

ADOPTED

"BUNKBEDS AND BULLIES"

Written by

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and

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Based on the life story of Shawn Vance.

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## CHARACTER LIST



JEFF VANCE- 60s, goofy, optimistic, carefree, and conservative Dad. He's a red-blooded, all American, business owner who hates negative thoughts... so he doesn't have 'em!



DENEICE VANCE- 60s, empathetic, overly attentive, a good Christian mother who believes in her kids as much as she worries about them. She's highly-emotional but likes to think she isn't.



DAVID VANCE- 12, adoptee from Russia, socially-unaware, naive, heavy accent. On one hand, he's the sweetest kid you'll ever meet. On the other, he suffered a lot of trauma and runs primarily on emotion. He has high highs and low lows, but you're always rooting for him because he's genuine and only wants to be accepted.



SHAWN VANCE- 27, overconfident like his father, anxious like his mother, this well-meaning meathead is fresh out of the military and directionless-but-cocksure.



ELYSE VANCE- 24, liberal, defiant, quintessential millennial with a host of congenital health problems (but you'd never know it). She's a budding social media "influencer" and by far the hippest person in the house.



DR. ZORA- 30, family therapist, beautiful, easy going, educated, smart. Sweet, confident, and direct. She keeps her cool when others don't, and provides a voice of reason in this chaotic world.



THUMPER (REAL NAME: MATTÍAS)- 12, pudgy Dominican adoptee and David's best friend. His nickname is derived from the term "Bible thumper." He's also deep in the throes of puberty, and struggling to stay on the straight and narrow Jesus prescribed.



TIM & AMANDA- 40s, interracial, genuinely nice, super Christians. They've adopted six kids from different countries (including Thumper), who are all in different life phases. In other words, nothing fazes them.

TEASER

INTERVIEW - SHAWN

We hear MIC BUMPS and RUSTLING as Shawn settles into his seat. GRAPHICS identify each character as they speak.

SHAWN

Three days ago, I was a Special  
Forces Green Beret living at Ft.  
Carson, Colorado - Don't thank me  
for my service. Just buy me a beer.

B-ROLL: Shawn walks through the front door, duffel in hand.  
"WELCOME HOME" Banner and ribbons everywhere. David (wearing  
a patriotic/horse-themed shirt) runs up and SALUTES.

SHAWN

Today, I'm an unemployed civilian  
living in my childhood home and  
sharing a bunkbed with David - the  
12 year old Russian orphan my  
parents adopted six months ago.

INTERVIEW - DAVID

DAVID

When I first meet Mama and Papa, I  
know I would be adopt. Papa love  
all my tricks!

B-ROLL: Jeff is blown away by David's acrobatics as he does a  
Russian folk dance, juggles, does a flip- TA-DA!!!

DAVID

(smiling)  
And mama cry when I make sad eyes!

INTERVIEW - JEFF & DENEICE

DENEICE

Sitting in church one Sunday  
morning, after a particularly  
inspired message, we just felt God  
calling us to adopt.

JEFF

I wanted an RV.  
(Deneice glares)  
But!

(MORE)

JEFF (CONT'D)

You know what the Bible says, "If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans."

DENEICE

(smiling through it)  
Anyway, our dear friends, Tim and Amanda...

B-ROLL: TIM, AMANDA, and their 6 kids (including THUMPER) sit in their living room, playing games.

DENEICE

Turned us onto a wonderful adoption organization... And six weeks later, we came home with our new son.

INTERVIEW - SHAWN

SHAWN

For the first three months, David's best and only friends were my parents... and it shows.

INTERCUT WITH B-ROLL: Jeff, David and Deneice in bad outfits, David scrapbooking with Deneice, watching Fox News with Jeff.

SHAWN

The kid thinks scrapbooking is cool and skateboarding is a crime. His favorite athlete is fifty year old pro golfer and osteoarthritis spokesman, Phil Mickelson.

INTERCUT WITH B-ROLL: Jeff hangs a Phil Mickelson FatHead poster on the wall. David gives him a thumbs up.

SHAWN

I guess the good news is, David wasn't alone with mom and dad for too long, because my sister moved back home to "help."

B-Roll: Elyse lying on the couch taking selfies while Deneice folds laundry at her feet.

SHAWN

I'm kidding. Rent's free and Elyse is an "influencer."  
(laughs smugly)  
(MORE)

SHAWN (CONT'D)

To be fair, she did bring her three disgusting dogs with her, and David loves them!

B-Roll: David wrestles with SAWYER (Golden Retriever), KI (Chihuahua-mutt), and BUFFY (Bichon Frisé). Sawyer's tail WHACKS two cups off the coffee table.

INTERVIEW - ELYSE

ELYSE

What my parents are doing for David is incredible. At the same time, I'm glad I'm here to provide him an-uh... "open minded" perspective in this conservative bubble.

INTERVIEW - SHAWN

SHAWN

So, to answer your question, I do feel a little out of place right now.

REVEAL: Shawn sits on the top bunk in he and David's room... the bed-spread and sheets are Western-themed.

SHAWN

It's weird being back home.

David enters wearing SUPERMAN PJs. He spies the camera on him, and kicks off the bottom bunk. David does a side flip-TA-DA!!!

SHAWN

Super weird.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. VANCE HOME - HALLWAY - DAY

The camera follows Jeff, in bathrobe, pajama pants, and largemouth bass slippers as he creeps down the hall.

JEFF  
(whispering)  
C'mon, lets go wake up David.

INT. VANCE HOME - SHAWN & DAVID'S ROOM - DAY

David and Elyse's three dogs sleep soundly on the bottom bunk. Shawn's bed is empty and made to military standard.

JEFF  
(Darth Vader impression)  
David, I am your father.

DAVID  
(alarmed)  
I know, Papa! Why is scary voice?

JEFF  
Oops. Sorry!  
(to camera)  
Forgot he hasn't seen Star Wars.  
(back to David)  
Big day, kiddo! What are we gonna wear?

INTERVIEW - DAVID & JEFF - SHAWN & DAVID'S ROOM

David and Jeff sit side-by-side in matching outfits: Hawaiian shirt tucked into denim, cowboy boots, braided leather belt and hair combed to a part. Jeff smiles, proudly!

DAVID  
Today is first day of school. Momma say everyone will love me, and I will make all the friends because I am such sweet boy!

JEFF  
You sure are, buddy!

SHAWN (O.C.)  
Have you guys seen my computer?

WHIP PAN to the door, where Shawn stands in ridiculous workout swag: RANGER PANTIES (Army-issue super-short shorts), "Teddy Swolsevelt" tank top, sweat bands, WOD socks, etc.

SHAWN

(re: David's clothes)

No-no-no. You cannot send him to school like this.

DAVID

Why?

SHAWN

You look ridiculous!

Shawn shakes his head, unaware of his own outfit.

JEFF

I think you look nice.

SHAWN

Ha. Okay, well I've got too much to do to give you a makeover.

INTERVIEW - SHAWN

Dressed Shawn digs through his backpack, pulling out his dated Toughbook laptop.

SHAWN

Being in Special Forces was great... It provided community, status, and gave me a sense of purpose. I'm looking for a career that does the same, but pays me way more. Step one - write a resumé!

INT. VANCE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Deneice hustles to prepare David's lunch. Canned meat, jello molds, gelatin packs and root vegetables adorn the island.

At the stove - Jeff holds BUFFY (the skittish Bichon Frisè) in one arm and fries/eats bacon with the other. Shawn enters, carrying his laptop and sets up at the breakfast bar.

JEFF

(offering Shawn a strip)

Bacon?!

SHAWN

Yes, please.



Shawn opens his computer. Presses power button- no response.

SHAWN

Aww, crap.

He notices Deneice, carefully coaxing a heart-shaped mold of meat jello into Tupperware.

SHAWN

Mom... what the hell is that?

DENEICE

Language! This is "Kholodets"- it's a popular Russian dish. David loves it, and it's actually very yummy.

SHAWN

Okay. So your plan is to send your son to his first day of Jr. High dressed like Tommy Bahama with a blob of meat jello for lunch?

DENEICE

Shawn, he asked for it.

SHAWN

Oh, he's gonna get it!

Deneice closes the lid on David's lunch box: It's Elsa, Anna, and Olaf (from FROZEN).

SHAWN

Are you f-  
(sees camera)  
Kidding me? Frozen?!

REVEAL: David standing behind Shawn, still dressed like Jeff.

DAVID

Frozen is my favorite movie!

SHAWN

It can't be.

Elyse enters in avocado-themed pajama shorts and tank, eyes glued to her phone.

DAVID

Why?

SHAWN

Uh... Because that movie's for babies and girls.

DAVID  
 (flash of anger)  
 This is lie! I am not baby or girl,  
 and I love this movie.

SHAWN  
 Hah! Okay... uh-

ELYSE  
 Your bro-gramming failing you? You  
 don't have a small-minded comeback?

JEFF  
 (to Elyse)  
 Bacon?

ELYSE  
 Dad, I'm vegan.

PUNCH IN on Elyse as she pops a DOZEN pills.

JEFF  
 Sweetie, this is bacon!

Jeff holds up a piece in confusion. Feeds it too Buffy.

ELYSE (PRE-LAP)  
 I have fourteen diseases and  
 disorders.

INTERVIEW - ELYSE

Elyse sits crosslegged on the couch. She wears a deep cut V-neck across her sternum we can see her heart surgery scar. She rattles through these at ultra-high speed.

ELYSE  
*Ebstein's anomaly, Wolff-Parkinson-White syndrome, Supraventricular tachycardia, Gastroparesis, Irritable bowel syndrome, Colitis, Idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura, Immunoglobulin A deficiency, Asthma, Migraines, Chronic rhinosinusitis, Hashimoto's thyroiditis, Temporomandibular joint dysfunction, Insomnia... Oh and I've had open heart surgery.*  
 (breathes)  
 As an influencer, my passion is to use Instagram to bring awareness and support to the chronically ill community.

INTERVIEW - SHAWN

Shawn scrolls through Elyse's I.G. ... lots of bathing suit pics.

SHAWN

This is my sister's instagram. Mom loves it.

INT. VANCE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Pill on her tongue, Elyse poses for a sexy selfie, making sure her zipper scar and a bit of cleavage is on display.

DAVID

(imitating Elyse)  
Why you make this face?

SHAWN

Yeah, Elyse. Why you make this face?

DENEICE

Because she doesn't care if she causes her brothers in Christ to stumble.

ELYSE

Brothers and sisters, mom. It's the twenty-first century. Love wins.

DAVID

Why you want me to fall down?

ELYSE

I don't. Mom's just shaming me.

DAVID

Why?

DENEICE

(worried)  
I'm not trying to "shame" you. I just wish you wouldn't take seductive pictures with your boobs out.

David laughs, looking to the camera in excitement. *[Note: David laughs every time he hears the word "boobs".]*

ELYSE

You're so repressed. It's the human body, it's no big deal, and it's my job!

SHAWN

So just to clarify for David, so he doesn't get the wrong impression... your job is to show your boobs?

David laughs again.

JEFF

Enough! I don't want to hear or see my daughters boobs until I finish my bacon.

SHAWN

That's a good rule, dad.

Elyse spikes the camera in disbelief.

DENEICE

Is that what you guys are wearing? Because we need to leave.

SHAWN

What? I've got stuff to do!

DENEICE

You can do your "stuff" later. We're going to Adopted Club as a family.

ELYSE

What is that?

EXT. SCHOOL - ESTABLISHING - DAY

DR. ZORA (PRE-LAP)

Adopted Club is more than just your child's homeroom; it's a community.

INT. SCHOOL - ADOPTED CLUB HOMEROOM - DAY

This large middle-school classroom is filled with a diverse group of families, children from all corners of the globe.

DR. ZORA addresses them from the front.

DR. ZORA

Which is why every year, I ask our A.C. families to join us to kick-off the school year and get to know one another. Hello, everyone. For those who don't know me, I'm Doctor Zora, your child's homeroom teacher. Welcome! As you can see...

We drift around the classroom, taking in the diverse families. We key in on TIM and AMANDA, and their litter of children, including THUMPER (who sits next to David). And MEL and TRACY (40s, lesbians) with a Chinese daughter, TEAL.

DR. ZORA

Adoption calls families from all walks of life, each of us bringing our own experience, wisdom, strengths and weaknesses. The people in this room are your lifelines. And, trust me, you will need them. So, take this hour, eat some donuts, and get to know each other!

Jeff CLAPS- too much.

JEFF

She's terrific. That was great, huh? She's a doctor?

DAVID

(in love)  
She is like silk raven in the snow.

THUMPER

(also in love)  
Gosh, if she were my wife, I would treat her right unto the Lord...

SHAWN

Amen.

TRACY

Amen.

INTERVIEW - DAVID & THUMPER

David sits on the couch with his arm around Thumper - less than zero personal space.

DAVID

Thumper is my best friend. I meet him when I move here because he is my neighborhood. He have six brother and sister and teach me everything about Jesus and girls!

Thumper smiles and nods.

INT. SCHOOL - ADOPTED CLUB HOMEROOM

Families mingle in the b.g.

AMANDA

How's everything going?

DENEICE

I can't complain. I love having a house full of kids.

TIM

Oh, praise God. A lot of times there's a bit of an adjustment period - sibling strife. It can be-

AMANDA

Terrifying.

Amanda smiles, but her eyes tell a different story. Donuts in hand, Shawn and Elyse join them. Amanda gives Elyse a side-hug and the girls talk in b.g.

JEFF

Shawn-boy, have you met our neighbors Tim and Amanda?

SHAWN

(shaking hands)

Thumper's parents? You guys are the ones responsible for talking these crazy old people into adopting!

AMANDA

(pleased)

We may have played a small role.

TIM

Your father brags about you all the time! Says you're the future of Hoseman.

SHAWN

Oh, he did, did he?

JEFF  
A dad can dream, can't he?!

INTERVIEW - JEFF

JEFF  
Eighteen years ago, I started a  
small enterprise called Hoseman.

B-ROLL SHOT: Hoseman facility and parking lot. A vinyl wrap covers the side of Jeff's truck, proudly displaying his "HOSEMAN" company logo and line drawing of JEFF holding a giant hose. *The innuendo is hard to miss, but somehow, he does...*

WHIP PAN TO: A MOTHER and CHILD cross the parking lot looking at Jeff's truck. The mother scowls, diverting her kid's eyes.

JEFF  
Today, we have five locations  
across Texas and are the primary  
supplier of custom hose fittings,  
nozzles and hazzles and hose-  
related what-nots! I like to say,  
"We knows hose!"  
(gets no reaction)  
My dream is to one day hand it off  
to my son... s. My sons. Hah!

INT. SCHOOL - ADOPTED CLUB HOMEROOM

Leading Dr. Zora by the hand, David busts through the crowd and reaches our family.

DAVID  
Everyone stop talking. I need to  
meet you, Dr. Zora!

SHAWN  
(to Elyse)  
I been waiting to meet me some Dr.  
Zora all morning.

ELYSE  
She's out of your league.

SHAWN  
(laughing it off)  
Yeah, right...  
(sotto)  
Right.

JEFF

Howdy, doc!

DR. ZORA

Hello, Vance family! What a pleasure.

DENEICE

(hugging Dr. Zora)

Hi, I'm Deneice. We're so excited to be a part of this community.

Deneice gives her a hug.

SHAWN

We're trying to keep it professional.

Shawn goes for the hug, and Dr. Zora expertly turns it into a handshake. THE BELL RINGS, giving her a quick out and leaving Shawn clearly rejected. Elyse fist-bumps Shawn, teasing-

ELYSE

Smooth.

SHAWN

You'll see.

DR. ZORA

Alright, everyone! That's the hour. We'll circulate a contact sheet, and see you all at the mid-semester potluck!

(to Jeff and Deneice)

Sorry we didn't get more face time. If you need anything, don't hesitate.

DENEICE

Thank you!

David runs up and hugs Deneice. She gets down on one knee, doing her best not to project her anxiety on David.

DENEICE

We love you so much, sweetheart! You are going to have such a wonderful day.

She hugs David again real tight. Jeff gives him a low-five.

JEFF

Go get 'em kiddo.



DAVID  
I will get them, papa!

They watch as David confidently strolls toward the door.

ELYSE  
(to Deneice)  
He's gonna be okay.

DENEICE  
I know.

David turns into the hall and greets a group of cool  
ATHLETES.

DAVID  
Howdy, homies!

The athletes are very NOT impressed. Elyse's jaw drops. Mom  
covers her mouth.

JEFF  
Taught him some slang!

SHAWN  
Aww, you shouldn't have.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWOINT. VANCE HOME - DAY

Shawn shuffles through a pile of papers, overwhelmed. Deneice wheels out her cleaning supplies, organizing them in a very particular fashion.

DENEICE

Hows the resumé coming?

Shawn looks to the camera, frustrated.

## SERIES OF SHOTS - SHAWN RESUMÉ STRUGGLES

1. Shawn digs through the electronics drawer, trying to find a power cord that fits his laptop.

2. Shawn, pleads with his Toughbook laptop.

SHAWN

What? How can that not be my password? It's my only one!

3. Angrily types his password:

SHAWN

P-A-S-S-W-O-

4. Shawn sits at his laptop, Googling...

SHAWN

Now we're cooking!  
(pecks at keyboard)  
How to write a resumé.

He hits ENTER, and the screen FREEZES.

5. Shawn repeatedly SLAMS the lid of his Toughbook. It breaks.

BACK TO:

INT. VANCE HOME - DAY

Shawn bites his tongue.

SHAWN

Making progress.

DENEICE

Have you thought about working with dad while you figure it out? Give you something to do.

SHAWN

Something to do? I've only been out of the army for SIX DAYS!

DENEICE

I know. I'm sorry. I don't want to pressure you, honey. I just don't want to see you...

The camera follows Deneice's gaze to the window. Outside by the pool, Elyse lays on her stomach, pretending to tan while using a selfie stick to take a photo of her backside.

DENEICE

...do nothing with your life.

INTERVIEW - DENEICE

DENEICE

I was raised on a turkey farm by a Baptist minister. So from a young age, it was drilled into me that idle hands are the Devil's workshop.

Deneice raises her hands into frame, revealing wrist weights.

DENEICE

And these hands are never idle!

She notices her hanging tricep flab. Jiggles it.

DENEICE

And if I can clean this house burn some of this off at the same time... even better!

INT. VANCE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Deneice pops a cassette tape labeled "chore music" into a 25 year old boom box and presses "Play." Kirk Franklin (high-energy worship music) pumps through the house, startling Shawn.

SHAWN

What the...

Deneice slides across the tile floor in her kneepads, dancercizing along to the chore music and scrubbing the grout in rhythm. *To be clear, this is weird- not sexy.*

Shawn shakes the image out of his head, frustratedly grabs at his papers, and retreats outside.

EXT. VANCE HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

CELL PHONE FOOTAGE (Elyse's Instagram story): We see Deneice dancing/doing chores to music we can't hear. IG CAPTION: *I got it from my momma!*

Elyse starts to sing the song, flipping to selfie mode and dancing... A shadow falls across her. She turns the camera to see Shawn, who is unamused/confused by what he sees.

ELYSE  
Can I help you?

SHAWN  
I'm starting to think not.

END CELL-PHONE FOOTAGE.

SHAWN  
(re: Mom's dancercizing)  
She's really gettin' after those choreobics!

ELYSE  
Probably just worried about David.  
(re: stack of papers)  
What is this mess?

SHAWN  
This is my resumé... or it will be,  
once you put it all together in the  
old thinking machine and hit print.  
Hooah!

Shawn hands Elyse the stack of papers. Clipped to the top page is his Basic Training photo.

ELYSE  
Handwritten? Well, it will  
definitely stand out.

SHAWN  
Buzzfeed said that's the most  
important part, so...

ELYSE

If BuzzFeed said it, it must be gold...

(struggling to read)

...under special skills you wrote... extra grenadine?

SHAWN

Expert grenadier.

(She doesn't get it)

A guy who throws grenades.

Expertly. Duh.

Elyse is texting now (she texts non-stop).

ELYSE

And for what job would that skill be useful?

SHAWN

I don't know. I didn't go to college, so I had to put something.

ELYSE

Okay, let's take a step back. What do you want to do?

SHAWN

Again, I don't know... that's the worst part! I'm a soldier without a mission. Actually, I'm not even a soldier. So I'm nothing without anything!

ELYSE

Well, Buddha would say-

SHAWN

Mmm... hard pass.

Elyse laughs.

SHAWN

I'm serious. What am I gonna do?

(over it)

Maybe I should just go work for dad.

ELYSE

Why don't you?

SHAWN

Because, I don't care about hoses. And... I don't know-

ELYSE  
C'mon, spit it out!

SHAWN  
I want to do something that matters-  
not that hoses don't matter! They  
just don't matter to me, you know?  
I just always thought I would be  
somebody...

ELYSE  
Aww!

Elyse puts her hand on her heart, feeling deeply.

ELYSE  
You think you're special.

SHAWN  
It's not called Everybody Forces.  
It's called Special Forces!

Still looking at her phone, Elyse laughs.

SHAWN  
You like that?

ELYSE  
No. Sorry, it was a meme.  
(puts phone away)  
Alright, Mr. Special... We've got a  
lot of work to do.  
(re: Basic Training photo)  
Starting with a headshot.

INT. VANCE HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

CAMERA FLASH!

ELYSE  
Now let's try contemplative!

Shawn and Elyse are mid-photoshoot in a makeshift studio.  
Light from the bay window illuminates Shawn, who looks absurd  
in one of Dad's too-big sport coats (excess fabric alligator-  
clipped in the back). Elyse continues snapping photos  
throughout.

SHAWN  
Are you serious? I'm not-

ELYSE  
Contemplative!

Shawn commits hard, striking a pose: finger and thumb gracing the bottom of his chin.

ELYSE

Great. Now look like you have a secret, and it's JUICY!

SHAWN

Oh my god, this is stupid.

ELYSE

(continues shooting)

You have to trust me. As an influencer, I've learned a lot of camera tricks to make people think I'm even hotter than I actually am.

SHAWN

I'd keep that to myself.

Elyse snaps a final photo and starts flipping through them.

ELYSE

Ok that one's bad. Bad. Bad. Weird. Disturbing...hmmm...this one...

(finds photo)

This is the money maker!

She shows Shawn- it's terrible.

SHAWN

Alright, I don't want to do this.

ELYSE

(laughing)

I'm kidding. Look, here's a good one!

SHAWN

That's a good one? You made me look skinny!

ELYSE

Isn't that a good thing?

SHAWN

No! I'm trying to look buff. Like a member of swole team six, riding the gains train into Jacked City!

ELYSE

I don't know what any of those words means.

WHAM! A shirtless David storms in the front door. He throws his Frozen lunchbox down.

DAVID  
I hate school! It is no more!

SHAWN  
Yo, it's Magic Mikhail!

ELYSE  
Where's your shirt?

David notices the cameras on him - FLEXES.

DENEICE (O.C.)  
Oh, no. What happened, sweetie?

Deneice enters with a stack of laundry, concerned. As soon as she sees him, she drops the laundry and gives him a hug.

DAVID  
Mean boy say I dress like 'sexual editor' and whole class laugh.

SHAWN  
(spiking camera)  
What'd they say about your lunch box?

ELYSE  
Shawn, c'mon!

DENEICE  
Oh, I'm so sorry you got teased, sweetheart. Kids can be mean.

DAVID  
I never go back to school! I will be Hoseman. Like Papa!

DENEICE  
I'm sure Papa would love that. But why don't we take a little time to cool down, and then we can talk about this?

SHAWN  
Classic Mom delay tactic. Guess what, buddy. You're going back to school.

DAVID  
What?!



DENEICE

David, he's teasing.

SHAWN

Oh, he doesn't have to go back to school?

DENEICE

Of course he does, but that's not-

DAVID

Why do you take his side?

DENEICE

I'm not taking his side, honey. I'm just trying to make you feel better.

DAVID

I not feel better! I feel bad like Elsa!

David storms to the stairs, kicking his lunchbox.

ELYSE

David, violence isn't the answer.

David looks back, crazy-eyed. Staring daggers into Elyse, he PUNCHES a hole in the drywall, then storms upstairs.

SHAWN

Hell of a right hook, Ivan Drago!  
(no one laughs)  
Rocky Four? Dad would get it.

DENEICE

Stop, Shawn. Just Stop!

ELYSE

Seriously, you're too mean to him.

SHAWN

Too mean? I tried to stop him from dressing like he was going to Hawaii on a horse and you guys said, "Giddy-up!"

ELYSE

Shawn, he had a traumatic childhood! He needs our support.

DENEICE

Just... think about it from David's perspective.

(MORE)

DENEICE (CONT'D)

He gets teased at school by a bully, and then he comes home, where he's supposed to be safe... only to find another bully.

SHAWN

Well, when you say it like that, I sound like a jerk!

Just then, Jeff enters with an armload of groceries. He doesn't read the room.

JEFF

You guys talkin' about dinner?!

INT. VANCE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Jeff pounds a steak with a Texas Rangers commemorative mini-bat. Eggs boil on the stove. Deneice scrubs her anxiety away on the baseboards...

JEFF (PRE-LAP)

I think it's easy to let your kids problems affect you.

INTERVIEW - JEFF

Jeff peels hardboiled eggs, the pot from the stove in evidence.

JEFF

Parenting is a lot like barbecue... there's a lot of different ways to do it... what I do is ask the butcher what's the best way to cook the cut of meat I'm buying, so I don't have to do a lot of thinkin'... I guess in our home, Deneice is the butcher!

Proud of himself.

DENEICE (O.C.)

Sweetheart...

ZOOM OUT: Deneice is waiting at the foot of the stairs:

DENEICE

Shall we talk to our son?

Jeff snags the bowl of eggs.

INT. VANCE HOME - STAIRS - CONTINUOUS - DAY

Working on his resume in the corner, Shawn types on the ancient family desktop as Jeff and Deneice climb the stairs the camera follows from below.

DENEICE

(to Jeff)

I swear your love language is food.

JEFF

People's hearts are in their tummies. It's basic psychiatry!

DENEICE

Psychology.

JEFF

Either one.

DENEICE

Remember. When we go in, we're on a team, and you're the team captain.

JEFF

Can't you be the captain?

DENEICE

Just, talk to him!

JEFF

Alright-alright. I got it.

Just before they go into Shawn & David's room, Jeff gives Deneice a little love pat on the butt. Deneice tries to avoid the camera seeing her scold him.

DENEICE

Goodness gracious, Jeff. Stop it!

JEFF

Sorry. I thought you looked cute.

The camera whips back down and zooms in on Shawn.

SHAWN

Is this the first time you've seen my dad give a "tough talk"?

(chuckles)

You're gonna love it.

INT. VANCE HOME - SHAWN & DAVID'S ROOM - DAY

Deneice softly pushes open the door to Davids room, Jeff hot on her heels, bowl in hand.

JEFF

Hey, kiddo. Brought you somethin' to eat.

DAVID

I am not hungry to eat.

When David sees the hardboiled eggs, his eyes light up. Jeff spikes the camera. David begins scarfing down the eggs.

JEFF

How ya doin'? I heard you had a tough one at school.

DAVID

(mouth full)

Mama say I have to go back, but I will never!

JEFF

Well, that's what we're here to talk about.

(to Deneice)

Go ahead, sweetheart.

DENEICE

Jeff...

JEFF

Okay.

(deep breath)

What are you thinking, David?

DAVID

I don't go to school!

DENEICE

I know this is difficult, but quitting school is not an option.

DAVID

You cannot make me! Papa, please?

Jeff looks to Deneice as if to say, "What am I supposed to do with that?" She gives him nothing in return. Jeff grimaces.

JEFF

David, life is hard. But we have a saying here in America, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going!" And that's why we gotta go... back to school.

What?

DAVID

What?

DENEICE

JEFF

Look, sometimes you gotta pull yourself up by your bootstraps.

DAVID

My boots not have straps!

JEFF

Forget about the boots.

DAVID

(overwhelmed)

I cannot understand!

JEFF

It's about doing the right thing, son. You're a Vance now. And Vances don't run from their problems!

Furious, David throws the bowl of hard-boiled eggs...

DAVID

Then I am not Vances!

... and runs out of the room. Deneice calls after him:

DENEICE

We're not done! Come back here!

Downstairs, we hear the front door SLAM. The camera runs to the window, just in time to catch David racing across the front lawn. BACK TO: Deneice and Jeff. She sighs.

JEFF

Well, that's what ya get for makin' me team captain.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. VANCE HOME - GARAGE - DUSK

Shawn digs through his army duffel, pulling out gear...

SHAWN

(to camera)

It's been two hours since David left, and we're starting to think maybe he isn't just "getting some air."

Elyse walks through the garage, taking a selfie-video.

SHAWN

Hey, yoga pants! You gonna help look for David or just internet with your friends all night?

ELYSE

I am helping!

INT. VANCE HOME - HALLWAY - DUSK

CELL PHONE FOOTAGE (INSTAGRAM VIDEO \*LIVE\*): Elyse strolls down the hall...

ELYSE

Hey, E-nation, quick update! My little brother's still missing, and as you can see... we're stressing pretty hard over here.

Elyse re-angles the cell phone to reveal Deneice sitting at the dining room table, rubbing her temples. Deneice's phone is on speaker phone- she's calling AMANDA.

Deneice notices Elyse and snipes her with angry-eyes. Elyse evades, heading back down the hall.

ELYSE

*Yikes!* If you're in my hood, keep your eyes peeled. And if you spot David, shoot me a DM. X. O. X. O.

END CELLPHONE FOOTAGE.

INT. VANCE HOME - DUSK

Deneice sits at the dining room table, phone still RINGING.  
Thumper answers.

THUMPER (V.O.)  
(over phone, filtered)  
Hey, Mrs. Vance! This is Thumper.

DENEICE  
Hey, Thumper. Is your mom home?

INT. TIM & AMANDA'S HOUSE - DUSK

Thumper sits at the coffee table drawing a sexy Disney princess version of Mary Magdalene drying Jesus's feet with her hair. "JOHN 12:1-8" is scribbled underneath. In the b.g. his brothers and sisters play a board game.

THUMPER  
No, ma'am. She's in the bathroom,  
and dad says we're supposed to let  
her poop in peace.

INTERVIEW - AMANDA

Amanda stands at the entrance to her bathroom. It's less of a restroom, and more of a sanctuary: candles, incense, prayer rug, etc.

AMANDA  
When you have six kids, the  
restroom is the only place you get  
to be alone... I go a lot.

INTERCUT BETWEEN THUMPER AND DENEICE

DENEICE  
It's fine. You can help me. I'm  
looking for David. He disappeared a  
few hours ago, and-

THUMPER  
Did you look in his room?

DENEICE  
Yes, Thumper. We looked in his  
room. We had a disagreement  
earlier, and he ran away. And we're  
on our way-

THUMPER

Say no more. I'll get my rescue boots and meet you out front!

DENEICE

Oh that's not necessary. We can-

THUMPER

I'll call Doctor Zora!

INT. VANCE HOME - KITCHEN - DUSK

Jeff has three dogs leashed to his waist (with a dog walker belt) and is filling a Zip-loc baggie with Goldfish and Oreos. Deneice paces in.

DENEICE

Let's go. Shawn's already out front.

JEFF

Have you seen the poop bags?

DENEICE

Why are you bringing the dogs?

JEFF

To pick up David's scent! A dog's nose can smell ten thousand-

DENEICE

Jeff, not now!  
(catching herself)  
I'm sorry. I'm just really worried.

JEFF

Of course you are, honey. Our son's out there alone and sad, and it's getting dark-

DENEICE

For Pete's sake, Jeff, you're making it worse!

Deneice sheds a tear... Jeff moves in to give her a hug, rubs her back.

DENEICE

I don't know if we're built for this anymore. I love the kids, but... I forget about all the hard parts.



JEFF

I know... I wonder the same thing.  
Was this all a mistake? Should we  
have just bought an RV?

DENEICE

What?

JEFF

What?

DENEICE

(exasperated)

I'm going to look for David.

As she steps away, Jeff feeds a goldfish to one of the dogs, exciting the other two. Deneice's foot gets caught in the leash, but all of her momentum continues forward, SMASHING her forehead into the drywall.

JEFF

Oh, honey! You okay?!

Swatting Jeff's hand away, Deneice stumbles forward.

DENEICE

I'm a country girl, Jeff. I've been  
hit in the head a lot.

Jeff spikes the camera, reassuring.

JEFF

She's alright. My girl's a tough  
bird.

EXT. VANCE HOME - NIGHT

Shawn (mission ready: spec-ops chest rig complete with IR patches and glow sticks) hops out of the back of his truck. He clicks on his night vision monocular, and it comes to life, GLOWING GREEN.

ELYSE

Wow... Captain Overkill, reporting  
for duty!

Shawn points to his Special Forces patch on his chest rig.

SHAWN

Sorry I'm special.

Deneice cuts across the front lawn, headed down the street. Jeff and the three dogs approach.

He's hand-cranking a dinky man-powered flashlight, when he spots Shawn in full battle rattle.

JEFF

Now that's a cool get-up!

Tim, Amanda, and their kids approach with flashlights.

DENEICE

(to Amanda)

You guys are so sweet. I'm sure it's gonna be fine. You don't have to-

Amanda gives Deneice a hug.

AMANDA

Deneice, several of our children ran away in the beginning. I've been in your shoes before, and I was freaking out.

DENEICE

Okay, I'm freaking out.

THUMPER

(saluting Shawn)

Don't worry, Sergeant Vance. I talked to the big man upstairs. J.C.'s in the driver's seat!

As the gang splits up, a Harley Davidson V-Rod rounds the corner and parks. The rider takes their helmet off- it's Dr. Zora.

THUMPER

I also called Dr. Zora.

SHAWN

Smart. Super glad she's here.

They fist bump.

EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - NIGHT

The search party scours the neighborhood, school, and surrounding areas...

AT A STRIP MALL

Tim and some of their kids drive slow in their 15 passenger van.

TIM  
David! You here, buddy?

AT SCHOOL

Jeff, Thumper, and Dr. Zora search the school grounds.

DR. ZORA  
David! It's Doctor Zora.

THUMPER  
And Thumper! Please come home!

Suddenly, the dogs begin to bark wildly, pulling Jeff towards a dumpster.

JEFF  
They're onto something! Over here!

He cranks his light to life, just in time to see a RACCOON  
HISS.

JEFF  
Get back, Buffy!

AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Elyse, Mom, Amanda, and the remainder of the kids walk the streets.

DENEICE  
David! Sweetheart...

Elyse opens Instagram, scrolling through comments.

DENEICE  
Elyse, please get off Instagram!  
It's not helpful!!

DING! Elyse looks at her phone.

ELYSE  
David's at the park. Texting Shawn  
now...

DENEICE  
How do you know that?

ELYSE

(texting)

I linked my Instagram to the NextDoor app, so half the neighborhood follows me... lot of weirdos.

MESSAGE SENT sound. Deneice is in shock.

INTERVIEW - ELYSE

ELYSE

Honestly, I forgot that I linked my accounts. So I was surprised as my mom was... I guess we both underestimated me.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Shawn spots David through his night vision.

EXT. TREE TOP - NIGHT

Using an ascension rig, Shawn hoists his way up to David's branch.

SHAWN

What's going on, buddy? You must be cold.

DAVID

Cold never bother me anyway.

SHAWN

Don't quote Frozen to me.

(beat)

Sorry. You can quote it if you want.

DAVID

Why you doing here?

SHAWN

I'm here because my little brother ran away, and our Mom is worried sick.

DAVID

Momma is sick?

SHAWN

Yes, with worry.... About you.

DAVID

Why? I am no good. I am only problem in your family.

SHAWN

Negatory, comrade. You're a problem in our family.

(beat)

And that's okay! When I was your age, I was a HUGE problem for mom and dad... honestly, kind of still am.

DAVID

You are not nice, teasing on me all times!

SHAWN

You're right. I shouldn't be teasing on you all times. I'm just not very mature.

(David doesn't get it)

But that's the point. Mom and dad love me despite my imperfections. Just like they love you despite yours.

DAVID

This not true. I not fit in. No one does like me.

SHAWN

If that's true, then why are all those weirdos here?

Tim closes the van door, as he and his kids join the rest of the search party under a nearby street light.

THUMPER

(yelling)

David, it's Thumper! Jesus loves you!

SHAWN

Listen, bro. I know what it's like to feel out of place. I'm a grown man who sleeps in a bunkbed with cowboy sheets! It sucks! And, I'm sorry I made it worse.

DAVID  
You are good brother.

SHAWN  
You are good brother, too.

As David and Shawn bro-hug, we PUNCH ZOOM out to see Deneice and the rest of the search party watching from a distance. Deneice fights back tears... so does Thumper.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

At the base of the tree, Shawn packs his ascension straps, as David runs and hugs Deneice. Jeff wanders up, dogs in tow.

JEFF  
There he is! Ya did good, son!

SHAWN  
Thanks, pops! It felt good being there for David. Really good.

JEFF  
Being there for the people you love is the best feeling there is! It's what makes life worth living.

Shawn spikes the camera, pleasantly surprised by his dad's insight. Buffy poops as Jeff eats the last Oreo from his snack-bag.

JEFF  
That and barbecue!

Jeff flips the Zip-loc snack bag inside out and picks up the dog poop.

JEFF  
(to group)  
Who's hungry?!

INT. VANCE HOME - NIGHT

The place is full of joy and people, as the Vance family breaks bread with everyone from the search party. Drink in hand, Elyse approaches Shawn (standing by the printer).

ELYSE  
You finished your resumé?

SHAWN

Yep! Now I'm gonna see a Hoseman about a job.

ELYSE

What!?! I thought you wanted to do something that matters, "be somebody"?

SHAWN

Hoses matter! And everybody's somebody to somebody.

ELYSE

What?

SHAWN

I dunno...

Shawn watches David tickles Jeff in the kitchen and smiles.

SHAWN

Maybe your job and your purpose don't have to be the same thing?

(chuckles)

I have no idea. But what I do know? I'd be an idiot not to let the Hoseman pay me, while I figure it out.

ELYSE

(playful)

Aww... I love you, brother.

SHAWN

Gross.

(whispers)

I love you too.

DAVID (O.C.)

What about me?

David hugs Elyse and Shawn and they head to the table, where everyone's having a great time. Elyse uses her selfie-stick to take a group photo. David puts his arm around Shawn.

SHAWN (PRE-LAP)

When my parents told me they were going to adopt, I thought it was a bad idea.

INTERVIEW - SHAWN

SHAWN

I just thought they were old and bored...

B-ROLL: Jeff and David in matching outfits, eating bbq on tv trays.

SHAWN

And what if this kid's a little crazy?

INT. VANCE HOME - STAIRS - DAY

Jeff has a dry-wall patch kit out, and he's teaching David how to repair the hole he punched in the wall.

SHAWN (V.O.)

Punches holes in walls and stuff?

INTERVIEW - SHAWN

SHAWN

But now that I know David, and what kids like him go through, I realize that none of that other stuff matters.

B-ROLL (ADOPTED CLUB): Diverse families and their adopted children...

SHAWN

Maybe all a kid needs is some people to love 'em...

INT. VANCE HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The whole family's cuddled up on the couch watching Frozen. David lip-syncs every line of dialogue. Jeff sleeps with a bowl of nuts in his lap. Buffy licks his salty fingers.

SHAWN (V.O.)

And a place to belong.

David leans forward, enthralled, holding his hands close to his heart. In the b.g., Deneice holds the same pose. Shawn fights back tears.



INTERVIEW - SHAWN

SHAWN

Frozen?

(scoffs)

Sucked!

END ACT THREE

TAG

INT. VANCE HOME - DAY

Trash-bag in hand, Shawn swings open the garage door. He's stopped in his tracks, and his face drains of blood. We see Shawn's truck next to Jeff's. They've both been wrapped in a new vinyl that reads "HOSEMAN & SONS," with Shawn and JEFF depicted on the side, both holding massive hoses, tips crossed.

SHAWN

I don't think this is gonna work out.

END OF SHOW