

COUNCIL OF DADS

Written by

Peter Tolan

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ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

CATHERINE WELLS, 38, faces an unseen group of men. She's a little nervous, but mostly repentant and apologetic.

CATHERINE

I just want to start off by saying again how sorry I am about what happened. And Daniel's very sorry, too. He's a good kid.

MAN (O.C.)

Yes, we know that. Our issue isn't with Daniel - it's with those men. As far as we can tell, they started all the trouble. What exactly is your relationship to those men - if I might ask.

CATHERINE

Wow, the short answer? My children now have five fathers - and I guess I have five husbands - and we're all trying to sort of get used to each other.

(quickly)

It's not a Mormon thing. This is - an arrangement my late husband put together.

MAN (O.C.)

Yes, our condolences. It's been - six months?

CATHERINE

Six months, three weeks, four days and seventeen hours. I don't even have to look at my watch.

(a beat)

When he knew he wasn't going to -

(a beat)

Michael wanted to be sure, when he was gone, that our children had a strong, positive male influence in their lives. So he came up with this idea. A council of dads, he called it.

INT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NINE DAYS EARLIER

Over the following, we see Catherine answering the door and welcoming four different men into her home. They are JERRY KLEIN, 44, lean and earnest; BILL HILLARD, 35, a slightly overweight, soft-spoken African-American man; RANDY IWAI, 28, a super intense, very fit Asian-American; and finally, MARTY "THE PARTY" PARKINSON, 40, loud and larger than life.

CATHERINE (V.O.)

A group of men - from all different corners of his life - who'd come together when needed to help Daniel and Mykala with any issue where they'd naturally be looking for help from their father. I'll be perfectly honest - I thought the idea was crazy. I mean - these are really Michael's friends. Did I really want to deal with these men? It's taken me six months to deal with just leaving the house. But this isn't about what I want. It's about what Michael wanted. So last weekend - I called them all together for the first time.

INT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NINE DAYS EARLIER

Jerry, Bill, Randy and Marty sit on the sofa facing Catherine and her two children: DANIEL, 12 - a touch too bright for his own good - and MYKALA, 10, quiet and still a little overwhelmed by the loss of her father.

CATHERINE

I want to thank everybody for taking the time on a Saturday -

Ad-libbed responses all around. "It's an honor." "Anything for Michael." "We've been waiting for the call."

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I thought - since this is our first get-together as a group - and since most of you know Daniel and Mykala, and since I know most of you - Bill and Marty, obviously - you guys are already like family. Randy I've met once or twice - and Jerry, I know of you, but we've never really met - other than at the funeral.

(MORE)

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

So I guess since you're the newest face in the group, maybe you could start things off.

Marty quickly raises his hand.

MARTY

Catherine?

(pointing to himself)

Actually - Michael's oldest friend, knew each other from fifth grade - maybe I should go first? Just saying?

CATHERINE

I already asked Jerry, Marty.

MARTY

Got it. Fifth grade.

(to Jerry)

Be my guest.

JERRY

Thanks. I'm Jerry Klein. Michael chose me to be the Feelings Dad. So kids, when you have something you want to talk about - something that's bothering you or making you sad, I'll always be here to listen. It's what I do for a living.

(to the guys)

I was Michael's therapist for the last few years. I actually helped him with the idea for this council -

MARTY

Whoa - hold on. Mike was seeing a shrink?

BILL

He never mentioned that to me, and we worked together every day for the last eleven years.

MARTY

What did he say about me?

JERRY

You're Marty, right?

MARTY

Marty Parkinson. "Marty the Party." Michael's best friend since forever. Oldest friend, best friend. Fifth grade.

JERRY

He never mentioned you.

MARTY

Yeah, he did - a lot.

JERRY

Not really.

MARTY

Think for a second.

JERRY

Don't have to.

MARTY

Think.

JERRY

(thinks for a beat)
Nope. Sorry.

MARTY

(light dawns)
Okay. Got it. Patient confidentiality. You can't speak freely - you're a professional, I respect that.
(a beat, hushed)
You'll tell me later.

CATHERINE

Bill?

BILL

Hey, everybody. Bill Hillard.
(to the kids)
You guys know me as Uncle Bill, but I guess from now on, your dad wants me to be your Homework Dad. I'm good with numbers and organizational stuff, so if you need help with a big school project or even a little math problem - you can come to me.
(to the guys)
(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

Like I said before, I was Michael's business partner for the last eleven years. He was, you know, he was like a brother to me. I still can't believe he's gone.

A quiet beat as everyone takes this in.

MARTY

Bill! Buddy! Thanks for being the black cloud. And I'm not saying that because you're black. It's an expression - black cloud. It means downer - that floats in the sky. I'm up! Marty Parkinson, Michael's best friend, but everybody knows that. Guess what, kids? I'm going to be your Fun Dad! I know - big surprise. Of course the most fun guy in the room is going to be the Fun Dad. Get ready, you two, because you know what we're going to have lots and lots of?

DANIEL

(a beat)

Fun?

MARTY

Bingo! And we're starting with these bad boys.

Marty pulls two packaged rockets out of a bag at his feet. The smaller of the two is bright pink.

CATHERINE

Are those - ?

MARTY

Rockets! Yeah!

DANIEL

Cool! Thanks, Marty!

MARTY

Silver for you, Daniel - and little lady, you get the pink one. Didn't think they made them that color. Maybe a breast cancer awareness thing - I don't know.

Catherine takes the rockets from the kids.

CATHERINE

Okay, kids - I'm just going to hold onto these for later or never.

MARTY

Is something wrong?

CATHERINE

No, Marty. I appreciate the spirit of the gift, just not the potentially deadly part of it. But thank you. Randy?

RANDY

(to the kids)

Hi, guys, I'm Randy Iwai. Born and raised in Wisconsin - I was friends with your dad because we were in the same running club. I'm going to be your Fitness Dad - so we'll be talking a lot about exercise, diet and taking good care of your bodies. We're going to have a super time getting lean and mean!

(fist pump and growl)

Yeah!

The kids are taken aback by Randy's intensity. Mykala's eyes go a little wide.

MYKALA

Can I go upstairs, Mommy?

CATHERINE

Yeah. Start working on your school project, and I'll be up to help you soon.

Mykala exits. She looks back at Randy, worried that he might pounce. The men ad-lib goodbyes to her.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Okay, guys - let me tell you why I called you together -

BILL

Catherine, before you do that, can I ask - are we going to be meeting on a regular basis, or will it be an "as needed" situation? Because it would help me schedule-wise if it was more regular.

JERRY

And will you be contacting us when we're needed, or should there be one person you call, and then that person calls everyone else? I'll volunteer to be that person.

MARTY

I think there should be a council leader, and as Mike's oldest and closest friend, I think it should be me.

(raising a hand)

Can I get a second?

CATHERINE

Marty, there won't be a leader position. You're all equal.

MARTY

Is that what Mike said?

CATHERINE

Well, no -

MARTY

(hand up again)

Can I get a second then?

(to Randy)

Back me up here, Jet Li.

RANDY

Excuse me?

(to Catherine)

I'd like to vote someone off the council. Is that allowed?

(raising a hand)

Can I get a second?

MAN (V.O.)

Mrs. Wells, I'm sorry to interrupt -

INT. MEETING ROOM - PRESENT TIME

MAN (O.C.)

You mentioned that this council was made up of five men. So far I only count four.

CATHERINE

I was just about to get to that.

INT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NINE DAYS EARLIER

Randy raises his hand again as we overlap the past slightly.

RANDY

Can I get a second?

CATHERINE

Guys - can we focus, please? Being here today isn't about establishing rules and a pecking order, it's about helping me with the kids and establishing a positive atmosphere. In other words - don't piss me off this soon.

(to Daniel)

Excuse my language.

The front door bursts open and BURT WELLS, 66, enters. Burt is all man - imposing, former military, not to be screwed with. He hasn't shaved recently, but he may have had a cocktail or two before his entrance.

BURT

Okay - listen up! If you guys want to come here and leave your apple bags at the door and play pretend daddies, that's your damn business. Me? Not now, not ever. I'm the grandfather. I outrank all of you! I did two tours in Nam, boys. You think I'm gonna let Charlie invade my territory?

(to Randy)

Not aimed at you.

RANDY

I'm Japanese-American.

BURT

Yeah? Don't care.

(to all)

You're not welcome here, and you're not needed here. This whole thing - this council of dads - I would love to meet the jackass who came up with this idea.

MARTY

(pointing at Jerry)

Right here.

JERRY

It was really Michael's concept. I just came up with the name.

Jerry stands and offers a hand to Burt.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Jerry Klein -

BURT

Sit down!

Jerry sits very quickly.

BURT (CONT'D)

This - whatever it is you're doing here - is a waste of time - and an insult to me. If my son was here, I'd tell him the same thing.

(a beat)

That's all I got to say.

He glowers at the group for a beat, then turns on his heel and slams out the door the same way he came in.

CATHERINE

(to Daniel)

Well - always nice to see Grandpa.

DANIEL

What did he mean about the bags of apples?

CATHERINE

Nothing.

MARTY

That means balls.

CATHERINE

(annoyed)

Marty.

MARTY

I wasn't sure you knew.

JERRY

I assume that was Michael's father?

CATHERINE

Burt - yeah. That's the first time we've seen him since the funeral.

(a beat)

(MORE)

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Oh, well - the council was supposed to be five - but four works, I guess.

BILL

What can we help you with?

CATHERINE

Okay. Daniel's in Scouts, and next weekend they're holding this Pine Box Derby thing. Daniel has to build a car for it, and I don't want to get into a whole gender roles discussion, but that feels to me like something he should do with another male. Not to mention I really don't want to do it. I mean, there's whittling involved. You lose me at whittling.

(to Daniel)

Sorry, honey.

DANIEL

Oh, I get it. It's a bag and there are two apples in it.

CATHERINE

Get off that, okay? Please?

(to the guys)

So -

EXT. CATHERINE'S FRONT YARD - MOMENTS LATER

The guys head for their cars.

CATHERINE (V.O.)

There's a kit to make the car. The hobby shop over on Grand sells them, so if you could take Daniel over there, then help him build his racer - that would be great.

JERRY

We can all fit in one car, right?

RANDY

We don't want to be cramped. I'll take my car and follow you.

BILL

Okay.

Jerry, Bill and Daniel head for Jerry's car. Marty joins Randy as he walks to his car.

MARTY
I'll ride shotgun for you, Randy.

RANDY
No, that's -

MARTY
(to Daniel)
Come with us, buddy! This is gonna be the fun car!

DANIEL
Okay!

Daniel runs over to join them.

RANDY
Really, Marty - I'm good by myself.

MARTY
No man is an island. You know what I'm saying? We can use the time to get to know each other. You can learn about us, and we can learn the many secrets of the Orient.

RANDY
I'm from Wisconsin. Look - I don't like people being in my car. My car is my sacred space.

MARTY
Is that an Asian thing? Or a super control freak thing.

Jerry's car is pulling out of the driveway.

RANDY
Look - they're leaving. You better go -

MARTY
Come on! Open up!

Marty tugs at the passenger side door handle.

RANDY
Don't do that! You're gonna break it! Gentle upward pressure! Okay, okay - you can come with me!

MARTY
Excellent!

RANDY
Shoes in the trunk.

MARTY
What?

RANDY
Take your shoes off and put them in
the trunk.

Randy hits his remote and the trunk opens.

RANDY (CONT'D)
There's a special shoe mat in there
where you can put your shoes. And
there's a restraining strap that
holds the shoes in place on the
mat. Make sure the strap goes over
the shoes, please.

MARTY
(sotto, to Daniel)
Nutjob.

RANDY
What?

MARTY
Shoes on the mat!

INT. JERRY'S CAR - AT THE SAME TIME

Jerry drives, Bill is in the passenger seat.

JERRY
Very interesting meeting Michael's
father.

BILL
Yeah, Burt's going through a rough
patch. I went over to see him a
couple weeks after the funeral. I
knew he was home, but he wouldn't
even answer the door. He's really
hurting.

JERRY

Well, a parent surviving a child - it's unnatural and therefore difficult to process. I deal with it a lot in my practice.

BILL

(a beat)

I still can't believe Michael was seeing a therapist.

JERRY

Michael had issues same as anyone else. Haven't you ever wanted to talk to a professional, Bill?

BILL

The only professional I talk to is my heavenly father. Not to belittle your profession, Jerry, but every human issue can be addressed through prayer and devotion.

JERRY

So I guess you won't be coming to see me.

BILL

No, sir. No, I won't.

(a beat)

Not unless you know something about E.D.

JERRY

E.D.? Erectile dysfunction?

BILL

Never had a lick of trouble in that area, then just over a year ago, it started. Went to my doctor, everything checks out fine.

JERRY

So you've had this issue for just over a year - which would be right around the time Michael got sick. Do you think there's a connection?

BILL

Are you trying to link my friend's illness and death to the situation with my penis? See, that's why I'm never going to a therapist.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)
 You're all twisted up in the head.
 I'm going to pray for you, brother.
 I truly am.

JERRY
 Bill -

BILL
 Shhh. I'm starting now.

Bill lowers his head and starts to pray.

INT. RANDY'S CAR - AT THE SAME TIME

Randy drives, Marty's in the passenger seat and Daniel is in the back. Marty puts his elbow on the padded armrest that's between the two front seats.

RANDY
 Could you not rest your elbow
 there?

MARTY
 Why not?

RANDY
 You're making an indentation in the
 leather pad.

Marty carefully lifts his elbow and inspects the pad, then widens his eyes and cocks his head a little. This guy's a lunatic.

DANIEL
 Can we listen to some music?

MARTY
 No - probably not a good idea. The
 sound waves might make indentations
 on the interior.

RANDY
 (to Daniel)
 Are you chewing gum?

DANIEL
 No. My mouth just moves up and
 down when I talk.

Randy reacts, then clicks on the radio. Opera fills the car. A beat, then Randy starts to sing along - full voice. Marty and Daniel exchange a look.

INT. HOBBY SHOP - LATER

Daniel and the guys are looking through car kits, paint and decals.

BILL

Boy, this takes me back. I spent a million hours in the hobby shop in my hometown when I was a kid. I had a massive model railroad set-up in my basement. It even had a town. Bill City, I called it.

MARTY

So you were a pathetic outcast as a child.

BILL

See, that's the kind of remark that would get you thrown out of Bill City. You'd have to move over to Maytag Corners. That was the bad part of town over near the washer and dryer. My mother never cleaned the lint filter, so it always looked like winter over there.

RANDY

Fascinating stuff, Bill - but maybe we should focus on the present.

JERRY

Yeah - but still, I think we should acknowledge and applaud Bill's ability to open up and share about his past. Since we're all getting to know each other, that's very important.

MARTY

Yeah, it's super. What kind of car are we making?

RANDY

I suggested the Formula One racer.
(to Daniel)
That's what you wanted, right?

DANIEL

I don't really care. I'm not one of those guys who defines himself by what he drives.

(a beat)

(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

I'm kidding. The Formula One's good.

MARTY

We don't want good, Danny - we want kick-ass. I'm going to toss out an idea here, gentlemen. I say we cheat. We build a car but we strap that rocket I gave you underneath it, then we light the fuse and watch all the other scouts crap their pants.

(raising a hand)

Can I get a second?

Randy heads for the counter, Daniel at his side. Marty and Jerry follow. Bill stays behind, lost in Bill City.

RANDY

We're not cheating, Marty.

(to Daniel)

Cheating is wrong.

DANIEL

I didn't know that.

MARTY

Well, so is losing, and that's what we're gonna do with your lame Formula One racer.

RANDY

Look at me. I'm Asian. We know how to build cars.

MARTY

I can do better.

RANDY

Oh, really?

MARTY

Yeah, really.

The men arrive at the front counter.

JERRY

Hey, guys - let's remember the goal here. This isn't a competition. Leave your egos out of this and put all your energy into helping Daniel build a great car.

RANDY

Uh-huh.

(right back to Marty)

Okay - here's how it works. We buy
two kits, I make the Formula One -

Jerry wanders away to join Bill, annoyed that he's been ignored.

RANDY (CONT'D)

You make whatever the hell slow car you want. We race them against each other in a series of time trials - Daniel takes the winner to the Derby. You good with that?

MARTY

Works for me!

RANDY

Bring it on!

MARTY

You bring it on! Let's get us some more supplies, and may the best man win! And by that, I mean me.

Marty and Randy run off to stock up leaving Daniel alone at the counter. The COUNTER GUY is a grungy, long-haired goth guy, full of pins and needles and wearing heavy mascara.

COUNTER GUY

Who are those guys?

DANIEL

Well - I guess - they're sort of my dads.

COUNTER GUY

Hey, don't say it like that, dude. Be proud. I had two dads growing up and look at me. I turned out fine.

DANIEL

(worried now)

I see that.

The counter guy laughs in an odd way. Daniel backs away from the counter.

FADE OUT.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWOFADE IN:

INT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - LATER

Marty and Randy have opened their kits and are about to get into the building process. Daniel sits between them. Bill and Jerry are nearby.

MARTY

This is important now. The initial carving process is the most critical part of building your Pine Box Derby entry. You need a steady hand with the knife - or it can all go bad. Luckily for you, Daniel, I'm an expert. I've got two boys and they were both in scouts - so I've been around the block a couple times.

He picks up the knife.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Prepare to be dazzled.

He moves to make the first cut.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Marty sits on the closed toilet seat applying a large Band-Aid to his bloody thumb. Catherine stands nearby.

MARTY

Pine's a lot softer now than when I was a kid.

CATHERINE

Are you sure you don't want to go to the emergency room? I think I saw tendons and stuff.

MARTY

No, I'm good. But thanks for the concern, Catherine.

He grabs her elbow and gives it a squeeze - leaving a bloody stain on her nice blouse.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Sorry.

CATHERINE

No problem. It's just silk.

Randy appears in the doorway.

RANDY

You coming back down - or should we just scrap your car?

MARTY

You're not scrapping anything, guy!
Marty's good to go -

Marty gets up - way too fast. He staggers a little, grabs for the towel rack - and tears it off the wall.

MARTY (CONT'D)

Sorry - I'll fix that.

CATHERINE

No, it's okay. I never liked that towel rack. It was too conveniently located right next to the shower.

MARTY

Mike had a caulking gun out in the garage. I'll be back in two seconds.

He starts away, swoons a little and places his bloody hand against the wall to steady himself, leaving a mark.

MARTY (CONT'D)

I'll grab some paint, too.

He exits. Randy steps into the room as Catherine wipes up blood from pretty much everywhere.

RANDY

Listen - the council - I am honored to be involved - but this Marty guy has gotta go. He's throwing the whole thing out of balance. I just don't get it. That was Michael's best friend?

CATHERINE

You don't have a friend like that? An old friend where the relationship is based on shared history more than anything else?

RANDY

No.

CATHERINE

You don't have a friend that other people don't like so much?

RANDY

No.

CATHERINE

(a beat)

Do you have a friend?

RANDY

Of course I do.

(a beat)

No - not really. I'm an athlete, I tend to see other people as the competition. Really - we've got to get rid of Marty if the council's gonna work.

CATHERINE

He is kind of a douche.

RANDY

So you agree.

CATHERINE

(a beat)

When Michael passed - that day, the house was full of people and food. The next day - fewer people, not so much food. And so it went - until there was nobody. Except Marty. Who showed up day after day after day, and would not leave until he'd made both kids laugh at least once.

(a beat)

He's loud, inappropriate - and as I said - a douche. But I'll never be able to thank him enough for what he did. So he stays.

Marty returns with a caulking gun, a small can of paint and a brush.

MARTY

Randy, can I have a second with the boss? No, you can hear this.

(to Catherine)

I've been waiting for the right time to bring this up -

He grabs her elbow again.

MARTY (CONT'D)
Listen to what I'm saying.

He remembers his hand is bloody. He lifts it slightly and takes a quick peek underneath.

MARTY (CONT'D)
It's going to the cleaners anyway,
right?

CATHERINE
(evenly)
What did you want to say?

MARTY
Difficult subject, but here we go.
Dating. As in you sticking a toe
back into the water.

CATHERINE
Marty, I'm really not thinking
about dating. Trust me.

MARTY
But you will at some point, and I'm
just saying - my two cents - as
Mike's oldest and best friend -

CATHERINE/MARTY/RANDY
(together)
Fifth grade.

MARTY
I think you should wait another six
months to a year. And even then,
it should only be about emotional
support. No getting it on. That's
five to ten years from now. Yeah?

CATHERINE
(a beat, to Randy)
Let's go back to what you were
saying.

INT. MYKALA'S ROOM - AT THE SAME TIME

Jerry enters. Mykala sits at her desk working on a project for school.

JERRY

Hi - Mykala. Just wanted to check in with you - as your Feelings Dad - to see how you were - feeling.

MYKALA

I'm okay.

JERRY

What are your thoughts about losing your father? What are you thinking and feeling these days - if you can express it.

MYKALA

I think death is a part of life and we have to accept it. When we lose someone we love, it would be bad to cry forever, because then we'd be wasting life - and especially after we lose someone, we should know that life is a beautiful, wonderful present.

JERRY

(a little thrown)

Wow - that's - very healthy. You're eleven?

MYKALA

I'm ten.

JERRY

Wow - okay. Anything else I can do for you?

MYKALA

Can you bring my daddy back?

JERRY

(a beat)

I can't.

MYKALA

Then can I have a cookie?

JERRY

I'll get you one.

She goes back to her work. Jerry exits, watching her as he goes, still a little thrown by her adult response.

INT. CATHERINE'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - LATER

The guys are holding time trials for Marty and Randy's cars. They've set up a plank which they're using as a track, and Daniel holds a stopwatch.

RANDY

I hope you're noticing that my car is kicking your car's pathetically slow little ass. Let's forget the time trials and just admit I'm the winner.

MARTY

How about you put your money where your mouth is? Fastest car wins twenty bucks.

JERRY

Guys, maybe we shouldn't -

RANDY

You're on!

MARTY

And I don't want my money in yen!

RANDY

I'm Japanese-American, you idiot. I was born in Wisconsin.
(showing his cash)
American money.

Marty snatches the twenty from him, pulls out a twenty of his own and hands both bills to Daniel.

MARTY

Daniel - you're the bank. Hold the kitty, best three out of five races takes it.

DANIEL

I don't know. I mean, should we be doing this? Isn't this gambling?

MARTY

Listen to me, kid - because this is a valuable lesson. It's only gambling if you lose. And I sure won't be doing that!

BURT (O.C.)

So - the council of losers is still in session. How very sweet.

The men turn to see that Burt has returned. He stands at the bottom of the stairs with a cooler full of beer under one arm and a cannister of his homemade jerky in one hand.

BILL

Have you come to join us, Burt?

BURT

No, Bill - I've come to sit a short distance away, enjoy an ice-cold beer and some of my delicious homemade elk jerky - and mock you. Which will begin now - you useless, sad bunch of turds.

Daniel laughs. The members of the council look at him.

DANIEL

What? It was funny.

MARTY

Burt - you knows I love me that elk jerky of yours. Can I have a piece?

BURT

Do you renounce this council and everything it stands for?

MARTY

No.

BURT

Then no elk. Too bad.

JERRY

Hey, you don't want to get involved with the group - we hear that. But actively trying to tear it apart sends a pretty negative energy out into the world. After all, this is really about what Michael wanted and what Daniel and Mykala need.

BURT

(to Bill)

Who the hell is this guy?

BILL

His name's Jerry. He was Michael's therapist.

MARTY

His shrink!

BURT

Bull! My boy didn't need a shrink!
I raised him right. How dare you
dishonor the memory of my son with
that garbage!

(a beat)

What did he say about me?

MARTY

He won't tell. I guess he's really
the Secrets Dad.

JERRY

I really can't divulge -

BURT

So he said something. Damn it! I
knew it! You smack him on the ass
one time when he's nine and
suddenly you're the bad guy
forever!

Burt opens his cooler and takes out a beer, twisting off the
non-twist-off cap in one angry motion.

BURT (CONT'D)

What did he say? Did he mention me
sawing his bike in half when he was
sixteen? Okay, a little extreme, I
agree, but I was trying to make a
point about being responsible for
your possessions. You keep leaving
your bike in the driveway, sooner
or later somebody's gonna saw it in
half.

JERRY

Can I make an observation? I think
you're here because, forgetting
what you're saying, you really want
to be involved with this.

BURT

Get the message, doc. My grandkids
don't need you. They've got me.
I'm all the positive male influence
they need.

He burps loudly, then sucks down more beer.

JERRY

Yes, but it's kind of hard to be an
influence when you're never around.

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)

Catherine told us they haven't seen you since the funeral - other than your brief appearance earlier today.

BURT

So? I'm keeping my distance out of respect for my daughter-in-law. Catherine's putting her life back together. She doesn't need me getting in the way.

JERRY

I think Catherine would welcome the companionship of family.

BURT

How long you known her?

JERRY

I just met her about an hour ago.

BURT

Well, I've known her about sixteen years. So maybe I have a better idea of what she wants and needs. You think?

JERRY

You're angry, Burt. And you've got reason to be angry. Losing a child is a terrible thing. But cutting yourself off from your family - that's not the answer.

BURT

Okay - since you know so much about it, doctor - what is the answer? I really want to know. Share it with me.

(roaring in his face)

What's the damn answer?

BILL

(a beat, quietly)

There is no answer sometimes. I haven't told anyone this - not my wife, not my preacher - but when Michael passed - I lost my faith in the Lord for a little while. I prayed. I asked him why such a good man had to die. Nothing came back.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

So I stopped believing - until I figured out maybe true belief starts when you ask for guidance and don't get it. But giving up - quitting - that's not a choice, Burt. Because when you stop believing, God gets angry and your penis stops working correctly.

Everyone stares at him for a beat.

BILL (CONT'D)

Scratch that last part.

JERRY

Burt - we're helping Daniel make a car for the Pine Box Derby. Don't you want to be involved in that?

BURT

You don't know what I want or what I don't want. Get this straight - you don't know me!

JERRY

(snapping back)

Maybe I'd like to know you! Maybe Michael wanted me to know you. Ever consider that? This stupid council - perhaps it's not just about the kids. Maybe it's about us - needing someone to fill the space in our lives where Michael stood. And he set this up to fill that space for us.

(a beat)

You have to let it go, Burt. He's gone. Let it go.

Burt glowers at Jerry, then looks like he's about to break - which only makes him more angry.

BURT

Oh - I get it. I'm supposed to cry now? I'm supposed to break down and bawl like a baby - like a woman. Well - here's what I got to say to that, boys!

He angrily yanks at his shirt and pulls it off.

BILL

(hushed)

Oh, no.

MARTY
 (hushed)
 Here it comes.

RANDY
 What's he doing?

MARTY
 Burt likes to wrestle.

BURT
 You ladies want me on board? Fine!
 One of you pins me best three out
 of five - I'm in! So who's taking
 me on?

(to Jerry)
 You? I don't think so. You don't
 look like you could lift your
 weight in angel farts. What do you
 say, Marty? You game?

MARTY
 Sir, I still remember the last time
 we wrestled. Fourth of July, 2006.
 You can still make out the grill
 pattern on my left forearm where
 you pushed me onto the barbecue.

BURT
 You're a good man for understanding
 that old Burt has a temper - and
 for not taking legal action. You
 get some elk for that.

MARTY
 See - it was a bad burn, but I knew
 there'd be a silver lining!

Burt offers the cannister and Marty takes a piece of jerky.
 Burt offers the cannister to Randy.

BURT
 You want?

RANDY
 I'm a vegan.

BURT
 So you're gay.

RANDY
 What did you say?

BURT
You married?

RANDY
No.

BURT
Girlfriend?

RANDY
No.

BURT
Use anything on your face other
than plain soap and water?

RANDY
Well, everyone should use a
moisturizer of some kind.

BURT
Gentlemen?

MARTY/BILL
Sounds gay to me./That's pretty
gay.

RANDY
You want to see who's not gay?

DANIEL
I'm not. Just to be clear.

Randy, staring at Burt, strips off his shirt.

RANDY
Let's do it, old man.

JERRY
Guys, it's our first day together -

BURT
This is strictly Greco-Roman. No
fancy holds and none of that kung-
fu crap, Chinaman.

RANDY
I'm from Wisconsin!

BURT
You told me that before. I still
don't care!

JERRY

Guys -

BURT

And by the way - I hate Wisconsin.
It's a nothing state.

JERRY

Put your shirts back on now.

RANDY

Yeah? Well, I hate old guys with
elk breath. What do you say to
that?

Burt charges at Randy and grabs him around the waist. Jerry
moves in and forces himself between them.

JERRY

(losing it)

No! Stop it, you two! This is not
the reason we're here! Listen to
me! God - nobody ever listens to
me! Even the people who pay to
listen to me - they don't listen to
me! I'm not powerless! I'm not
invisible! I have a voice and I
will be heard, so you, and you, and
you and my wife and my son and my
parents - you can all shut up!

BURT

(a beat)

Keep standing there - you're gonna
get hurt.

JERRY

Got it.

Jerry skips out of the way and the men continue their battle.
Marty, Bill and Daniel cheer from the sidelines. The fight
escalates and then Burt gets a firm grip on Randy. He spins
him around, then both men lose their balance and crash into
the plank track, bringing it down and destroying both racers
as well. Marty picks them out of the wreckage.

MARTY

Nice going, guys.

JERRY

I told you it was a mistake.

RANDY

You happy, Burt?

BURT

Oh, you're blaming me? This is your fault. If you were a real man, I never could have pushed you that far!

MARTY

Don't worry, Daniel. I'm sure we can fix these up.

CATHERINE (O.C.)

What is going on down here?

The men turn to see Catherine has arrived. She's not happy.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Where are your shirts?

(a beat)

Burt, please don't tell me it's the wrestling again.

BURT

The gay Asian guy started it.

RANDY

I'm not gay! And I did not start anything!

JERRY

I tried to stop them. They wouldn't listen.

BURT

(a beat)

You want some jerky?

CATHERINE

I want some answers.

BURT

I don't need this. I don't need to be accused of some crime when all I tried to do was be here for my grandson. This is it, Catherine. End of the line. It's either them or me. Let me know what you decide.

He grabs his shirt and his cooler and stomps angrily up the stairs.

CATHERINE

Daniel, go up to your room.

DANIEL

It's okay, Mom. It was fun. There were time trials, and I got to be the bank!

CATHERINE

The bank?

MARTY

Do as your mother says, Daniel. Go upstairs.

Daniel goes. Catherine glares at the men for a beat.

CATHERINE

Really? Is this what it's going to be? Because I'll tell you something, gentlemen. I have two children. I don't need four more.

Marty crosses to her.

MARTY

Catherine, it wasn't us. Burt showed up with beer and jerky -

He grabs her elbow again - then checks. Yeah, more blood. On a different blouse. He looks at his hand.

MARTY (CONT'D)

You'd think that would've closed up by now. Sorry.

CATHERINE

This is going really well.

She shakes her head grimly, then heads up the stairs. The guys know they're blowing it - in a major way.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

OVER BLACK:

THE SOUND OF MANY YOUNG BOYS CHEERING

FADE IN:

INT. BOY SCOUTS MEETING PLACE - ONE WEEK LATER

The room has been set up for the Pine Box Derby. Scouts run around the room with their cars, eager to race and show off. Parents sit off to the side on bleachers. Catherine, Daniel and Mykala sit with the council.

MARTY

Dude, your race is coming up. It's time to decide.

RANDY

Marty - he's already decided. He's using my car.

(to Daniel)

You're using mine, right?

DANIEL

I'm still not sure.

MARTY

That means he wants mine.

RANDY

Okay - we'll flip a coin.

CATHERINE

It's Daniel's decision.

RANDY

Great. He can choose which coin we use.

JERRY

Guys, you're putting undue pressure on Daniel. You're both in the early stages of a relationship with him, and you're asking him to elevate one of you over the other, which will have implications on the development of both relationships.

MARTY

Holy cow. You've gotta have a huge carbon footprint based on the amount of oxygen you just sucked out of the room. I mean, I'm surprised most of the boys aren't dead.

RANDY

(looking off)

Daniel, it's almost your turn.

(MORE)

RANDY (CONT'D)

You have to pick a car. No pressure, but do it right now.

DANIEL

Look - I don't have to race. It's fun just being here. I don't know which car to choose.

BURT (O.C.)

How about this one, kid?

Everyone turns to see that Burt has arrived, freshly shaved and cleaned up considerably. He holds out an old Pine Box Derby car painted green.

DANIEL

You made me a car, Grandpa?

BURT

No. This is the racer I made with your father when he was in scouts. We named her the Red Devil.

DANIEL

But it's green.

BURT

I know. We always liked to screw with people. She hasn't been out on the track in a long time, but I think your dad would be okay with you using her.

DANIEL

Thanks, Grandpa.

Daniel takes the car and runs off. Catherine smiles and goes to Burt, tearing up just a little.

CATHERINE

Thank you, Burt.

They embrace in a small flood of emotion.

JERRY

Welcome to the council.

BURT

This is a trial period only. If I decide to stay, I'll let you know.

ANGLE ON

Daniel stands at the starting ramp with the Red Devil. The KID he's racing against turns up his nose at the sight of it.

KID
How old is that thing? It doesn't look very fast.

DANIEL
Ten bucks says it's faster than yours.

KID
Dude, that's gambling.

DANIEL
(a smile)
Not when you know you're going to win.

INT. BOY SCOUTS MEETING PLACE - LATER

Catherine, Mykala, Burt and the council are still seated in the stands, along with most of the other fathers and families.

BURT
I'm telling you, the only way this dumbass council's going to work is if there's a leader - and as the grandfather, and as Michael's father, that should be me.

RANDY
Actually, Burt, we talked about it, and we decided there wouldn't be a leader.

BURT
Other than being a lousy wrestler, who the hell are you exactly?

RANDY
Randy Iwai. Michael and I were in the same running club.

BURT
Yeah, he told me about you. You're the guy with the shoes in the trunk.

RANDY
What's wrong with that?

BURT

Nothing - if you're a complete and total lunatic. You must go all to pieces when it rains. How do you get from the trunk to the car without getting your feet soaked?

RANDY

I have baggies that can be slipped on and removed once inside the vehicle.

A beat, then all the men - and Catherine - start laughing.

RANDY (CONT'D)

What - how is that funny?

Mykala laughs, too.

MYKALA

You put baggies on your feet! You are silly!

RANDY

Well, maybe I'm silly - but I have floor mats that are in mint condition.

BILL

Thank God for that!

Daniel runs over holding his car and a large trophy.

CATHERINE

Daniel - you won!

DANIEL

No, I came in dead last. But the slowest car trophy is bigger than any of the other trophies. And I get a free pass into the final round of races. Wish me luck!

He passes the trophy to Burt and runs off as the men ad-lib encouragement and congratulations.

MARTY

Twenty bucks says he comes in third or higher in the final round.

BURT

I'm not betting against my own grandson.

ANOTHER DAD nearby has heard Marty and is interested in the wager.

ANOTHER DAD

You think the kid who just finished dead last is gonna wind up third or higher? I got fifty says he won't.

BURT

I'll take a piece of that!

CATHERINE

Guys, maybe we shouldn't be -

SECOND DAD

I got fifty says he finishes dead last again.

RANDY

You're on.

THIRD DAD

I'll put a hundred on the same bet!

RANDY

You're covered!

CATHERINE

Guys -

But it's too late - fathers are moving in from every corner of the room, money flashing into view as far as the eye can see.

INT. MEETING ROOM - PRESENT TIME

CATHERINE

So it all started very innocently, and really, if one of the fathers hadn't been an undercover police officer, we'd probably all be laughing about this today. Instead of not laughing. Which is what we're doing now.

ANGLE ON

The people Catherine has been speaking with. They are three men of various ages, all taking this very seriously, all dressed in their scoutmaster's uniforms.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I'm still not sure the council is a good idea - in fact, I think it's a terrible idea. I mean, other than the Declaration of Independence, what good has ever come from a bunch of men getting together? But I will say - it's very strange -

(a beat)

When they are together - it doesn't matter how annoying or disruptive or petty they are - they each bring a little piece of my husband with them. So in a way, it's almost like he's there with us again. For that reason alone - I think it might not be such a bad idea after all.

SCOUTMASTER

Well, we'd like some assurance that this sort of thing won't -

CATHERINE

Come on - really - it won't happen again. They're not bad guys. How could they be? I mean -

(a beat)

They're the fathers of my children.

She smiles a little, maybe actually accepting the idea for the first time.

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE

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