UNTITLED GENIUSES PROJECT

"PILOT"

Written by
Lon Zimmet

1-8-19
COLD OPEN

INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - DAY

A CHILD DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST, MISS TREMBLAY, SITS ACROSS FROM MARC (10, INTROVERTED, IDIOSYNCRATIC) WITH AN ARRAY OF DIFFERENT VISUAL AIDS. WE CAN’T HEAR WHAT THEY’RE SAYING, BUT SHE’S CLEARLY GIVING HIM SOME KIND OF TEST.

RESET TO:

INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

CAY (LATE 30’S, CAUSTIC, NO-FILTER) STANDS IN THE DOORWAY, TRYING TO GET A SENSE OF WHAT’S GOING ON. AT THE TABLE, MIKE (LATE 30’S, CARPENTER, BULLSHITTER) SITS NERVOUSLY WHILE LEILA (8, THE BABY, A LITTLE DUMB) DOODLES.

CAY

I can’t tell how the hell it’s going out there. Now she’s got the blocks out, I don’t know.

MIKE

It’s gonna be fine. He’s a regular kid, just a little odd. (NERVously PICKING AT HIS ARM) I’m not worried.

CAY

You just drew blood.

MIKE

Not worried about that either.

BRIAN (16, CONDESCENDING, NO SELF-AWARENESS) AND NICOLE (15, SCHEMING, FIERCELY COMPETITIVE) ENTER.

BRIAN

Wow, he’s still getting tested?

MIKE

We’re not worried!
NICOLE
We know you guys have been stressed about this. If it helps, we’ve been praying for you.

CAY
You’ve been praying? Didn’t you say you’re too smart to believe in God?

NICOLE
No, I said I’m too cynical to believe in God. I’m too smart not to kiss the ring a little, just in case.

MISS TREMBLAY ENTERS. EVERYONE LOOKS AT HER EXPECTANTLY.

MISS TREMBLAY
I have good news.

MIKE
Oh, thank God.

MISS TREMBLAY
Actually, it’s great news. Your son Marc is gifted! His IQ is off the charts.

CAY/MIKE
No! / Damn it to hell!

MIKE SLAMS THE TABLE. CAY POURS A MASSIVE DRINK. MISS TREMBLAY IS CONFUSED.

MIKE
In my heart I always knew, but now hearing it out loud, it’s just... too real.
MISS TREMBLAY
Did you hear what I said? This is wonderful, your son is a prodigy.

CAY
Yeah, yeah, we’re so proud, what a blessing, bla bla bla... We know the drill, we’ve been through all this. Twice already. With Brian and Nicole.

MISS TREMBLAY
Wow! Three gifted children in one family? You two are so blessed!

CAY
Lady I will take you out back and punch you in the neck.

MIKE
What she’s trying to say is that sometimes it can be a challenge.

BRIAN
They’re overwhelmed. It’s not easy keeping up with a physics prodigy and polymath such as myself. Especially now that I’ve been branching out and dabbling in the arts. Caught some Wagner performances at the Met (QUICKLY UNDER HIS BREATH) on YouTube. (MORE)
BRIAN (CONT'D)

‘Rheingold’ certainly had its striking moments, such as Wotan and Loge’s journey down to Nibelheim.

NICOLE

Oh my god, no one cares. (TO TREMBLAY) I’m the overwhelming one. I’m a hyper-polyglot, already speak five languages. Once I master twenty, I’m going to travel the world for Doctors Without Borders. But that’s only a marketing ploy for my eventual political run. I’ll be the youngest elected president in history. And if that bitch Ocasio-Cortez tries to beat me to it, well... (OMINOUS) We’ll have to take care of her.

CAY

See? This is the type of nonsense we listen to all day long.

MIKE

But on the bright side, all the private schooling has left us in massive debt.

MISS TREMBLAY

(RE: LEILA) Well, what about this little one? I’m happy to test her too while I’m here.
LEILA STARES AT HER IN DEEP, PHILOSOPHICAL CONSIDERATION.

LEILA
How come we don’t smell with our mouths and eat with our nose?

MIKE
No, we’re feeling good about Leila.

CAY
She’s our star.

MISS TREMBLAY
Okay, seems like you have this all covered. But I do feel like you should know, um… (SCARED TO SAY IT) Marc actually had the highest score I’ve ever tested.

MIKE STARTS SOBBING QUIETLY. CAY STARES DAGGERS AT HER.

CAY
You can see yourself out.

MISS TREMBLAY LEAVES. MARC WALKS IN. SEES MIKE SLUMPED AND CAY POURING HERSELF A GIANT GLASS OF VODKA.

MARC
I guess this means I’m gifted.

MIKE
(THROUGH TEARS) We’re so proud of you.

AND WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF COLD OPEN
ACT ONE

INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING (DAY 2)

MIKE AND CAY ARE ALONE IN THE KITCHEN, GOING THROUGH THEIR MORNING ROUTINE.

CAY

I was thinking. You know what the scariest part about the Marc news is? We’ve officially lost our voting majority in the house. Dummies vs. Smarts, it’s all tied up.

MIKE

Damn. Guess that means we gotta have another baby so we win the tiebreaker.

CAY

(LAUGHS, THEN) Just so you know, if you ever even joke about that again, I’m leaving you.

MIKE

And I wouldn’t blame you.

MIKE EXITS. A BEAT LATER, BRIAN ENTERS, FACE BURIED IN AN IPAD.

BRIAN

Well, just as I expected, Le Cinq has been downgraded from three Michelin stars to two. Dare I say, Chef Christian Le Squer is losing his luster.
CAY
Deep commentary from someone whose
favorite restaurant is the “Pasta Hut”
ext to a burned down strip club.

BRIAN
(DEFENSIVE) The flavor profile of
their mac-‘n-cheese-stick is complex
and exquisite.

CAY
Oh, by the way... I’m assuming this is
you?

SHE POINTS TO THE DOORWAY TO THE DINING ROOM, WHICH WE NOW
SEE IS ENTIRELY BLOCKED BY ALUMINUM FOIL AND YELLOW TAPE.

BRIAN
Oh yeah, dining room’s off limits. I’m
using it as a lab to measure Quantum
Vacuum polarization. Don’t worry, it’s
only for a month. (OFF HER LOOK) Dad
said it was okay.

AS MIKE RE-ENTERS --

CAY
You said he could turn the dining room
into NASA for a month?

MIKE
(HAD NO IDEA) What? He asked if he
could use the dining room. I thought
he meant for lunch.

MIKE HEADS TO THE FRIDGE. NICOLE MAKES A BEELINE FOR HIM.
NICOLE
(SWEET) Hey, daddy. You look so nice. What are you doing at work today?

MIKE
(CONFUSED) I’m building a shelving unit and window seat for the Jassers’ bedroom. (SUSPICIOUS) Why?

NICOLE
(BUTTERING HIM UP) I’m just interested in you. It’s so inspiring the way that you create, with nothing but a slab of wood and your hands. Turning people’s houses into their homes. There’s nothing more honorable.

MIKE
Oh god, something’s coming --

NICOLE
Well only because you brought it up, I do have a question for you. It’s silly, really. (FISHING) But when the tester said Marc’s WISC score was the highest she ever tested... that’s only because she didn’t test me, right? Or else his score would have been the second highest... right?
MIKE
I’m not playing this game. You know we don’t tell any of you your IQ’s.

NICOLE
Honestly, I’m just curious. It’s not a big deal, I already know my score was higher than Brian’s.

MIKE
How did you know that?

NICOLE
You just told me.

MIKE
Damn it, I shouldn’t have these conversations without your mom. Cay!

NICOLE
No, we’re having daddy-daughter time--

CAY APPROACHES.

MIKE
She wants to know their WISC scores.

CAY
No chance. There’s enough ego and competition in this house, we don’t need to start putting numbers to it.

NICOLE
(GROANS) Thanks a lot, Mike!

SHE CROSSES OFF.
MIKE
What happened to “daddy”? Come on, let me tell you more about my honorable work! (REALIZING) Where’s all our aluminum foil?

MARC ENTERS, WHEELING A WHITE BOARD INTO THE FAMILY ROOM.

MIKE (CONT’D)
Hey, buddy, whaddaya doing with those?

MARC
Miss Tremblay said I should challenge myself more, so I’m developing an opera about Sacco and Vanzetti, two Italian anarchists unjustly convicted of robbery in 1921 and put to death.

MIKE
Neat! Sounds like a fun romp.

CAY CROSSES INTO --

INT. RICKARDS HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LEILA WATCHES CARTOONS AND EATS CEREAL AS CAY ENTERS.

LEILA
Mommy, I have a question. If Brian’s a genius, and Nicole’s a genius, and now Marc’s a genius... Am I a genius?
CAY

(DELICATE) Well, you have a lot of good qualities, but um... do you want to be a genius?

LEILA

(THINKS, THEN) No. I wanna be a waffle. Because I love waffles and then I can eat myself whenever I want.

CAY

Good, that feels a little more realistic.

CAY KISSES HER AND MOVES ON. MIKE APPROACHES.

MIKE

I’m not gonna lie, that waffle thing made a lot of sense to me.

CAY

We need to talk.

MIKE

Basement?

CAY

Basement.

CUT TO:
INT. RICKARDS' BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

A CRAMPED, UNFINISHED BASEMENT WHERE A 1990’S ERA SOLO-FLEX, A FOOSBALL TABLE, AND A SHITLOAD OF MIKE AND CAY’S OTHER BELONGINGS/PASTIMES HAVE BEEN EXILED.

CAY

So is it me or are things getting crazier around here?

MIKE

(RE: MARC) We did just invite a plus-one to the crazy party.

CAY

It’s not only that. The kids are so up their own asses, they have no perspective on anything normal. I know we said we’d never put limits on them, but this can’t be healthy. I mean, we have to hide just to have a conversation. This is the only room in the house that’s even ours anymore.

MIKE

I know. It’s our monument to simpler, dumber times. This is where I come to feel safe.

HE PUSHES A BUTTON ON A “BIG MOUTH BILLY BASS” ON THE WALL. IT SINGS ONLY FOR A SECOND, THEN WAILS INTO SILENCE.

MIKE (CONT’D)

That feels sadly symbolic.
CAY
Maybe there’s something we can do to rein it all in. To bring the kids back down to earth a little.

MIKE
I think the ship’s sailed on that. Unless... Hear me out. We have Brian build a time machine – you and me go back in time, drop each of the kids on their heads as babies. Nothing crazy, just bring the IQ’s down a few points. Added bonus, we get to have sex with our younger selves, which would be... (OFF HER LOOK) Great for you, because I had so much more energy back then. For me, big letdown, because you get more beautiful with age --

CAY
Are you done?

MIKE
Look, I think we ride this out, and in ten years they’re the next Steve Jobs and we’re set for life.

CAY
Or in ten years they’re the next Unabomber and we’re on “20/20” talking about how we ruined their lives.
MIKE
Wow. You think “20/20” will still be on by then? That’s a good run.

CAY
It just feels like we could encourage them to ease up a little. Even if it’s only for a day. Don’t you think it’d be good for them to have one normal day?

MIKE
I don’t know about them, but it’d great for us. Think of all the money we’d save on aluminum foil.

CAY
We can make this happen, right? We can get one day of Normal out of these kids.

MARC COMES HALFWAY DOWN THE STAIRS.

MARC
Mom, my opera is lacking inspiration. I need $18,000 for a 1903 Tanfoglio revolver to serve as my muse.

CAY
(BEAT) So how quickly you think Brian can bang out this time machine?

AND WE...

CUT TO:
INT. HARRAH’S CASINO – DAY

CAY STANDS BEHIND A BLACKJACK DEALER AND HANDLES A SITUATION WITH SOME GAMBLERS. SHE’S A PIT BOSS.

CAY
I mean it, Gary. If I see you touch your stack again when the cards are out, I’m gonna shove those chips so far up your ass you’ll have to blow your nose to place a bet.

SHE GOES BACK TO THE MIDDLE OF THE PIT AND CONTINUES TALKING TO HER CO-WORKER, RITA (40’S, BLUNT, DOESN’T GIVE A SHIT).

CAY (CONT’D)
Okay, keep going.

RITA
(PICKS UP MID-STORY) Long story short, it turns out the car wasn’t stolen. My youngest, Molly, took it without a license, then crashed it into a Bennigan’s because she was sexting.

CAY
Oh my god, you’re so lucky! Tell me the one again about how your oldest got busted vaping during the SAT’s.

RITA
No! You’re enjoying this too much.

CAY
You know these stories about your kids are like porn to me.

(MORE)
CAY (CONT'D)

I want to put them in a needle, tie a belt around my arm, and shoot them straight into my veins. I’d love to punish my kids for things like crashing cars and reckless sex. At least that’s the stuff I was doing at their age.

GAMBLER

(EAVESDROPPING) How much reckless sex we talking about?

CAY

Shut up, Gary.

RITA

Actually, I’d like to know too.

CAY

I was telling Mike I’d kill to have just, like, one normal day. (RESIGNED) But what can you do, you can’t snap your fingers and force your kids to be normal.

RITA

For a day? The hell you can’t. You just gotta get ‘em out of their element. Make them do something you like. They’re always hijacking your days, hijack one of theirs.
CAY
That’s not a bad idea. Get the family out of the house, go someplace where no one’s talking about ancient dead philosophers, or the frontrunners for the Nobel, or how the reason Joe Biden is so sexy is because he doesn’t know he’s sexy.

RITA
Nicole’s into Joe Biden?

CAY
No, that one’s Mike actually. (THEN) This could work. I just need to come up with somewhere to go that’s basic and mindless with zero intellectual value whatsoever.

SMASH CUT TO:
INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE – KITCHEN – NIGHT (DAY 2)

MARC
The boardwalk?

BRIAN, NICOLE AND MARC STARE INCREDUOUSLY AT CAY AND MIKE AS THE FAMILY EATS DINNER.

MIKE
Yep. It was your mom’s idea. We’re gonna do the Tilt-a-Whirl and eat funnel cake and ride the log flume until we throw up a bunch of funnel cake.

MARC
But I can work on my opera there, right?

CAY
No. There’s not going to be any talk of wrongfully-accused anarchists. Tomorrow is about whacking moles and winning cheap stuffed animals like a normal family.

NICOLE
It doesn’t sound normal, it sounds trashy.

CAY
We live in Atlantic City, normal is trashy.

BRIAN
I think it sounds fun.
MIKE

Seriously?

BRIAN

Yeah. Is it okay if I bring a friend?

MIKE AND CAY LOOK AT EACH OTHER, SURPRISED AND THRILLED. THEY HIDE IT SO THEY DON’T WEIRD HIM OUT.

CAY

(CONTAINING HERSELF) Yes, of course. That’s such a... normal thing to do.

MIKE

(SOTTO TO CAY) He’s got a friend! Just like the kids in the movies!

CAY

(TO MARC AND NICOLE) And if it gets you guys more excited about it, you’re welcome to bring a friend too.

MARC

All of my friends were unjustly put to death in a gross miscarriage of justice amid of wave of anti-Italian bias and dishonest political motives.

A LONG BEAT. THEN:

LEILA

I’m gonna eat funnel cake!

DISSOLVE TO:
INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - MORNING (DAY 3)

MIKE PUTS SUNTAN LOTION ON LEILA AS NICOLE APPROACHES. SHE’S DRESSED BEACHY AND CUTE.

MIKE

Look at you, all ready to go. Thank you for making this easy.

NICOLE

Well, I thought about it, and you’re right. Today’s gonna be fun. (SAD) I’m just worried I’ll be too distracted to enjoy it.

MIKE

What’s wrong?

NICOLE

Nothing. It’s silly. I shouldn’t even-- Okay, do you think, just for the sake of today, you could ease my restless mind and tell me... (ALL BUSINESS) Was my WISC score higher than 156?

MIKE

We’re back to this? Why can’t -- Wait, 156? That’s Marc’s score. You went through his folder?

NICOLE

Of course not! I called the company and pretended I was mom. Come on, I’m literally asking you for one word.

(MORE)
NICOLE (CONT'D)

"Higher" or "Lower." It’s not a big deal. I already know 156 is a better score than Brian’s.

MIKE

How’d you know that?

NICOLE

You just told me again.

MIKE

Damn it! Why do I keep talking to you without supervision? Cay!

CAY APPROACHES. NICOLE GROANS AND SKULKS OFF.

CAY

(RE: LEILA) I see sunscreen, that’s a good sign. How’s it going here?

MIKE

Brian, Nicole and Leila are all ready.

CAY

That’s amazing. And look, I got Marc to wear swim trunks. He called them “Water Khakis,” but whatever, he’s wearing them. So as soon as Brian’s friend gets here, we can leave.

MIKE

I’m excited about this, we used to love the boardwalk. Maybe for old times’ sake, we play a little strip skeeball when the arcade clears out.
CAY
This isn’t for us. It’s for the kids.

MIKE
(NOT BUYING IT) Whatever you say. I’m wearing extra layers just in case.

CAY
Honestly, I’m just happy to know this family isn’t so far gone that we can’t have one normal day around here.

THERE’S A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. CAY ANSWERS, REVEALING STU. HE’S NERDY, BALDING, AND THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS OLD.

STU
Hi, Mrs. Rickards!

CAY
Can I help you?

BRIAN
(SEES HIM) Stewy!

STU
Bri-Bri!

STU STEPS INSIDE. HE AND BRIAN GIVE EACH OTHER A BIG MAN-HUG. MIKE AND CAY WATCH IN BEWILDERMENT.

MIKE
What’s happening?

CAY
I think we just met Brian’s friend.

AS STU AND BRIAN DO AN ELABORATE HANDSHAKE, WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE
ACT TWO

INT. FAMILY ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

MIKE AND CAY TRY TO WRAP THEIR HEADS AROUND THIS SITUATION AS THEY WATCH BRIAN AND STU.

CAY

(WARY) So you’re Stu. The friend Brian is bringing on our normal family day.

STU

Yes, and thank you so much for inviting me, Mr. and Mrs. Rickards.

MIKE

“Mike” and “Cay” would probably be less awkward for everyone.

STU

Well, Mike --

MIKE

I was wrong.

STU

-- I’ve been so stressed waiting to hear about my application to the Princeton Physics Fellowship, and a day at the beach is exactly what I need.

CAY

I’m so glad we could plan this for you. So how exactly do you two know each other?
BRIAN
From the American Astronomical Society message boards. And look, I know what you’re thinking: how are these two friends? I mean, he does computational physics and I do theoretical physics! Like what?!

MARC COMES UP.

MARC
If we’re not leaving, I’m taking off these swimming pants.

CAY
It’s called a bathing suit, man, come on. And yes, we’re leaving. (LOOKS TO MIKE) But, um...

MIKE
Your mom and I just need to talk to Brian alone for a minute.

MIKE AND CAY START TAKING BRIAN INTO THE KITCHEN.

STU
FYI, I have a severe nut allergy.
Here’s my EpiPen, it’s better if you hold it. I always lose it, and I will need it.

MIKE AWKWARDLY TAKES THE EPIPEN AS HE HEADS INTO THE KITCHEN.

RESET TO:
INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER
CAY, MIKE AND BRIAN ENTER.

MIKE
Listen, Bri, about your friend--

CAY
Stu can’t come. Your dad and I talked about it and we both agree.

BRIAN
What? I’ve been with you since he got here, how did you talk about it?

CAY
With our eyes. We can do that.

BRIAN
Where is this coming from? Is this because he’s a little older than me?

CAY
First of all, he’s A LOT older than you --

MIKE
(TO CAY) He’s like our age, we don’t need to hit the “a lot” that hard --

CAY
And yes that’s the reason! It’s weird!

BRIAN
You’re both such hypocrites. You’re always telling me that I should try to make more friends.
CAY
We meant normal friends! The type who introduce you to drugs and alcohol.
People your own age.

BRIAN
People my own age are boring and vapid. All they do is make penis jokes and Rick & Morty references.

MIKE
God, people his age sounds awesome.

BRIAN
None of that is for me. I require sophistication and intellectual stimulation.

STU POPS IN, WITH A BROWN STAIN COVERING HIS SHIRT POCKET.

STU
Mr. Rickards, do you have a shirt I can wear? (RE: POCKET) I forgot I left a half-eaten Snickers bar in here.

BRIAN
Not ideal timing. Take one of mine.

STU HURRIES OFF.

MIKE
We’re just trying to have one normal day, Bri.

(MORE)
MIKE (CONT'D)
And Stu seems like a lot of things - smart, interesting, probably eczematic - but normal ain’t one of them. We’re sorry.

BRIAN
Then I’m sorry too. Because if Stu can’t go, then I don’t go.

BRIAN SITS DOWN DEFIANTLY AT THE TABLE, IN PROTEST.

BRIAN (CONT’D)
You’re not the only ones who can take an arbitrary and irrational stance.

CAY
Okay, you’ve made your point. But you’re coming. Because if you don’t...

SHE WALKS UP TO THE FOIL WALL BLOCKING THE DINING ROOM.

CAY (CONT’D)
... I’m going to walk in there and ruin your weird proton beam.

BRIAN
Might as well. I won’t have any friends to share the results with anyway. Who needs to prove a quantum vacuum in the universe when there’s one right there in my heart?

OFF MIKE AND CAY’S LOOK...

CUT TO:
INT. RICKARDS' BASEMENT – A LITTLE LATER
MIKE AND CAY ARE ALONE, FIGURING OUT HOW TO HANDLE THIS.

MIKE
He seems really bummed about this.
Maybe we just let Stu come.

CAY
Sure. We’ll pay for his rides, buy him some taffy. Oh, he can play strip skeeball with us.

MIKE
Don’t be ridiculous. What if he’s got a better body than me? My ego couldn’t take it.

CAY
We’re not bringing Stu. Normal people don’t have fond family memories from childhood that involve a random forty-year-old man. Do you?

MIKE
Actually, most of my memories from childhood involve random forty-year-old men. My mother had an active social life.

CAY
The whole point of today is to get the kids out of their bubble.

(MORE)
CAY (CONT'D)

Instead, we’re bringing the bubble with us and holding its asthma inhaler. There’s gotta be a way we can force Brian to go without Stu. Is he into any weird porn we can blackmail him with?

MIKE

No. I mean, yes, but -- if we threaten him, he’ll just dig in deeper.

CAY

Do you have any other ideas?

MIKE

Okay... I might know a way where Stu doesn’t come, but Brian doesn’t hate us for it. Come on.

MIKE STARTS TO WALK OUT BUT REALIZES CAY HASN’T MOVED.

CAY

Sorry, I know we have to go back up, but... it’s just so nice down here, I need thirty more seconds.

SHE CLOSES HER EYES, TAKES A DEEP BREATH. A BEAT.

MIKE

Now?

CAY

Thirty more seconds.

AS MIKE CONTINUES TO WAIT...

CUT TO:
INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE – KITCHEN – MOMENTS LATER

CAY AND MIKE ENTER TO SEE BRIAN AT THE TABLE, SADLY LOOKING AT HIS PHONE.

MIKE
Hey, Bri. Your mom and I were talking, and... if it means that much to you, Stu can come with us to the boardwalk.

BRIAN
(PERKING UP) Really? Thank you, I knew you’d come around! (CALLING) Stu, call your mom back, she doesn’t have to pick you up!

BRIAN RUNS OFF, EXCITED.

CAY
This is wrong, I don’t like tricking them. I’m more comfortable with threats and intimidation. You knew that the first time we slept together.

MIKE
This is the only way we’re not the bad guys so Brian still comes. Did you get his phone?

CAY HANDS IT TO HIM. MIKE SEARCHES THROUGH THE CONTACTS:

MIKE (CONT’D)
Stu M... Stu H... How many “Stu’s” does our son know? Oh, here we go...

MIKE TAKES OUT HIS OWN PHONE, THEN ENTERS STU’S PHONE NUMBER INTO IT AND CALLS.
MIKE (CONT’D)

(INTO PHONE, HAUGHTY VOICE) Hello, Stu, this is Doctor, uh, Venkman calling from the Princeton Physics Fellowship... That’s right. And excellent news, you’ve been accepted.

STU (O.S.)

(UPSTAIRS) OH MY GOD IT’S HAPPENING!

MIKE

We need you to come down to the campus as soon as possible to... collect your prize? (SHRUGS, TO CAY) I don’t know.

CAY

This is crazy. Do we really expect him to --

STU SUDDENLY COMES RACING DOWN THE STAIRS --

STU

Sorry I can’t make it, have a lovely--

-- AND OUT THE DOOR.

CAY

Can’t argue with the results.

MIKE

I think now we should be good to go now.

CAY

Except where are all our kids?
MARC (O.S.)

No! I said F Sharp!

MIKE AND CAY EXCHANGE A LOOK, THEN HEAD INTO --

RESET TO:

INT. RICKARDS' HOUSE - FAMILY ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ONE WALL OF THE ROOM IS COVERED IN SHEET MUSIC THAT'S BEEN SHARPIE-WRITTEN DIRECTLY ON THE WALL. MARC PACES AND DICTATES TO LEILA, WHO STANDS ON A CHAIR TRANSCRIBING ONTO THE WALL.

MIKE
This seems about right.

CAY
What the hell’s going on here?

LEILA
I’m helping Marc with his opera!

CAY
On the wall? Was all the paper broken?

MARC
Big ideas require a big canvas. What if someone had told Michelangelo he couldn’t draw on the ceiling?

MIKE
He probably just would have ordered a pizza with something crazy on it. (OFF THEIR LOOKS) We’re talking about the Ninja Turtle, right?

CAY
You should go get Nicole.
MIKE

Yep.

MIKE WALKS OFF.

CAY

Leila, stop writing. (TO MARC) You had to drag your poor sister into this?

MARC

It’s a privilege for the proletariat to service the needs of the elite.

CAY

Really, you’re “elite”? How many of the “elite” still wet their bed?

MARC

A significant amount?

CAY

I mean, yeah, probably. Just get down, we’re leaving.

SHE GUIDES THEM BOTH OUT OF THE ROOM.

LEILA

I’m a proto lariat!

CAY

I know, sweetie.

AS THEY WALK OUT...

CUT TO:
INT. RICKARD’S HOUSE – NICOLE’S BEDROOM – SAME TIME

MIKE ENTERS TO SEE NICOLE IS WORKING INTENSELY ON HER LAPTOP.

MIKE

Come on, we’re leaving.

NICOLE

I just need a few minutes to finish this up.

MIKE MOVES IN TO SEE WHAT SHE’S DOING. HE SEES ON SCREEN:

MIKE

“Question Six: Serial Order Matrices...” Is this a WISC test?

NICOLE

You wouldn’t tell me my score, so I found a site online to retake it.

MIKE

Oh my god, your mom’s right. We need to get you to the boardwalk before you turn into a little Unabomber.

NICOLE

I wish. His IQ was a 167.

MIKE

Why do you know that?! That’s enough. I’m unplugging this.

HE REACHES FOR THE COMPUTER CORD.
NICOLE
Okay, but I had to pay to take this.
So as long as you’re fine throwing
away $250...

MIKE
(TO HIMSELF) Damn it, she knows I’m
not fine with that. (THEN) I’m so
sorry about this.

HE RIPS OUT THE PLUG. SHE GASPS.

NICOLE
I don’t forgive you!

MIKE
I wasn’t talking to you, I was talking
to my bank account!

AS MIKE WALKS OUT...

CUT TO:
INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

MIKE ENTERS AS CAY WALKS THROUGH WITH MARC AND LEILA.

MIKE
She’s coming. And I think you’re right, we need to get out of this house as soon as possible.

BRIAN ENTERS, LOOKING DEPRESSED AND WEARING PAJAMAS. HE POURS HIMSELF A BOWL OF CEREAL AND SIGHS LOUDLY.

BRIAN
You guys go ahead without me. I can’t bear facing the world today.

MIKE
What’s the problem now? It’s not our fault Stu had to leave.

BRIAN
I know! It’s Princeton’s fault! I can’t believe this. I applied to the same fellowship and haven’t heard anything, which means he got in and I didn’t. I guess I’m not good enough for Princeton. I wonder if I’ll ever be good enough for anyone.

MIKE AND CAY LOOK AT EACH OTHER. UH OH.

MIKE
I bet Princeton just hasn’t gotten around to calling you yet. They’re probably calling alphabetically.
BRIAN
His last name is Zycam.

CAY
He’s named after a nasal swab?

MIKE
That tracks.

BRIAN
I’m sorry, I need to be alone so I can ponder the sad, barren wasteland that is my intellectual future.

HE TAKES A SAD BITE OF CEREAL. HALF THE SPOON FALLS ONTO HIS SHIRT. HE DOESN’T EVEN BOTHER CLEANING IT UP.

CAY
(TO MIKE) This is why tricking them was a bad idea. We have to come clean.

MIKE
I might have another idea.

SMASH CUT TO:
INT. RITA’S HOUSE – DAY

CAY’S CO-WORKER, RITA, IS ON THE PHONE.

RITA

(FAKE VOICE) Hello, is this Brian?
This is Dr. Spengler calling from the,
uh --

SHE GLANCES AT HER CELLPHONE, WHERE CAY WATCHES ON FACETIME.

CAY

(FACETIME) The Princeton Physics
Fellowship.

RITA

(PHONE) -- the Prison Finsticks
Fellowship letting you know that,
yeah, you got in that thing, good
work... All right, stop screaming...

(FOR CAY’S BENEFIT) Uh, you’re asking
if you should come in now?

ON FACETIME, CAY FURIOUSLY SHAKES HER HEAD NO.

RITA (CONT’D)

(PHONE) No, come in next week. You
just enjoy the rest of your day. Why
don’t you go outside and get some sun?
Maybe your parents have something fun
planned, I don’t know.

CAY

(FACETIME) That’s enough.
RITA

All right, bye!

SHE HANGS UP ON BOTH OF THEM. SHE ROLLS HER EYES AND TURNS TO HER CHILDREN:

RITA (CONT’D)

You kids go ahead and crash into all the Bennigan’s you want.

CUT TO:
INT. MIKE AND CAY’S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME

CAY HANGS UP WITH RITA AND TURNS TO MIKE.

CAY
You think he bought it?

BRIAN COMES RUNNING IN, GIDDY.

BRIAN
I got into the program! You’ll never believe it, they were calling everyone reverse alphabetically!

MIKE
Just like Princeton to go against the grain like that. Let’s celebrate!

BRIAN
Yes! I’m gonna get dressed and then let’s go boardwalking!

HE RUNS BACK OUT.

CAY
We’re going to hell, aren’t we?

MIKE
Yeah, we’ll be there tomorrow when we tell him the truth.

NICOLE (O.S.)
(FURIOUS) One fifty-one!?

CAY
Or maybe sooner.

NICOLE ENTERS, PISSED.
NICOLE
I scored a 151! That’s four points lower than Marc!

MIKE
How did you even finish the test? I unplugged the computer.

NICOLE
It’s a laptop, dad. They’re meant to be unplugged.

MIKE
I should appreciate more how amazing it is that I had smart children.

NICOLE
I’m a sham. How did I expect to be the greatest mind in sociolinguistic history when I’m not even the greatest mind in my own house?

CAY
Calm down. Whatever test you took isn’t even accurate. When you took the WISC the first time, you got a 153.

NICOLE
What?! So I’m getting stupider?!

MIKE
(TO CAY) Probably not smart to tell her that.
CAY

Coming from the man who successfully unplugged a cordless computer.

BRIAN STORMS IN, STILL IN HIS PAJAMAS.

BRIAN

So I just called back the number that “Princeton” called from, and guess what happened?

MIKE

Did they act like they weren’t Princeton? Because that’s just some Ivy League pranking right there. Classic Princeton.

BRIAN

A seven year old answered the phone! Did you fake that phone call to trick me into going to the beach?

CAY

Okay, yes, we did. But in our defense, we also faked the phone call to Stu so he wouldn’t come with us.

MIKE

Which is good news, because it means they didn’t choose him over you. See? Princeton doesn’t think you’re stupid.
BRIAN
You’ve both twisted everything around. I don’t know what’s real anymore! Am I dumb or not?

NICOLE
You are. We both are. But it’s not our fault. They’re destroying our brain cells with their “Boardwalk Days.” Well, I’m not doing it. I’m not going.

BRIAN
Me neither.

THEY STORM OUT.

MIKE
Hey! You can’t --

HE STARTS TO FOLLOW BUT STOPS WHEN THERE’S SUDDENLY A LOUD CRASH FROM THE NEXT ROOM.

MIKE (CONT’D)
Oh, no.

RESET TO:

INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE – FAMILY ROOM – CONTINUOUS

MIKE AND CAY WALK IN TO SEE MARC AND LEILA TIPPING OVER FURNITURE AND DISPLACING EVERYTHING IN THE ROOM. IT’S A MESS.

MIKE
Oh, come on! What is this about?

MARC
It’s for inspiration. To write about anarchists, I must embrace anarchy.
MIKE
It looks like you’ve embraced it plenty. Now let’s embrace cleaning up--

CAY
(GIVEN UP) It’s fine. Knock over anything you want.

MIKE SEES THAT CAY IS LOSING HOPE.

MIKE
Look, forget the kids. It’s stupid for you and me to let the whole day go to waste. Why don’t we go to the boardwalk with Leila?

CAY
No. This whole thing was a garbage idea anyway. I’m just gonna go upstairs and find the dumbest possible reality show to watch.

CAY CROSSES OFF. MIKE HEARS A CRASH, AND TURNS TO SEE LEILA HAS KNOCKED A BUNCH OF PICTURE FRAMES TO THE FLOOR.

LEILA
I’m helping.

OFF MIKE’S LOOK...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO
ACT THREE

INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER

ALL THE KIDS ARE IN THE LIVING ROOM. BRIAN WORKS ON HIS LAPTOP WHILE LEILA CLEANS UP SOME OF THE MESS. MARC KEEPS WORKING ON HIS WALL OPERA, BARELY LISTENING TO NICOLE.

NICOLE

So mom and dad don’t want you to know, but I found out your WISC score. You got a 150. Which is excellent. It’s not my 156, but...

MIKE ENTERS.

MIKE

I hope you’re proud of yourselves.

BRIAN

Hey, we’re not the ones who --

MIKE

I get it, I understand why you’re mad. We shouldn’t have lied about Princeton. (TO NICOLE) And maybe you’re right, maybe we should have told you your WISC scores a long time ago. Honestly, I don’t know. Because the truth is, when it comes to you guys, your mom and I are winging it. There aren’t a lot of books written about how to raise three genius kids. But we try to do the best we can. For all of you.

(MORE)
MIKE (CONT'D)

We sacrifice our time, our money, our walls, because we’re trying to give you every possible opportunity to make the most out of your gifts. And today, all your mom wanted in return was four hours. And I actually thought you could do it. I thought, for just one day, you were mature enough to not make everything about yourselves. I guess not. As smart as you all are, you’re really just a bunch of dummies.

MIKE WALKS OUT. THE KIDS TAKE THIS IN.

MARC

Is he mad? It feels like he’s mad, but he didn’t yell. It doesn’t make sense.

NICOLE

What is his problem? It’s not our fault we didn’t want to go to some gross boardwalk.

BRIAN

I know. We’re the weird ones? Why can’t they be normal parents who do normal things, like Stu’s dad who vacations in Chile twice a year to study stellar distortion.
NICOLE
It’s just a beach. Who cares? Why was this such a big deal?

LEILA
I guess mom just wanted to do something she likes for a change since it’s her birthday.

BRIAN, NICOLE AND MARC’S JAWS ALL DROP.

NICOLE
WHAT?

BRIAN
It’s mom’s birthday?!

LEILA
Uh huh.

BRIAN
(TO NICOLE) Did you know that?

NICOLE
Yes, I knew and decided to be a huge bitch to her anyway.

BRIAN
(BEAT) Is that sarcasm because it seems like a reasonable possibility.

NICOLE
No I didn’t know!

MARC
I didn’t even know mom had a birthday.
LEILA
She has one every year. Stars, they’re just like us.

BRIAN
We all have photographic memories, how could we not remember this?

NICOLE
Because we’re a confederacy of narcissists and monsters. We’re so self-obsessed we can’t even remember our own mother’s birthday.

MARC
Except for Leila.

LEILA
I’m a proto lariat.

MARC
So... what do we do now?

A BEAT AS THEY ALL LOOK AT EACH OTHER, CLUELESS.

CUT TO:
INT. RICKARDS' BASEMENT - MOMENTS LATER

CAY SITS ON A COUCH, MINDLESSLY PLAYING “CANDY CRUSH” WHILE “90 DAY FIANCE” PLAYS ON AN OLD-SCHOOL BIG SCREEN TV. MIKE IS TINKERING WITH SOMETHING.

MIKE

Look, I know today was a bummer, but at least it taught us a valuable lesson: we should never leave this basement again.

CAY

There’s really no reason we’d have to. It has everything we’d ever need.

MIKE

Especially now that I’ve got this guy working again.

REVEAL HE’S BEEN TINKERING WITH THE “BIG MOUTH BILLY BASS.” HE PUTS IT BACK ON THE WALL, PRESSES A BUTTON... AND AGAIN IT DIES INSTANTLY WITH A LOW, PAINFUL MOAN.

MIKE (CONT’D)

Okay, that’s definitely symbolic of something.


LEILA

Marc was standing on the chair writing his opera and then he fell and is screaming a lot. Should we ignore it?

MIKE AND CAY LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND HEAD UPSTAIRS.

CUT TO:
INT. RICKARDS’ HOUSE - FOYER - MOMENTS LATER

MIKE AND CAY COME DOWN. BRIAN’S ALUMINUM FOIL WALL IS GONE.

CAY

What happened to the foil wall? Isn’t this messing up the laser beams?

LEILA LEADS THEM INTO --

RESET TO:

INT RICKARDS’ HOUSE - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THE ROOM HAS BEEN MADE UP INTO A MAKESHIFT BOARDWALK. THE KIDS HAVE AGAIN DRAWN ON THE WALLS, BUT THIS TIME IT’S A BACKDROP OF ATLANTIC CITY HOTELS AND STOREFRONTS. MARC PLAYS “UNDER THE BOARDWALK” ON THE PIANO.

CAY

What is all this?

BRIAN

We know we screwed up and missed the chance to go to the boardwalk, so we brought the boardwalk here.

CAY AND MIKE TAKE IT IN.

MARC

We didn’t know what a “log flume” is, but there’s a slip and slide...

NICOLE

And we ordered funnel cakes...

BRIAN

And luckily I already had the UV lights for my experiment, so we’re getting the same amount of cancer we’d get from being outside.
MIKE
Gotta appreciate the commitment to detail.

LEILA
We didn’t have any sand, so I dug up a bunch of dirt from outside.

CAY AND MIKE LOOK DOWN – THERE’S DIRT EVERYWHERE.

CAY
You’re a good helper.

NICOLE
We’re sorry about the way we acted today. Happy birthday, mom.

MARC/BRIAN
Happy birthday/We love you.

MIKE AND CAY LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

CAY
Thank you, this is so sweet.

THE KIDS ARE PLEASED WITH THEMSELVES. CAY AND MIKE STEP AWAY.

CAY (CONT’D)
This is so bizarre.

MIKE
I know. Why do they think it’s your birthday?

LEILA SIDLES UP.

LEILA
(WHISPERING) I told them. I thought they needed some extra motivation.
SHE WINKS AND WALKS OFF.

MIKE
Did she --

CAY
-- outsmart the smart ones? Yep.

MIKE
Well, at least they’re making an
effort. That’s progress. The Unabomber
probably never did this for his mom on
her fake birthday.

CAY
Yeah. We might as well enjoy it while
we can. I have a feeling this is about
as close as this family’s gonna get to
Normal.

CAY AND MIKE TAKE BITES OF FUNNEL CAKE. THE KIDS PLAY ON A
MAKESHIFT SKEEBALL MACHINE. FOR THIS ONE MOMENT, THEY’RE JUST
A TYPICAL FAMILY HAVING MINDLESS FUN. MIKE’S PHONE RINGS.

MIKE
This is so annoying.

CAY
Who is that?

MIKE
No clue. It’s been the same number
calling for hours. It’s gotta be spam,
I’m just turning the phone off.

AS MIKE SHUTS DOWN HIS PHONE...

CUT TO:
EXT. PRINCETON CAMPUS – NIGHT – SAME TIME

STU STANDS IN THE RAIN OUTSIDE A BUILDING, ON HIS CELL PHONE.

STU

Hi, Dr. Venkman, this is Stu. Again.

I’ve been outside the physics building
for a few hours. It’s all locked up,
but I won’t move until I hear from
you.

STU HANGS UP THE PHONE. HE TAKES OUT A LITTLE BAG OF TRAIL
MIX AND POPS SOME IN HIS MOUTH. A BEAT, THEN:

STU (CONT’D)

Oh, no. I think that was a peanut.

AND WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE