audience>*

LIGHTS CUT TO BLACK FOR THE NECESSARY SCENE TRANSITION

SCENE 4: MARY-JANE MERCANTILISM

*<Vince is back hanging around the loading docks of the high school shop wing, with the air of someone who should be in class but has decided to enjoy the benefits of fresh air and a limited agenda for the afternoon. He talks to a number of unseen passersby, who generally do not respond. If one does, it is a voice emanating from off-stage. He is prone to breaking the fourth wall, and engaging the audience if the spirit moves him, with the potential for ad-libbing responses hanging in the air.>*

VINCE

Cripes, what a beautiful afternoon! How can anyone sit in a classroom and stare at a teacher on a day like this?

*<cringes marginally as a teacher apparently walks by>*

Pardon me, Sir, didn't quite mean it like that. We all know the value of a quality education, hehheh....*<pauses for a four count>* and we all know nothing like that ever really happens around this joint!

Hey buddy, how's it going? Wanna buy an ounce? Too much? Hey, I'll sell you a single doobie, no problemo! But way better value in buying the whole bag, man.

Hey friend, what a great day? Why not rev it up even more with a wee taste of the ganja, mon?!

Young lady, young lady...life has gotten so much better with you walking by! How about a little bag of Perth County homegrown to jazz up your afternoon? OK, a no is a no, and I really didn't need that dirty look! Jeez, what a buzzkill!

Ah, a future captain of industry if I ever saw one! Young Sir, before you storm the ramparts of corporate capitalism, how about you brand yourself with an itsy-bitsy package of Mary-Jane?

## VOICE FROM OFF-STAGE

Isn't that illegal, man?

VINCE

Uh, technically yes, but in practice, no! Lots of lawyers and doctors and accountants light up on this stuff after work! Do they think the OPP will be at their door any moment? No way, amigo! I predict this stuff will be legalized some day. If Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau doesn't do it, then maybe his little boy Justin will step up and do the right thing eventually! Who's taking bets around here?

Heading off to the track meet? Take a few doobies along, my man. I know from experience that you will fly, literally fly around that cinder track, dude! Lots of out-of-town chicks come in for the meet, and they might just be into stealing over to the cemetery for a few quick tokes. One never knows what might happen between the tombstones, catch my drift?!

*<breaks the fourth wall>*

I know y'all think I'm tawdry, but never question a salesman's tactics, just his results!

Come to think of it, I've been having terrible sales of late. Have hardly moved any of last week's product, and a new shipment comes in tomorrow. Maybe I need a new location...

*<Kat comes in from the left side, and pauses outside Vince's peripheral vision zone>*

KAT

Or maybe you just need a new way of being?

VINCE

Hey, hey, a good day just got way, way better! I've got some amazing stuff from down Listowel way, want to take a little walk and do a big sampling?

KAT

No, little baby, that used to be the way I rolled. But I've been thinking lately, that it doesn't bring out my best self. I don't know where life is going to take me, but I think I need to get there on my own steam and not on a puff of smoke!

VINCE

Hey, listen to me, my ravishing beauty! If you need to go through a little quiet phase, so be it. I can fly solo for awhile, until you rethink things and we get back to the good times.

KAT

I don't think you're quite catching my drift, Vincey. I'm saying I'm done with the weed, and I'm also done with the Weed-Man.

VINCE

Oh baby, not digging this vibe. You hinting that we're done?! That you're done-done, with this amazing hunk of masculinity? Say it ain't so, baby! Please, please, don't make me beg!

KAT

Yessir, that's exactly what I'm saying. We've had some fun, Vince, but life should be more than just having fun. Have a good life, dude.

*<The young lady struts off-stage confidently, with just the hint of a knowing look towards the audience>*

VINCE

*<stands there, holding his gut, breathing audibly with bug eyes>*

Can you believe it? I just got dumped! It's not fair, I tell 'ya! And if there's any dumping to be done, it's Vince who does the dumping, not the other way around!

*<looks skyward and shakes his fist>*

Is that all you've got? Give me your best shot! Smite me down, Big Fella! I've already crumbled, so just zap me into pulverized dust! Go ahead, give it to me!

*<Jayson comes in from the same direction that Kat recently retreated to>*

JAYSON

Hey Vince, what's up? You look kinda, well, like kinda funny, dude.

VINCE

She just dumped me, man, here on the side of the shop wing's loading docks. Beside the welding rods, and little bits of two by four, ol' Vince lies bruised and tattered!

JAYSON

Who dumped you?

VINCE

Kat, you goofball! She's my girlfriend...or was.

JAYSON

Vince, Vince, Vince. You were one of many, and you were just too blind to see. I know you thought Lou and I were making an angle towards the lovely Kat, but there were many more guys well ahead of us. A girl like that has options, my friend. Maybe you were just her party guy?

VINCE

You knew that and didn't tell me? Or even hint?

JAYSON

I'm learning to surf the waves of life, man. Being the bearer of that kind of news would have just earned me a knuckle sandwich. It's better you get the memo loud and clear from the person who wears the pants.

VINCE

So it's gang up on Vince day, that much is clear. Well, if I can't move product, I may as well use some. Want to go over to the track meet, see if the gals from Chesley want to have some fun?

JAYSON

Nah, I'm heading to basketball practice, got to get ready for our big season. My last year of high school hoops, lots of expectations, y'know?

VINCE

Expectations? Tell me about it...I'm doing this gap year, re-taking a few Grade 13 courses to get my grades up so that I might get in to college. But I miss being on the team, school sucks, my band is pretty crummy if the truth be told, and I just lost my girlfriend who apparently wasn't really my girlfriend? Can anything else go wrong?

JAYSON

I know it's rough, so let's maybe hang out a bit more. My Mom thinks you're great, so why not come over more often for a couple of her signature chocolate chip cookies? Warm cookies and a glass of cold milk? Nothing can make the problems of the world go away faster!

Later, friend, got to go to practice...

*<Jayson dashes off>*

VINCE

He's right, I need to get back to simpler things. Enough of this sex, drugs and rock n' roll crap. I'm going to find a payphone and cancel tomorrow's shipment!

LIGHTS CUT TO BLACK FOR THE SCENE TRANSITION

SCENE 5: FAMILY DYNAMICS

*<Willard and Rachel are in the kitchen, the father sitting at the table and the mother putting around with dishes and a tea towel. Jayson is sitting reading, around a divider to resemble another room, out of sight but within earshot>*

WILLARD

I'll take a tea, if you're making some...

RACHEL

Hmmnnnph...

WILLARD

And a piece of pie, if you have it.

RACHEL

Go pound salt, mister!

WILLARD

Jesus, why are you so goddamn chippy?

RACHEL

Do not talk like that around me. I will not hear the Lord's name taken in vain!

WILLARD

Alright, alright, but what's a man supposed to do? I've been walking on eggshells more than I like these days! You're sullen more often than not. What can I do to see you smile every now and then?

RACHEL

Perhaps you need to take a look in the mirror. What would you see? Someone who never stops talking, who is always quick to criticize? Someone who never shuts up about how great it was to be off at war?

*<after this escalation of tone and volume, a zone of quiet hurt falls between the two adults. A few seconds tick by and the boy squirms in his seat>*

WILLARD

But what if it was great to be off at war? Living rough, feeling every corpuscle pumping through your veins? What if I'm a storytelling man who likes to talk about that chapter of his life?

RACHEL

Maybe it's good for you, but non-stop, day after day? And when you know full well my dear brother lies in a cold grave in the Dutch countryside? Have you ever stopped to think of my feelings? How Bert never made it home on a troop train? How your prattling on and on doesn't allow me to let go of my grief?

WILLARD

I will not sit here, a man in my own house, and be belittled!

I've got work to do in the garden, and I'll go do it now, with the pleasure of my own company!

*<the Dad huffs off, and the mother stands there looking distraught, with a tea towel being used to wipe away a few tears. The boy eases awkwardly out of his chair, peeks around the divider, and sees his Mom now looking at an old framed photo>*

JAYSON

Mom, are you alright?

RACHEL

Yeah, don't worry about me...

JAYSON

Who's in the photo?

RACHEL

Oh, the kids when they were young. Before you were born. He was such a cute little fellow. Eyes that danced, and he loved to play. He was just a wee sprite of a thing, because of his condition. He loved running after the neighbourhood kids, but he would fall behind and then just slump over. He'd call out to me, his arms up in the air asking to get picked up, and say 'Mommy, I need to get wound up!'

JAYSON

Why was he sick? I kinda forgot...

RACHEL

He had a hole in his heart from birth, in his septum. That's the wall that keeps the oxygenated blood from mixing with the deoxygenated blood. They call these kids 'blue babies', 'cause the mixing of the blood gives them a bluish tinge...

JAYSON

And there was nothing they could do for him?

RACHEL

Not back then. Nowadays they have a short operation that solves the problem, but back then it didn't exist. We were in and out of Sick Kids in Toronto more times than you could count. Best doctors in the country, but they just told us to enjoy him fully, as it was only a matter of time.

JAYSON

And he was five when he died?

RACHEL

Exactly. I remember his last day like it was yesterday. We were playing with his toys in the living room of our first house. Something told me to hold him tight, to hug him for all he was worth. He hugged right back, and looked up at me so sweetly and said, 'I love you, Mommy'. Then he went limp in my arms and made a strange sound deep in his throat. What they call the 'death rattle'.

And then he was gone. I felt his spirit lift out of his body, and knew exactly what was happening.

I sat there for a moment holding him, kissing him, praying my instincts were wrong. We rushed him off to the doctor but there was nothing to be done. He was always a wee angel, and I guess he just needed to go home.

*<Jayson reaches out and holds his Mom tight, eyes closed, until she breaks the embrace and turns back to her dishes>*

RACHEL (CONT'D)

And so life goes on, for those of us left behind. We pick up the pieces, and try to fashion an existence that makes some kind of sense. If only partially...

JAYSON

It seems like death has been on my mind lately. Maybe not such a bad thing to reflect on, if only to figure out how you want to best enjoy the life you have?

RACHEL

Wise words...and now I suppose I need to get out to the garden to put up with more of your Dad's yammering? Such is the life I have...

JAYSON

Okay, Mom, and I just have to run down to the feed mill. Mr. Cramm called and said he would be in today to pick up supplies and would slide me the payment for the last bit of haying we did...

RACHEL

Run on then, my sweet boy. I'll get a hoe from the garage and get to some gardening. Working with the soil helps one think, and hopefully mend.

*<they both go off in opposite directions, Rachel off-stage and Jayson walking quickly in a zig-zag fashion as if he is late for an appointment. At some point the Mystery Man comes in from off-stage as if he would cross the path of the boy>*

MYSTERY MAN

Good afternoon, Jayson...

JAYSON

Sir, good to see you. It's been a little while.

MYSTERY MAN

I've been giving you a bit of space, but you've been on my mind lately. Are you OK? You look a little flushed...

JAYSON

Yeah, yeah, I'm good. Well, decent enough anyways. A few tough conversations at home. Life with family, y'know?

MYSTERY MAN

Oh yeah, for sure, I know far too well. My family was a lot to deal with. More than a few complications to navigate.

JAYSON

Mmm, that's reassuring to hear. Some days I think I pulled the short straw. I look around and so many families seem like they're perfect.

MYSTERY MAN

Don't be fooled, young friend. Every family has a secret, every family faces tragedy, every family has a crazy uncle! Some are just better at wallpapering things over.

JAYSON

Well, that's cold comfort, I guess. I suppose I won't have to put up with it that much longer. This is my last year at home before I fly the coop!

MYSTERY MAN

It may feel that way for now, and that's okay to think on the tougher days. But you can never escape family. They will be there for you in tough times, and you will be there for them when they need you. That's the way families work. So you'll go off and have an amazing time at university. But no matter how far or how high you fly, remember your roots. And that ties straight back to your family, my friend.

JAYSON

So no escaping, eh?

MYSTERY MAN

Nope. So appreciate your Mom for all she does, and start mending some fences with your old man. He's got a burr under his saddle, but he's shaped you more than you think. Later on, much later, you'll be happy you did. But it's up to you, it's your life.

JAYSON

I appreciate the advice, I really do. Your advice always seems to ring true.

MYSTERY MAN

Think nothing of it, kid. I just like to help people. Especially a good boy like you. Realize every decision you make now will affect your future in a big way.

Hey, you better skedaddle, or you'll be late.

*<the Mystery Man strides off as if he too is late for an appointment, and Jayson nods and starts to walk off in the opposite direction. The man then throws a comment over his shoulder, followed by Jayson doing a perplexed double take to end the scene>*

You don't want to keep Mr. Cramm waiting!

LIGHTS GO TO BLACK FOR TRANSITION TO THE INTERLUDE

INTERLUDE BETWEEN ACTS

*<an older, retired couple sits on rocking chairs on a simulated front porch>*

MATILDA

Kind of a nice day, dontcha think, if it doesn't rain...

ORVILLE

I've cut the grass, and it can rain at any moment, as far as I'm concerned!

MATILDA

You're a little peppery, dontcha think, I was just making light conversation?

ORVILLE

It just seems that's all people talk about?

MATILDA

Talk about what?

ORVILLE

Weather, mother, weather. That's all Canadians talk about!

MATILDA

Well, what else is there to talk about?

ORVILLE

I dunno...hockey? The price of food? What's going on up in Ottawa? There's a million things to converse about, but just wait until you next meet someone out on the street, and sure as shooting, they're going to talk about the weather!

MATILDA

I don't happen to see a problem with that. A little chat about the weather is kind of an icebreaker, as it can lead to topics of more substance.

ORVILLE

But it never does! It's yesterday's weather, a little more about today's weather, and then rounding things off with tomorrow's weather forecast!

MATILDA

Well it's a safe conversation topic, and Canadians like their conversations to be safe...comfortable, y'know?

ORVILLE

I think you've hit the nail right on the head, m'lady! But the older I get, the ornier I've become, and I don't want to be comfortable!

MATILDA

Orville! That's pretty out of line, mister! The neighbours could be listening in!

ORVILLE

Now what did I possibly say to offend the neighbours?

MATILDA

C'mon, sir, do I really have to repeat it out loud?

ORVILLE

Yes'm, 'cause I have absolutely no clue what you are talking about!

MATILDA

Well, Orville, you said you're getting older, and then you said you're getting hornier!?

ORVILLE

Arrrgggh! Damn you and those fancy hearing aids of yours! I said or-ni-er, not hor-ni-er!! That's it, I'm not going to sit out here another minute! I'll be inside, watching TV!

MATILDA

Whatcha you gonna watch, Orville?

ORVILLE

Well, if you really must know, m'lady, it'll be the weather forecast!

LIGHTS GO TO BLACK MOMENTARILY, AND THEN HOUSE LIGHTS COME UP  
TO SIGNAL A TWENTY MINUTE INTERMISSION

ACT 3:

SCENE 1: CLOSE, BUT NO CIGAR

*<Jayson walks around the stage in an equally aimless and directed fashion, checking his watch from time to time as if he has an appointment. He looks into the audience and mutters out street numbers, as if he is looking for a place that he hasn't been before. Finally he pulls up, peers intently at a front door, and checks his watch one last time. Content that he is in the right place at the right time, he knocks on the door and stands back a bit nervously>*

KAT

Well, helooooo...

*<the young woman stands there with one hand on her hip, and a sultry tone to her voice. Light jazz floats in from the living room>*

JAYSON

Uh, hi...

*<Jayson stands frozen to the spot. Kat slowly pulls up the lapels of her blue plaid shirt, causing her physique to reform itself in the most appealing of ways, and gives him a sly smile>*

KAT

Well, come on in, silly. It's a bit too cold to stand around with the door open.

*<they go into a living room of a well-appointed home, and sit down on a love seat with a coffee table in front>*

JAYSON

Wow, what a nice place. I've walked by it a million times and always admired the exterior, but had no idea how beautiful it would be inside.

KAT

Yeah, it is a nice place.

But it's not ours, we're just long-term housesitting for one of my Mom's friends, who's taken off to Portugal with her new artist boyfriend. My Mom's auditioning for a major part in the next play for the County Towne Players, and if she gets cast, we'll be just a few blocks' walk from the Town Hall.

Thirsty? Want some Coke?

JAYSON

Sure, won't say no to that...

KAT

*<fusses a bit with a bottle of Coke and two glasses with ice>*

I know I asked you to come over to help me with a few bits of math, but it's almost the weekend and my Mom is out, so why don't we do the serious stuff some other time?

JAYSON

Oh listen, I don't mind doing math on a Friday. My family works all the time...I came here to help, so let me earn my Coke!

KAT

No, no, we'll do math next time. Let's just use today to get to know each other...

*<the girl slides closer and leans in a bit>*

JAYSON

OK, uh, wow, I guess I had better stop thinking about Vince...

KAT

You're reclining on a love seat on a late Friday afternoon, with a girl whose Mom is out for hours, and you're thinking about Vince?!

JAYSON

I know it's weird, but up until very recently if I even looked your way I would get the evil eye from ol' Vince. He's a friend, but he's a tough guy. He'd explode if he knew I was over here as a math tutor, sipping a Coke in a fancy living room! Blow a gasket for sure!

KAT

Vince and I were an item at one point. But I knew he had his cow band groupies, 'cause he hid that very poorly. So we're done, and he knows it because I've told him so in very clear terms. Now I'm thinking about the future, and exploring my options.

JAYSON

Options are good...um, what kind of options?

KAT

Romantic possibilities, dumbbell! Maybe that's why I find you so intriguing, you're just so....green?

JAYSON

Green? Like the colour green?

KAT

No, Bozo, I mean inexperienced, fresh, just begging to be broken in..

JAYSON

Yeah, I suppose that's true...

KAT

And what really ramped up my interest was a little meeting I had yesterday with Miss Goody Two-Shoes!

JAYSON

And that would be who?

KAT

I think her name's Beth...pretty enough, but churchy. So she stops me outside the Home Ec room, where she's been perfecting her date turnover recipe, and tells me to stay away from you! Like, have you guys even dated?

JAYSON

No, not really. We've been in drama class plays together. Y'know, boyfriend/girlfriend roles. Things got a little warm, a little personal maybe? That's probably what she was referring to, who knows?

KAT

Regardless, I just laughed in her face and told her I'll hang out with whoever I choomse! And then I told her you were a math whiz, and were coming over to help me with my algebra...

JAYSON

Oh man, now I've probably upset both Vince and Beth by coming over here, and it looks like we're not even going to do any math!

KAT

Tell me a little about yourself. What do you like to do for fun?

JAYSON

Oh, that's dead easy! Play basketball, morning noon and night?

KAT

Man, that's boring, unless you are doing it for those cute cheerleaders with their short little plaid skirts! Tell me what else you like to do...

JAYSON

Read, just can't put a good book down. And play tennis, I certainly love to stroke that ball!

KAT

Ah, now we're talking...mixed doubles, charging the net, stroking balls, love-love...would you like me to show you my stroke?

JAYSON

Heh-heh, yeah...but I'm not really sure what you mean?

KAT

Don't play hard to get...it's driving me bananas! Let's jump out of our clothes and get down to some real business!

JAYSON

Here, in the living room? Isn't that kind of unsanitary?!

KAT

Good God, man! Who gives a crap? Unzip your pants and let me make some real magic happen!

*<the two young folks enter a chaotic series of fumbling embraces, broken up by the boy's awkwardness and the girl's focussed passion>*

*<there is a sound of a lock turning in a door, and the deliberate wiping of feet on a doormat>*

MOTHER'S VOICE FROM OFFSTAGE

Hellooo, anybody home? Kat, my darling, where are you?

*<the young folks quickly compose themselves, and go back to casually sipping their Cokes>*

LIGHTS GO TO BLACK FOR THE SCENE TRANSITION

SCENE 2: UNDER THE INFLUENCE

*<Jayson and Vince are sitting in a simulated truck cab, with Jayson at the wheel and Vince riding shotgun, both young men facing the audience and evidently inebriated>*

VINCE

I'm so frigging happy you came up to Sauble to help me with the furniture, man! Your strong back and someone to party with...male bonding, y'know?

JAYSON

Caught me in a moment of weakness, buddy. Beth had invited Lou to go to some gospel concert. He played it casual when I talked to him. You know that, it's-not-a-date vibe, that makes it even more like a date? And with Lou, my backcourt basketball brother! We play pickup every day in the Summer, and we know what each other is thinking before we even think it! That makes it hurt all the more, dude, in a weird sort of way.

VINCE

I hear ya, bro, I hear ya! Christ, I've had my own girl troubles. Kat is way back in the rearview mirror, and the band groupies don't even come close. Beth isn't my type, but she would have been perfect for a frigging Boy Scout like you, man. So I feel your pain, feel it, feel it, wahoooooo!

JAYSON

And it was me who fumbled the ball. Beth had told me about the concert, and hinted she needed someone to go with her, but I just didn't read the telegraph signal. So good ol' Lou stepped in...

VINCE

Take it from Vince, just cinch up your pants and get ready for the next game, man! And in the meantime, we got each other and we're feeling no pain! Yowwwwhhh!

JAYSON

Don't rock the boat too much, you animal! I never should have had any vodka at the cottage, and why did we stop in at the Paisley Inn? I'm a good driver when I'm sober, but it's taking every bit of focus to keep this rig on the road!

VINCE

Ha, what a pussy! I've probably had five drinks to your one, and I could still jump on stage and rattle off the solo for Free Bird, man! Could have stayed behind the wheel, but something told me in Paisley that I needed to flip you the keys? Keep the faith, bro, you'll get us home safe and sound!

JAYSON

Will do my best, Vincie! Only a couple of miles to the town line, so I may just slow down and roll in on autopilot...

VINCE

Hell, no! Go big or go home! Give it some pepper!

JAYSON

I'm the driver, meatball, and I'll decide how to bring this plane down! I don't want to roll as far as the school, 'cause of the OPP cop shop. I'll just turn left on Ridout and take the back way to your place.

VINCE

Decent plan, but I hate to break it to ya, Ridout is coming up fast and it's not a ninety degree intersection! Brake hard and start your turn!

JAYSON

Good Christ, man, you're right! Hold on tight....

*<the boys lean hard left, with a glint of fear mixing with the ambient party reverie>*

VINCE

Okay, good work, now straighten out the wheel! The wheel, straighten the fucking wheel! Watch the pole, it's coming up fast! Christ, man, the pole!

*<lights go to black and there is the crashing sound of metal hitting wood. The lights come up at quarter of full light, with Jayson slumped over the wheel and an older man dressed in white and spotlit at his side, standing outside the vehicle. Vince lays sideways on the bench seat, out of sight>*

ED

Well, that was quite a bit of drama, dontcha think?

JAYSON

Ed? Ed, my old neighbour Ed? But you passed away ten years back?

ED

I did slip away, but some of us get to keep an eye out for folks down here that meant something to us...

JAYSON

Ed, tell me straight up! Am I dead?

ED

Kind of in an in-between zone, my young friend. You just crashed a truck into a telephone pole on Ridout Street. You certainly hurt yourself, enough for you to fly out of your body. But my trusted sources tell me you'll be going back down, as you've still got many things to do, big things to accomplish. So I've been dispatched to keep you company for a bit... until the paperwork is approved by The Big Guy.

JAYSON

Suddenly, I'm feeling completely clear headed! But I just smacked a pickup truck into a telephone pole! Shouldn't I be hurting like hell from the impact?

ED

Oh, that's all related to your physical body. You'll get back to that soon enough.

Unpleasant as it will be, the docs will fix you and Vince up real well. And young bucks always mend quickly.

JAYSON

So, Ed, is this Heaven?

ED

Uh, not quite. It's kind of like being in a waiting room, with no National Geographic magazines to browse. Just me, as your support guide.

JAYSON

Are you doing OK, Ed? You were my favourite neighbour! I cried non-stop when you died!

ED

Yeah, I know. You're generally allowed to hang around a bit, at least until the funeral is over, so you get to see who is sad and who's indifferent about you leaving town. But I'm doing absolutely great. They call this place Heaven for a reason!

JAYSON

Ed, I have one question that's kinda personal...

ED

Go ahead, shoot! I pretty much see the big picture these days on everything...

JAYSON

Ed, do you ever see my brother around these parts? It would mean a lot to my family if they knew he was doing OK...

ED

I kind of figured that might come up. Yep, I see the lil' feller pretty much every day. Well, we don't really have time up here, Eternity being what it is, but let's just say I see him a lot. And he's doing absolutely great...tell your folks that in a way that makes sense to them.

Oh, my goodness, I'm being told that you've already got your clearance to go back down! Young fella, take better care of yourself and make sure to enjoy your life fully!

*<lights go to black momentarily, and then come back up fully with two dazed and inebriated young men slumped over the dashboard, looking balefully out to the audience>*

VINCE

Christ, man, my head hurts like hell! Why didn't we wear these frigging seatbelts?!

JAYSON

It's more my chest where it got pressed into the wheel! And why did I agree to drink, and then drive?

VINCE

And why couldn't you land a sharp turn at fifty miles an hour?

JAYSON

Listen, dude, let's just crawl out of here and lick our wounds! We can talk about the shoulda-coulda stuff later... I think we're going to have some company soon enough!

*<LIGHTS GO TO BLACK FOR THE SCENE TRANSITION, WITH THE SOUNDS OF POLICE SIRENS USHERING IN THE NEXT SCENE>*

### SCENE 3: A TURNING POINT

*<to allow time for Jayson and Vince to transition between scenes, the action starts with a choreographic-like sequence with Kat and Beth walking past one another with their hostility on display, stopping at either ends of the stage, then turning on their heels and coming back to the centre of stage confrontationally, pulling up with terse lips and furrowed brows, and then huffily walking off-stage on opposite ends. All done with no dialogue, but plenty of body language>*

*<Vince then comes in and hangs around the loading docks of the shop wing, pacing randomly, as if he is waiting for someone, muttering under his breath and looking around erratically. Jayson comes in from the side, and pulls up hesitantly>*

JAYSON

Haven't seen you since the accident. I'm healed up, and you look pretty good to my eye.

But we've been avoiding one another. Maybe blaming each other for what happened, when it was really both our faults?

VINCE

Aw, screw the accident! I got my ass kicked by the old man and we moved on, next game! But Bronco, we need to sort a few things out...

*<comes up square with Jayson in a confrontational way>*

JAYSON

Dude, are you high? After all we've been through?

VINCE

So what if I am? A guy has to get through the day somehow. Let's call it medicinal, maybe I'm still feeling bruised up...

JAYSON

I thought you had turned off your supply, gave up the business...

VINCE

Yeah, yeah, I did. But I do a little homegrown stuff at the back of my Dad's garden, purely for personal use.

JAYSON

Do what you want, man, but leave me out of it. I've got some plays to go over with Lou...

VINCE

Oh, the brainy jocks camping out to go over their picks and rolls. How nice, but I bet not as nice as the views last week in your art class?

JAYSON

Art class? What in the heck are you talking about?

VINCE

Yeah, the class with Brewski, the one where you do figure drawing.

JAYSON

Yeah, OK. Mr. Brewster has us drawing each other. It's been fun, what are you so upset about?

VINCE

Who's been your main model, numbnuts?

JAYSON

Uh, a bunch of people. But one, mainly. Guess that would be Kat.

VINCE

Ah, yes, Miss Kat, the future lingerie model. Former squeeze of your good buddy Vince, but one who now hardly says a peep to him.

Vince gets what Vince wants, and I want Kat back, whatever it takes!

JAYSON

Sure, sure, Vince. But your love life is your personal domain, man, I've got nothing to do with it.

VINCE

That's where you're wrong, dude. Last week I caught her walking across the parking lot, dressed in a thin skin-tight sweater with no bra underneath. She tells me she has just come from modelling in Brewster's class, and then she drops your name! Out of all the people in that group drawing her, she mentions that you were really enjoying the class. So what am I supposed to make of that, skunk-breath?

JAYSON

Listen, listen, calm down. Yes, she did have on a tight pink sweater. And she may not have been wearing a bra? And maybe, as we drew, she kinda got more into it and certain things got a little bit excited, if you know what I mean? But that's the extent of it, Vince, I swear!

VINCE

The problem is that Kat is more than a bit of an exhibitionist. Why was she smuggling raisins under her little pink top? Because your stares were exciting her! At the end of class, did she ask you to hang around, so she could pop the top and give you a good look at them?

JAYSON

No man, nothing happened. But I took a rain check to pick her up some night, so she can do some real life modeling in the back seat of my Dad's car. And after the sketching, who in the heck knows what might happen?

VINCE

Arrrgggghhh!!!!

*<Vince takes a run and a swing at Jayson, who ducks the punch easily, grabs Vince by his trailing arm and spins him down to the ground. In one deft move, he kneels down onto Vince's chest and roughly holds his friend's ears and leans in, nose to nose>*

JAYSON

You want a piece of me, dude?! I've put up with your crap for too many years! Don't tell me what I can or can't do, and certainly don't tell me who I can hang out with! Do we have an understanding? Or do I need to slap you around a bit to get my message through?

VINCE

Keep your hands off me, you goddamn twit! I'm still hurting from the accident, I've lost my girlfriend, and now my best friend is threatening to slap me around?! Get off me now!

JAYSON

I'll get off you, but we're done, man. We are done. If you are judged by the company you keep, I just realized that I need to make some changes. Starting right now.

Oh, hold on, I just remembered that I'm late for an appointment....

*<the lights dim to half measure as he walks away from Vince, who gingerly gets up and stumbles off in the opposite direction. The lights come up to full measure as Jayson walks briskly back and forth, talking under his breath>*

Right, man, steel up!

Don't lose your nerve, dude, steady on!

Focus, focus, focus!

*<He comes up to the law office entrance, makes a motion to knock and then dismisses the thought, and then boldly enters. Penelope is sitting behind her desk, typing a memo, with her glasses set attractively on the end of her pert nose. She smiles at him thinly. >*

PENELOPE

Jayson, how may I help you?

JAYSON

Um, I just wanted to come by and tell you that I would like to do that work-play thing...I mean, the work-study arrangement.

PENELOPE

Is this something you discussed with Mr. Barr?

JAYSON

No, uh, but I believe he's aware of it. It would be working under you, remember?

PENELOPE

Oh, well, it'll have to wait a few weeks, until the new paralegal starts here with Mr. Barr.

You see, I just learned yesterday that I'll be moving to New Brunswick to get married. My fiance found out he will be stationed down there for five more years. So we decided to go ahead and tie the knot. But I'm sure you'll enjoy working with the new office manager. I understand she'll be coming out of retirement and has over forty years of experience as a paralegal. So be sure to enjoy that work-play thing, y'hear?!

*<Penelope goes back to her typing and the chastened young man starts his slow walk home, with some haunting melancholic music as the background sound effects>*

LIGHTS GO TO BLACK FOR THE SCENE TRANSITION

SCENE 4: DANCE ME TO THE END OF LOVE

*<Jayson and Lou amble along, as if they are killing a bit of time before some important event>*

JAYSON

You sure you're not mad at me?

LOU

Mad at you? Why would I be mad at you?

JAYSON

Well, you know? You had gone with Beth to the gospel concert, and I thought maybe that might lead to something, which might lead to something else...y'know?

LOU

No, man, relax! I just love gospel music! I'm not much for going to church, but gospel music is like from another planet. So it wasn't really a date, just two friends hanging out and doing something they both enjoy.

JAYSON

Okay, okay, that makes me feel better. 'Cause Beth called me up last night, and asked me if I wanted to hang out this evening. I felt a bit conflicted and didn't want to cut into your turf, man. So I made up some lame excuse, but she wouldn't take no for an answer. Said her parents were out of town and she had time on her hands, and kept pressing me. So I finally folded and told her I would pick her up at 7:00. But I felt hellishly guilty, and then here I bump into you on the way over. But I'm really glad we cleared the air. We're teammates and great friends, and you don't want a girl to get between that!

LOU

So what are you actually planning to do with Beth?

JAYSON

No real plans, what can you do in a town where they roll up the sidewalks at supper time? But I can tell you what we won't do...

LOU

What you won't do?

JAYSON

Well, I read in the Herald-Times that the nudist ranch north of the golf course is having an open house!

That sounds interesting for obvious reasons, but I don't think Beth is the kind of girl to hang out at a nudist colony...

LOU

Yeah, kind of agree there. Nudists? Isn't it too bloody cold in these parts to walk around without clothes?

JAYSON

Well, we get a lot of heat and humidity in our Summers, big guy! People come up from Toronto, to soak up the fresh air of Bruce County.

LOU

Yeah, you and I might snicker, but my Dad says that back home in Europe, beaches are always clothing-optional. You get a tan without the lines. Canadians are largely scared of their bodies...a big bunch of prudes according to my Pop!

JAYSON

Your Pop is like way cool, man. And I'm certainly not going to take Vince's advice. I thought I was done with him as a friend, but he was hanging around my back door by 10:00 this morning. I swear he can smell my Mom's chocolate chip cookies baking a block away!

LOU

What did good ol' Vince suggest?

JAYSON

He said I should go bold with Beth, and do something with her that she has never done...

LOU

Well, that really narrows it down! I would assume there are only about a million things that could come out of the diabolical mind of Vince...what was it?

JAYSON

He said he could give me two hits of windowpane, and we could sit in her parents' living room and just listen to Pink Floyd all night...

LOU

An acid trip, with Beth?!! Like how tone deaf is Vince?

Baking cookies like you do with your Mom would be more in line with this gal's sensibilities...

JAYSON

So, dude, I think this is her place. We're a few minutes before 7:00, so maybe I'll just loiter out here on the sidewalk?

LOU

I don't have to be told twice. I'm exiting stage right, snagglepuss, and don't do anything I wouldn't do?!

*<the two boys are deep into their conspiratorial conversation, and are unaware that Beth has opened her front door and is standing there in a fetching and alluring way. Think Olivia Newton-John in the climax scene of Grease, dressed in heels and leather pants and a corset/bustier with bare shoulders, topped off with a classy pearl necklace and dangly earrings>*

BETH

Good evening, boys...

LOU

Beth?!! Mamma Mia, I've really gotta leave! I need to go home and soak my head in an ice bucket!

*<Lou runs off stage left, with a quick backward glance at Beth>*

JAYSON

Beth? Is that really you? Even your voice sounds different?

BETH

Yessir! Maybe some changes in your blood pressure have affected your eardrums?! My Aunty from Stratford is housesitting while my folks are away, and she is way more liberal than they are. She lent me some of her clothes, so here I am...

JAYSON

Indeed, indeed, indeed! What are we going to do this evening? Any thoughts?

BETH

There's a street dance in Cargill, if you can snag the car from your Dad. How does dancing under the stars sound, Rodrigo?!

JAYSON

Utterly amazing, Isabella! And we both know it takes two to tango!?

*<he holds out his arm in a courtly fashion, which the young lady cuddles into, and they stroll off the stage in a flushed and excited manner>*

LIGHTS GO TO BLACK FOR THE TRANSITION TO THE INTERLUDE

INTERLUDE BEFORE FINAL SCENE

*<an older, retired couple sits on rocking chairs on a simulated front porch>*

MATILDA

The pie just came out of the oven. Shame that we don't have someone to share it with...

ORVILLE

And what's wrong with eating half a pie? Just kidding, Tillie, I've invited George over to watch a little TV together. He'd probably love a slice of pie ahead of that.

MATILDA

Georgie? Again? Honestly, what do you see in that fellow? He's simple, and more than a wee bit odd!

ORVILLE

I prefer to call him George, Momma, sounds far more refined. And as for being simple, that's just the facade he shows to the world. Underneath that is a kind of folksy brilliance that is far too uncommon these days. I've heard people downtown call him an idiot, but I would say he's more like an idiot savant!

MATILDA

There you go showing off your fancy Grade 10 French, Miz-Yoor! What in the heck does Salve-Ant mean?

## ORVILLE

It means that he know things, Momma. He sees below the surface of life, and the connections that we all miss.

Oh, here's my boy now...George, good to see ya, Sir! C'mon up here and rest your bones, Tillie has just baked us an apple pie!

## GEORGIE

A mighty fine evening to you both, and don't mind if I do on the pie. I already had a slice at home, but I've found you just can't have too much pie in your life. Why, I suspect pie's probably a currency in some countries!

## MATILDA

<fusses with the pie, plate and fork before passing a slice to Georgie and her husband, with some pleasant murmuring and savouring of aromas by the two men>

There you go, Georgie...

## GEORGIE

Much obliged, Tillie! That is a mighty fine looking piece of pie. It all starts with the crust. If you have great pastry, you have great pie. My Momma was an exceptional pie baker...

## ORVILLE

And what was your favourite pie as a kid, George?

## GEORGIE

Oh now, Orville, that's a challenging question! Apple and pumpkin, naturally. Lemon meringue for sure. But I think my absolute favourite was raisin pie! Big, plump raisins, jacked up all the more with marination in a sweet syrup overnight. Raisin pie, sublime I tell 'ya!

## MATILDA

That makes me feel nostalgic, gentlemen! I used to make a couple of raisin pies every day during haying season to feed Orville and the boys who would come out from town to help us. Now those were the days...speaking of nostalgia, what are you gentlemen planning to watch on the TV tonight?

GEORGIE

I don't rightly know, Tillie. I kind of rely on Orville to fill out the watch roster for us. I can only get Wingham at home, and a lot of those CBC shows don't really stir the passion in a person. Orville has tightened the screws on that rotor antenna of yours, and sometimes we can even get coverage of shows all the way from Dee-Troit!

MATILDA

Oh, I don't mind the local shows. Good, clean content. Don Messer's Jubilee, or maybe a little Lawrence Welk?

ORVILLE

Oh, pshaw, woman! That's not for sophisticated men of the world like George and me! No, with a bit of luck, and a lack of humidity in the air down London way, we should be able to get something a little bit more exciting!

MATILDA

More exciting than Lawrence Welk? Why he has Bobby and Cissy doing the tango these days!

GEORGIE

Oh now, Tillie, discreet gentlemen may not reveal the details of their entertainment preferences! I'd prefer to maintain marital harmony and leave certain things unsaid...

MATILDA

If it's being watched in my living room, I need to know the details! Orville, out with it!

ORVILLE

Now calm down, Mother, it all depends on the air waves. But Georgie and I have been known to watch an episode or two of Laugh-In, and maybe a little Hee Haw...

MATILDA

Laugh-In! All of those skinny model types wearing fancy boots and hot pants?! And the way they shimmy and shake, it looks like they've been taking a few puffs of that wacky-tabacky!

GEORGIE

We find it's good to broaden one's exposure to things, Tillie, to keep current and all...

## ORVILLE

Okay, okay, Momma, I know a hot button when I hear one. Let's forget Laugh-In for tonight. We'll just sit back and enjoy Hee Haw. That's got a country theme, so it should be alright?

## MATILDA

Hee Haw?!! It goes from one scene to the next, of dishy young women lounging around wearing denim cutoffs and tight flannel tops. They throw in the odd bit of banjo music to throw you off the scent, but I can see right through that in a second. It's all about sex, I tell 'ya! Sex, sex, sex, sex, sex!

## ORVILLE

Well, you know the old adage, Momma...

"It doesn't matter where you get your appetite"...

## GEORGIE

"As long as you eat at home..."

*<both men go back to eating their pie with raised eyebrows>*

LIGHTS GO TO BLACK FOR THE TRANSITION TO THE LAST SCENE

## SCENE 5: GOING DOWNRIVER

*<Rachel and Willard are in the kitchen off to one side of the stage, with Jayson reading a book around a corner, eavesdropping in on the conversation>*

## WILLARD

He'll be gone in less than a year. Hard to believe, Mommy.

## RACHEL

Don't I know it. I've been in a state of denial for quite some time. An empty nest has been something that I haven't really wanted to face.

## WILLARD

I know I'm a big part of the problem, or have been at least. But I'm hoping things might be better between us. If not like the old days, something closer to it.

RACHEL

I've been hoping for that too, if the truth be told. Ever since Jayson told me about what happened during his truck accident, it made me stop and really reflect on what we're doing here?

WILLARD

What did he say? Typical teenage boy, shares with his Mom but tells his Dad nothing...

RACHEL

It was certainly strange, but very reassuring at the same time. He said after he hit the pole, all of a sudden he was talking to Ed?

WILLARD

Ed? Our neighbour? But he's been gone for a decade now? I go and trim the weeds around his stone in the Catholic Cemetery. Good old Ed, he'd do the same thing for me.

RACHEL

Yes, Ed is dead, but Jayson said he came to him for a few moments. The spirit of Ed, y'know?

WILLARD

That's a bit strange, but OK... so what did the spirit of Ed have to say?

RACHEL

That he's doing famously up there, and...well, that he sees our little guy regularly. And the wee fella is doing very well, playing and having fun...

*<tears up momentarily>*

WILLARD

Oh, my goodness...our little boy...

RACHEL

And as strange as all that sounds, it got me to thinking? If our little fellow is doing well, and we've been given a sign to show that, shouldn't we shrug off our grief after all this time and finally get down to some real living?

WILLARD

Sounds good to me, honestly. I feel like I've been walking on thin ice around here for longer than I want to admit...

RACHEL

But if we're going to get along better, then some things are going to have to change...

WILLARD

Like what?

RACHEL

No more talking about the war. Period. Go to the Legion hall, parade march on Remembrance Day, but the war's a no-fly zone between these four walls!

WILLARD

OK...I guess...but...

RACHEL

No buts, mister...and every week we'll need to get up on Tuesdays to the Keady Market, weather permitting of course...

WILLARD

No problem with that one, I love going to Keady...

RACHEL

And no more snoring in church! As soon as the minister is ten words into his sermon, you are leaning back like a buzzsaw! The ladies turn around and give me dagger looks...so you're going to have to sit up from now on, pay attention and stay awake!

WILLARD

Aww, that's torture, Rachel! All of that droning on about scripture and verse...

RACHEL

Well, expect a sharp elbow in the ribs if you don't cooperate...and one last thing, at least for the time being. We get to the movies in Hanover once a month. I pick the show and we always get popcorn with extra butter! Deal?

WILLARD

*<gets up and goes to the counter where his wife has been standing over him all this time>*

Deal, m'lady. Now how about a hug?

RACHEL

Does this mean we just might have a normal married life?

*<gives her husband a lingering hug, while the lights dim on that side of the stage, and the boy sneaks away, as if escaping outside to avoid detection>*

JAYSON

When I need to get away, to think a bit, I always go down to the river. I know I'm going to be leaving this town soon, but now I can go away knowing that the folks just might be okay.

I climb the dyke and it always just takes my breath away. I look upstream a bit and can see the water is very calm as it flows along. Then I look a hundred yards downstream and can see the river has turned turbulent and almost angry. Calmness to turbulence. And I look even further downstream right before the curve, and see just light ripples on its surface. Turbulence back to calmness. So one can just stand here and contemplate the rhythms and flow of the mighty Saugeen. It seems like a great metaphor for life...

MYSTERY MAN

*<comes in nonchalantly from the far side of the stage>*

Pretty profound stuff, my friend...

JAYSON

Hey, Mister, sorry about that...I thought I was down here by myself or I wouldn't have been prattling on so much...

MYSTERY MAN

Not at all, kid. I remember when I was your age. Lots to figure out, lots of choices to shape your life.

JAYSON

Tell me about it! It seems like there's a bunch of really important decisions to make, and not a lot of guidance.

MYSTERY MAN

Yeah, I remember that too. Life is all about choices!

Choose wisely, choose well, and you'll have a good shot at a full and happy life! It's almost like at every moment you are standing in front of two doors. Both will have light and both will have shadow. But one will be better for you overall. So, take your pick?!

JAYSON

That does ring true...listen, Mister, I've bumped into you a bunch of times but I've never asked you your name or where you hail from?

MYSTERY MAN

I've told you before, kid, I grew up here. Went to the same schools as you, to the same church, played basketball for the Raiders, worked up at the KFC and down at the LCBO.

JAYSON

Wow, that's kind of weird, or funny at least. That we would have so much in common. But you never told me your name?

MYSTERY MAN

Jay...my name's Jay.

JAYSON

Hmmm, that's even more strange. Like a short form of my name.

MYSTERY MAN

Yeah, shortened it when I went away to university. Wanted a fresh start...

JAYSON

Just like I want a fresh start...what are you trying to tell me, Mister?

MYSTERY MAN

Figure out the puzzle kid. You're more than just a good boy, you're a pretty clever one as well.

JAYSON

How did you know about Mr. Cramm?

And that Coach played two varsity sports? And all the names of the girls on the senior basketball team?!!

MYSTERY MAN

Because I'm...fill in the blank, kid...

JAYSON

Because...because you're me?! Cripes, Mister, you're going to have to go up to Owen Sound and get checked out!

MYSTERY MAN

No, no, I'm playing with all my marbles, Jayson. Or our marbles, to be precise...

JAYSON

But...

MYSTERY MAN

And yes, I'm you, at sixty five. It was kind of a retirement project. You know the premise...what would you tell your eighteen year old self, about how to best get on in life? So I got a chance to come back, find my younger self at the end of high school, and pass along a pearl or two of wisdom?

JAYSON

How can that happen? Sounds more than a little far-fetched to me?!

MYSTERY MAN

It's all about the river, kid. The river's a physical representation of the flow of life. Once you know that, and can work with the related energies, you just move back upstream to an earlier point in your life...

JAYSON

Holy smokes...and can you just stay here, like hang around in this small town where you grew up?

MYSTERY MAN

It's possible, but I've done what I set out to do, so it's time to go back downstream...

JAYSON

Are you sure you can't hang around for just a bit longer, to give me some more advice over the next few months at least?

## MYSTERY MAN

Tempting, because I so love this place! But I've got to get back, kid. Back to our wife, back to our grownup kids, back to our doggie! And besides, you've got the operating principles down pretty good. With those in hand, you just need to make your own choices, chart your own course, forge your own life. You don't need your sixty five year old self telling you how things are going to go down! No spoilers for this movie!

## JAYSON

I've got a wife and kids and a dog! What else can you tell me?

## MYSTERY MAN

Nope, nice try, but no further hints! Just listen to your heart, be kind to your folks, and take good care of your new family. And with that, I've got to go, kid! But it's been a blast, I tell 'ya!

*<the older man shakes hands and gives a hug to Jayson, before stepping away>*

*<Jayson stands there, looking at the receding Mystery Man, and then looks out to the audience as he is lit by a spotlight and breaks the fourth wall>*

## JAYSON

Holy crap! What was that all about?!

I'm going home now to hug my folks!

And after that I'm stopping by the gym to tell Coach how much he means to me!

And then after all that, I'm dropping by Beth's house. You know her parents are still out of town...just saying!!

*<runs off in the direction of his home, with a buoyant wave to the audience>*

LIGHTS GO TO BLACK BEFORE THE CURTAIN CALL

THE END