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Bad ideas for Bad Television Shows

A comedy in one-act

By Don Zolidis

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One-Act Comedy

6-18 actors, any gender

Two desperate NBC executives need a new prime time show and they need it now, so they've turned to the general viewing public for help. A ragtag collection of would-be producers show up in droves to submit ideas for the network's next big hit, pitching everything from a sitcom starring Jean-Paul Sartre to a singing competition in which the contestants are encouraged to sabotage each other. A zany, satirical take on the absurdity of contemporary entertainment that won't need a canned laugh track.

Cast of Characters

SAMMY, an executive at NBC
TOOLEY, an executive at NBC

The Pitchers:

LUKE
JESSIE
JESSICA
MAGNUS
JILL
BAILEY
JOEY
CAMPBELL
ARIEL
TODD
CASSIDY
ANGELA

THE ACTORS: All of the rest of the roles may be played by the same four actors switching costumes.

Flexibility: It's possible to use the same four actors for every pitch. Just rotate the pitcher out to become an actor in the next scene.

Gender: Most characters could be cross-cast.

Characters may be of any ethnicity.

(NBC studios.)

(Panic time.)

(TOOLEY is at a desk, sleeping. Snoring.)
(SAMMY enters with papers. He slams his hand on the desk and TOOLEY wakes up with a start.)

TOOLEY

Ah!

SAMMY *(to the audience)*

Welcome to NBC Studios.

TOOLEY *(to the audience)*

Oh you're here! Um…

SAMMY

NBC is the home of such great shows that are no longer on the air like *Cheers*, *Friends*, and *Seinfeld*.

TOOLEY

Those were awesome shows. People watched them.

SAMMY

Yes they did.

TOOLEY

So right now the situation here at NBC is a little bit different –

SAMMY

WE NEED YOUR HELP! HELP US!

TOOLEY

Sammy, we weren't going to beg.

SAMMY

Sorry. Ignore my begging. Um… we are offering a contest!

TOOLEY

Yes, it is a wonderful contest. We're asking you, the common people –

SAMMY

The unwashed, the people who sleep till noon, the people who wear sweatpants all day and have an 80% frozen pizza diet.

TOOLEY
You people. It's your turn – come up with NBC's -

SAMMY
The people who complain about products on the internet. The people who shop at Wal-Mart late at night. The people who eat at Taco Bell –

TOOLEY
Sammy.

SAMMY
Sorry.

TOOLEY
Come up with NBC's newest show. Pitch us your great ideas and we will make that show.

SAMMY
Seriously. We are completely out of ideas.

TOOLEY
Completely. We have nothing left. The tank is empty. We're considering doing all singing competitions next season.

SAMMY
Dance with the Singing Stars.

TOOLEY
It's American Idol meets the Voice meets the X Factor meets with Dancing with the Stars meets So You Think You Can Dance meets Twerkin' It.

SAMMY
Twerkin' It's my favorite. Just… yeah. Love that show. Really fresh.

TOOLEY
And since my idea got shot down -

SAMMY
No one wants to see Man vs. Donkey okay.

TOOLEY
It's a reality show where a man fights a donkey. Simple. Elegant. Awesome.

SAMMY
Tooley?

TOOLEY

What?

SAMMY

Man vs. Donkey is not going to happen.

TOOLEY

I'm feeling creatively neutered here!

SAMMY

Get over it!

TOOLEY

NEVER! All right. I'm over it. I've learned to swallow my feelings here at NBC. It helps me keep going.

SAMMY

So…

TOOLEY

So…

SAMMY

HELP US! PLEASE! NONE OF US HAVE FAMILIES! THIS IS ALL WE KNOW! SAVE NBC!

(to TOOLEY)

Did that sound too desperate?

(Lights change.)

(SAMMY and TOOLEY are centerstage. With each pitcher, they shift from facing stage left, to stage right.)

I.

(Lights up on LUKE.)

LUKE

All right is this thing on?

SAMMY

You're right in front of us.

TOOLEY

Any time you're ready.

SAMMY

Pitch away.

LUKE

It's called Veterinarians.

SAMMY

Okay.

LUKE

That's it. It's called Veterinarians.

TOOLEY

That's your idea?

LUKE

Yeah it's got Veterinarians in it. It's amazing. Just veterinarians.

SAMMY

So are there animals in the show too?

LUKE

No it's about veterinarians! How many times do I have to say it! Veterinarians!

SAMMY

I'm trying to figure out your angle –

LUKE

IT'S GOT VETERINARIANS! PEOPLE WHO ARE VETERINARIANS!

TOOLEY

Can we a see a clip?

LUKE

What is wrong with you?!

TOOLEY

I just want to see if you filmed something.

LUKE

Oh. Oh yeah. Sorry. I have anger issues when people don't recognize how great I am.

SAMMY

I totally identify. I'm in a rage all the time around here.

TOOLEY

I didn't know that.

SAMMY

Really bottled up.

LUKE

Here's my clip.

(Lights up. VETERNARIAN BRENDA runs in carrying a huge stuffed animal.)

VETERINARIAN BRENDA

Noooooooooooo!

(She throws the stuffed animal on the ground and starts performing CPR.)

You're too beautiful to die! Noooooo! Noooooooo! Come on! Live, dang it! Live!

(VETERINARIAN TODD enters with clipboard.)

Todd! Get me 16 CC's of benzo-methyl-spider-gel. Stat!

VETERINARIAN TOOD

Sure thing, babe.

(He throws a fake syringe at her.)

VETERINARIAN BRENDA

This oughta wake you up.

(She plunges the syringe into the stuffed animal.)

Please… please… Bonkers… you can do this… don't go into the light.

(She puts her head to the stuffed animal's chest.)

No. We were too late. Too late.

VETERINARIAN TODD

So what are you doing later?

VETERINARIAN BRENDA

Nothing.

VETERINARIAN TODD

You want to have a romantic subplot with me?

VETERINARIAN BRENDA

Maybe you don't understand this, Todd. But I'm veterinarian. I don't have time for a love life. Because I'm a veterinarian.

VETERINARIAN TODD

Hey I'm a veterinarian too. Just not a very good one.

TOOLEY

So is there gonna be –

LUKE

Skipping Forward

MAN

Well this sure is a beautiful day for walking along

(WHAM! WOMAN hits him in the groin with the whiffle bat. MAN collapses immediately.)

JESSIE

Scene change.

(MAN stumbles off stage.)

It's night. A different man is playing with his son. Teaching him baseball. Teaching him how to swing the bat. And then…

(BOY enters with whiffle bat.)

MAN

So you hold the bat like this and you watch the –

(WHAM! BOY hits MAN in the groin with the whiffle bat. MAN collapses.)

SAMMY

That's awesome!

TOOLEY

Wait a minute, is this all the show is?

JESSIE

Yup.

TOOLEY

We'll call you.

SAMMY

I think she's got something.

TOOLEY

We'll call you.

(Lights change.)

III.

(Lights up on JESSICA.)

JESSICA *(to herself)*

You can do this Jessica… you can do this… come on… you can do this… you are special… you look nice in green… you are a great person… most people like you… and breathe two three breathe two three

SAMMY

We're over here.

JESSICA

Do you mind?

SAMMY

Sorry.

JESSICA

And stretch two three…

(She launches into it. She's very polished and memorized.)

Greetings NBC Executives! Who is this girl in front you and why is she so magnetic? The answer is simple: Pizzazz. I've got it. And now I'm going to give it to you. What does your show lineup need? Oh no, not *another* situational comedy. We've already had those before. Yes, but you didn't have this situational comedy. Compelling characters? Check. Hilarious one-liners? Check. Break-out stars? Double check. What is this show and where can I get it?

(She waits for a response.)

That's when you say what is this show and where can I get it?

TOOLEY

You just said that.

JESSICA

I know. I was helping you with your line. You need to say that.

TOOLEY

I'm not saying it.

JESSICA

Well you're going to look pretty foolish when I stand up here for four hours waiting for my cue.

SAMMY

What is this show and where can I get it?

JESSICA *(right back into her routine)*

I'm so glad you asked! And now that I've *piqued* your curiosity, it's time for… Sartre! Exclamation Point! What happens when a famous existential philosopher moves in with an ordinary wacky family in Toledo? Hilarity. And… a little heartwarming fun. And also the contemplation of the essential meaninglessness of existence.

(SARTRE, wearing all black, probably a turtleneck, stares out the window, contemplating the nothingness.)

SARTRE

I am the void. These pretty things – the birds – they are hollow, all that flies or alights or treads upon the world is empty inside, a shell of feathers and froth concealing the nightmare beneath.

(MOM enters, cheerful.)

MOM

Hi Jean-Paul! How's it going?

SARTRE

Do not ask questions that you do not seek answers for.

MOM

You're so funny! Well. Guess what I did today!?

SARTRE

Hid your fear of death behind a veil of makeup?

MOM

Haahahaha! No. I didn't do that. I signed someone up for OkCupid!
(Pause)
Guess who I signed up for OkCupid?

SARTRE

No.

MOM

Guess.

SARTRE

No.

MOM

Please guess.

SARTRE

I am not your monkey.

MOM

Just do it. It's really cute.

SARTRE

No.

MOM

Okay!
(short pause)
You sure you don't want to guess?

SARTRE

I am certain of nothing. My desires are phantoms. I am instinct and rationalization.

MOM

I'm not sure what that means.

SARTRE

It means I am not your monkey.

MOM

You!

(short pause)

SARTRE

I have forgotten what this conversation is about.

MOM

I signed you up for OkCupid and here she is now!

(ELLEN enters. She is chewing gum like a horse. Big hoop earrings. Maybe from New Jersey.)

ELLEN

This him?

MOM

Yes. Jean-Paul Sart, this is Elle Carnozzi.

SARTRE

Sartre. (SAR-truh).

MOM

What?

SARTRE

It's pronounced (SARtruh.)

MOM

Ohhhh. I didn't know that. He's French.

ELLEN

Sweet.

MOM

So I'll just get out of your hair! I'm so happy!

(She exits.)

(ELLEN smacks her gum.)

ELLEN

So what do you do?

SARTRE

I am a man.

ELLEN

Uh huh. Uh huh. So you ain't got no job?

SARTRE

I have a profession.

ELLEN

You're a *professor*?

SARTRE

No.

ELLEN

So on my way here – I'm waiting for the bus, right? And this guy drives by and he honks at me. And he's like `hey you got a nice figure!' Except he didn't say figure I'm not gonna repeat what he said cause I'm like a lady, right? So I'm like "HEY! WHY DON'T YOU DRIVE OFF A CLIFF YOU SCUM-SUCKING PIECE OF TRASH!" You know, real lady-like, right? I don't use bad language. Cause I'm demure. I got standards. So he stops. He puts his car in reverse – middle a traffic, he starts backing up – and I'm like "HEY! MORON! THIS AIN'T MAKING YOU MORE ATTRACTIVE!" He's like "What's your problem you don't like people?" "I don't like you!" "You don't know me. You know what your problem is?" "I don't need you to tell me what my problem is!" "You got a closed heart. You're not open to love." "Go home and die!" "That's what I'm talking about!" So you know what he does? Gets out of his car starts crossing three lanes of traffic. "I don't even know you and I'm willing to risk my life to get your numbah!" "I'm not giving you my numbah!" "Give me your numbah!" "Nooo!" So he starts walking across traffic, right? Bam. Semi-truck hits him.

SARTRE

What did you do?

ELLEN

I got on the bus. What do you think about that?

SARTRE

I like you.

TOOLEY

All right stop. I'm pretty sure that most of the people who watch NBC have never heard of Sartre.

SAMMY

Or philosophy.

TOOLEY

They're not readers.

SAMMY

Yeah, if they were readers they'd be doing that instead of watching television.

JESSICA

So you're saying –

TOOLEY

We'll call you.

(Lights change.)

IV.

(Lights up MAGNUS. He's amped up.)

MAGNUS

It's time for Cutthroat Singing! What's the most awesome show ever?! Cutthroat Singing!

(DIABOLICAL HOST enters.)

DIABOLICAL HOST

Welcome to the only singing competition where you are allowed to sabotage your competition.

(COMPETITORS 1 and 2 gear up for singing.)

And let's get the first item for auction.

(He holds up a whiffle bat.)

Who will give me - ?

COMPETITOR 1

I'll take it.

DIABOLICAL HOST

And it's yours.

COMPETITOR 2

What?

DIABOLICAL HOST

Okay, what's your song going to be?

COMPETITOR 2

(COMPETITOR 2 mentions a song.)*

**This can really be anything that would be sung on American Idol.*

DIABOLICAL HOST

Off you go.

(COMPETITOR 2 begins singing. COMPETITOR 1 holds the whiffle bat menacingly. She gets closer… and closer… COMPETITOR 2 tries to move away a little bit.

(COMPETITOR 2 keeps singing. COMPETITOR 1 stalks her with bat.)

(WHAM! COMPETITOR 1 attacks! She beats COMPETITOR 2 again and again with the whiffle bat until COMPETITOR 2 can't sing any more.)*

*(*It's funniest if COMPETITOR 2 tries her hardest to keep singing through her beating.)*

DIABOLICAL HOST

And stop. Let's see what the blindfolded judge has to say.

(BLINDFOLDED JUDGE enters. – if you're using a cast of 6, this role can be played by the actor playing TOOLEY)

BLINDFOLDED JUDGE

I have to say I really enjoyed it. I thought you had a really nice tone – a lot of feeling in there in the beginning and then it just sort of went off the rails for me. Really got breathy.

DIABOLICAL HOST

Okay, thank you.

(BLINDFOLDED JUDGE leaves, bumps into something.)

And now it's your turn. Now this wouldn't be cutthroat singing if we didn't have a sabotage in store for you. We call this… the gym teacher.

*(STACY (COMPETITOR 3 enters))**

**(If you're using a small cast, STACY may be played by the actress playing COMPETITOR 2.)*

COMPETITOR 1

What does… what does that mean?

DIABOLICAL HOST

Stacy here is going to be your gym teacher. When she jumps you jump – when she stretches you stretch – when she does push ups, you do push ups… while singing your song. You ready?

COMPETITOR 3

I was born ready. Actually I was born without much control of my muscles, so I guess I wasn't born ready. But I'm still ready now.

DIABOLICIAL HOST

It's best if you don't speak much. What are you going to be singing?

COMPETITOR 1

(Names a song.)

DIABOLICAL HOST

Off you go.

(COMPETITOR 1 starts singing.)

(COMPETITOR 3 begins slowly. She starts stretching – COMPETITOR 1 keeps singing during this.)

(COMPETITOR 3 starts doing jumping jacks. COMPETITOR 1 follows while singing.)

(COMPETITOR 3 messes with COMPETITOR 1 as much as possible – push-ups, sit-ups, maybe she brings out weights or bounces on an exercise ball.)

DIABOLICAL HOST

And stop.

(BLINDFOLDED JUDGE enters.)

BLINDFOLDED JUDGE

I thought there were some great moments, particularly in the beginning. But then you just started losing your air. I mean, it's all about breath control. Big problem.

DIABOLICAL HOST

Thanks.

(BLINDFOLDED JUDGE leaves.)

And that brings us to you. Are you ready?

COMPETITOR 3

I was born ready. Actually, I was born screaming, so that technically makes me ready.

DIABOLICAL HOST

I'm so glad you mentioned babies.

(COMPETITOR 1 and COMPETITOR 2 return with handfuls of baby dolls.)

This is a challenge we call the nursery. You'll be singing the song, and catching these babies at the same time. Just like in a real nursery.

COMPETITOR 3

There are flying babies in a nursery?

DIABOLICAL HOST

In the exciting ones. What are you going to be singing?

COMPETITOR 3

(names song.)

DIABOLICIAL HOST

I hate the song. Seriously, you've already lost. I'm kidding I only mildly dislike that song. Off you go.

(COMPETITOR 3 begins singing.)

(COMPETITOR 1 and 2 begin tossing baby dolls high into the air. COMPETITOR 3 runs around the stage catching them as best she can as she continues singing.)

(COMPETITOR 1 and 2 mess with her, eventually throwing baby dolls right at her back.)

DIABOLICAL HOST

And stop. Let's see what our blindfolded judge has to say.

(BLINDFOLDED JUDGE enters.)

BLINDFOLDED JUDGE

I loved every minute of it. There was a desperation in your voice that was really fun.

DIABOLICAL HOST

Awesome! And now we're on to round two – a round I like to call, singing inside a glass box filled with tarantulas. Who'd like to go first?

SAMMY

It seems a little derivative to me.

TOOLEY

Totally unoriginal. I think it's got a chance.

SAMMY

We'll call you.

(Lights change.)

V.

(Lights up on ANDREW.)

BAILEY

Dubuque 911 Special Victims Cold Case Unit. The most dangerous job in America's least dangerous place.

(OFFICE BOB and OFFICER STEVE just stand there, sipping coffee.)

OFFICER BOB

Yup.

OFFICER STEVE

Yup.

BOB

Skipping Forward

You'll never break me!

MARCIE

Oh I don't think I need to. Let me introduce you to my partner.

(BOB enters.)

BOB

Hiya.

MARCIE

This punk thinks he's too good for clearly marked pedestrian crosswalks. You make me sick. You make me sick.

BOB

Okey-dokey then. Soooo…

(BOB sits across from PERP.)

How about some coffee?

PERP

NEVER!

BOB

Well I'll have some then. Marcie?

MARCIE

I'm not in the mood to get you coffee, Bob. My stomach is too upset. Because I'm sick. I'm sick of jaywalking.

PERP

Can I have a cup then?

MARCIE

YOU THINK THIS IS A JOKE?! DO YA? What if there had been some little kid there, watching you – looking up to you like a role model? What if he says – hey, that guy crossed the street, what if I crossed the street? WHAT IF EVERYONE CROSSES THE STREET WHEREVER THEY LIKE? All of society breaks down! Chaos in the streets! It takes a little longer for cars to get through because they have to pause. They. Have. To. Pause. You just think about that.

BOB

I know ya had it tough. You probably had an absent father.

PERP

No, actually he –

BOB

Hold on I'm trying to relate to you. It's not easy growing up on the mean streets of Dubuque without a father figure. But there are program for people like you. Programs designed to help you.

MARCIE

This punk doesn't deserve help. He deserves a fifteen dollar fine.

BOB

Hold on there Marcie. I'm not giving up on this guy just yet.

MARCIE

I am.

BOB

I'M NOT!

(BOB gets up to make a dramatic speech.)

I'm reaching out my hand for ya, boy. I'm reaching out. Are you gonna take my hand? Are ya?

(Pause.)

ARE YA?

PERP

I guess so.

(PERP takes BOB's hand. BOB wraps in a hug.)

(BOB cries.)

BAILEY

All the drama! With none of the danger!

MARCIE

What happened here?

STEVE

Well – near as I can figure it – this cow has been tipped over.

MARCIE

They've struck again?!

STEVE

Yup.

MARCIE

This is sick! Sick!

STEVE

Just tipped Bessie right over. She fell down. On the ground.

MARCIE

Nooo! Bessie! I loved you!

STEVE

She's still alive. She's just mildly annoyed now.

MARCIE

Oh.

BAILEY

And then the romantic tension you've all been waiting for.

BOB

Yup.

STEVE*

Yup.

**(It's less funny, but if you must, you can have MARCIE say these lines.)*

BOB

Yup.

STEVE

Yup.

(BOB looks at STEVE.)

(Pause. Then… with passion.)

BOB

Yup.

(STEVE inhales sharply.)

STEVE

I thought you'd never ask.

(BOB and STEVE take a step toward each other.)

TOOLEY

We'll call you.

BAILEY

Too edgy? Is that it? I can tone it down.

VI.

(Lights change to JILL.)

JILL

You've seen Ice Road Truckers! You've seen Dangerous Fish Catchers! You've seen Garbagemen! You've seen Hell's Bathroom! But now it's time for the most dramatic, most dangerous reality show of them all! The Writer's Room!

(Lights up on three writers, working on laptops.)

Look at them! Look at them!

(The writers are writing.)

Who will come out on top? Who?!

(The writers are writing.)

Who will get blocked?!

(The writers are writing.)

WRITER 1

Aaaaaah! Hand cramp!

(WRITER 1 falls out of his or her chair.)

(WRITER 2 steps into the confessional.)

WRITER 2

When I saw Jimmy cramp up I thought that was my chance. I mean, he's a good writer and all, but he can't stand the pressure cause he's weak. He's mentally weak, you know? He's got a brain like a cardboard box. I just pressed on. You know, I had my vision and as long as I stuck to it that hundred thousand dollars was as good as mine.

(WRITER 2 goes back to his laptop.)

JILL

We don't even tell them there's no hundred thousand dollars!

WRITER 3

Hey, you know what would be cool?

WRITER 2

No. Shut up.

WRITER 3

All right.

(WRITER 1 steps up into the confessional.)

WRITER 1

My hand really hurt. Like bad. Like really bad. I had only one chance to win this. And I wasn't going to waste it.

(WRITER 1 goes back to his or her chair.)

(Pause.)

(WRITER 1 tackles WRITER 2.)

SAMMY

Um… we'll call you.

JILL

Seriously? You'll call me?

SAMMY

If we like it.

JILL

Do you like it?

SAMMY

No.

TOOLEY

Not at all.

JILL

So you're not going to call me?

SAMMY

Nope.

JILL

So why did you say you would?

TOOLEY

We're lying to you to spare your feelings. We're very nice people.

SAMMY

We'll never call you.

JILL

Oh.

TOOLEY

We'll call you.

(Lights change.)

VII.

(Lights up on JOEY, who is full of rage.)

JOEY

I call it – Reality Show of my horrible neighbors.

(JOEY takes out a camera and points it at his neighbors, BILL and SHEILA.)

(BILL and SHEILA are unaware that JOEY is filming them.)

BILL

Hey did you see the water bill?

SHEILA

I think it's on the mail table.

BILL

Okay.

(BILL heads towards the opposite side of the stage. SHEILA sits down to watch T.V.)

SHEILA

You want to watch American Idol?

BILL

Nah I got too much work to do.

(BILL looks for the water bill. SHEILA watches television.)

SHEILA

Do you… hey Bill?

BILL

What?

SHEILA

Do you see something out there?

BILL

Oh man. Call the police.

SHEILA

JOEY WE CAN SEE YOU!

JOEY

JUST PRETEND I'M NOT HERE!

SHEILA

YOU ARE SICK!

BILL

I'M CALLING THE POLICE!

JOEY
Just pretend I'm not here. Go about your lives. We'll edit this part out.

SHEILA
I'll get the screens.
(SHEILA finds two large black pieces of posterboard. She hands one to BILL.)

BILL
You need to get help, Joey!

JOEY
You are not making for compelling viewing!

BILL
Get off my lawn!

JOEY
I want to see more conflict with Sheila!
(SHEILA puts up the black posterboard in front of her face.)

SHEILA
You're gonna see more conflict with me in a second!

JOEY
All right! All right! I'm leaving! I'm leaving! You guys don't want to be famous!
(JOEY leaves the scene.)

TOOLEY
Okay, well –

JOEY
No just wait it gets better. I hid cameras in their house all over the place.

SAMMY
I'm not really sure NBC is comfortable violating the law like this –

TOOLEY
Depends if it's good watching or not.
(BILL AND SHEILA sit down to watch television.)

SHEILA
It's cause his mother was overprotective that's why.

BILL
Yeah.

SHEILA
That's why he's never he had a girlfriend. He's emotionally stunted.

JOEY
We'll edit this part out, don't worry.

BILL
I just want him to get help.

SHEILA
He'll get the help he needs in prison.

BILL
Yeah. That's probably the best place for him. Locked up.

SHEILA
In a dungeon. Do they still have dungeons?

BILL
I don't think they have dungeons anymore, honey.

SHEILA
Why are we even paying taxes if there are no dungeons?

BILL
I'm sure with some electro-shock therapy they can…
(he spots something.)
Hold on.

SHEILA
What is it?
(BILL waves at SHEILA as he begins to examine something.)
(BILL finds the hidden camera.)

BILL
Are you kidding me? Joey!
(JOEY comes back into the scene.)

JOEY
Just admit that you stole my lawnmower!

BILL
I didn't steal your lawnmower!

JOEY

Admit it!

BILL

Never!

JOEY

All right can you just act like Honey Boo Boo? Just try it!

SHEILA

Go away.

JOEY

It's easy! All you gotta do is be like, "Honey Boo Boo eats all the Zingers she wants."
(HONEY BOO BOO VOICE)
"It's cause I wanna be sexy."

BILL

Get out!

SAMMY

We'll call you.

JOEY

Seriously, I got like three hundred and forty hours of footage.

TOOLEY

I think we'll pass on this.

JOEY

Dang it.
(Lights change.)

VIII.

ARIEL

And now for the heartwarming show you've all been waiting for –
(WIFE and DAUGHTER enter.)

WIFE

Can you come here for a second?

DAUGHTER

Mommm.

WIFE

I just saw your report card.

DAUGHTER

What-ever.

WIFE

Wait till your father gets home.

ARIEL

My Father… The Panda!*

(PANDA enters.)

*(*This is probably funniest if the person playing the Panda is in a full-body Panda suit. (**Feel free to change this to any apelike animal that you do have a suit for, if a Panda suit is unavailable or expensive. Any animal will work.) (***Also, this is funniest if the Panda behaves as much like a Panda as possible.)*

WIFE

Honey? Did you see what your daughter got in English?

(PANDA rolls over to a scratching post.)

Honey? Honey. Are you listening to me?

(PANDA takes a sapling and begins munching on it.)

Can you stop eating for a second and listen?

(PANDA keeps munching on a sapling. WIFE grabs a hold of it.)

You can have dinner later but I think we need to talk about her schoolwork. You're her father – you need to talk to her.

(PANDA rolls away from her.)

You can't run away from this, Bob!

(PANDA crawls up on something.)

Bob. Listen to me. You can't be detached from this family. I can't be the bad guy every time she does something wrong. You need to –

(PANDA has another sapling.)

Dang it listen!

(She takes the sapling away from him. PANDA reaches for it.)

No! Talk to her.

(WIFE exits.)

(PANDA waits for a second, then finds another sapling and begins munching.)

(DAUGHTER looks at him.)

DAUGHTER

What?

(PANDA keeps munching.)

You're not going to say anything?

(PANDA keeps munching.)

Fine. I won't say anything either. And if you have to know, I don't think I'm dumb.

(PANDA keeps munching.)

School just seems pointless sometimes, you know? Like… like why do I have to jump through all these hoops all the time – and then… I know this is stupid, I know what you're gonna say, but… there's this guy…

(PANDA keeps munching. Maybe he scratches himself.)

So he said that smart girls weren't pretty. And he made fun of me cause I had an A and…

(DAUGHTER walks over towards PANDA.)

So I got the C on purpose. To make him like me. Was that dumb? I know it was dumb. I know I'm not going to do it again.

(She sits down.)

Do you still love me?

(PANDA approaches her. PANDA begins eating bugs out of her hair.)

Are you grooming me? Oh Dad. I love you too.

(She tries to hug him. PANDA keeps eating bugs out of her hair.)

ARIEL

And we're not afraid to push the envelope either!

(WIFE enters, getting ready for bed.)

WIFE

Bob? Can we talk?

(PANDA rolls away from her.)

Bob. Wait. Wait. I feel like you're pulling away from me.

(PANDA is pulling away from her.)

Tell me what's on your mind. I'm not a mind-reader. I need you to communicate with me. Are you happy?

(PANDA finds a sapling and begins munching on it.)

Is that a yes? Just talk to me. Do you still feel the same way about me as you used to?

(PANDA gets closer. PANDA sets down the sapling.)

(PANDA begins eating bugs out of her hair.)

Oh Bob I feel the same way!

SAMMY

We're gonna stop you right here.

ARIEL

This could not be more awesome.

SAMMY

I agree, but you know what? CBS already has a show like this in development. My father the tortoise.

TOOLEY

It's more meditative, but they cater to old people so they figured the tortoise was an animal the elderly could identify with.

ARIEL

Oh.

SAMMY

Brilliant idea though.

TOOLEY

Brilliant. We'll call you.
(Lights change.)

IX.

CAMPBELL

Imagine a show… on every night of the week. Every night.

SAMMY

Even Saturday?

CAMPBELL

Even Saturday!

SAMMY

Whoah!

CAMPBELL

It's a reality show – where you have people go out into the community, and in fact, all over the world – and FIND OUT THINGS.

TOOLEY

Whoah.

CAMPBELL

Like, let's say there's a fire in town. Someone goes to the fire and films it.

SAMMY

No way.

CAMPBELL

And then talks about it. Like in a confessional.

TOOLEY

What do you call it?

CAMPBELL

The… NEWS.
(Lights up on GAIL and CHUCK behind a desk.)

Skipping Forward

CHUCK

So without some donations soon the orphanage will be forced to close its doors – please, donations can be sent to –

(GAIL hits CHUCK in the groin with the whiffleball bat.)

Aaaaaarrhrhg!

JIM

This just in from the Emergency Management System – A Tornado warning has been issued for –

(GAIL hits JIM in the groin.)

Aaaaah!

SAMMY

Can we stop you there?

JIM

Please?

CAMPBELL

What?

SAMMY

I'm loving this. But I was wondering if there was some way we could make it more difficult for the newscasters.

TOOLEY

What if we put them in glass boxes filled with spiders?

CHUCK

What's that?

SAMMY

Or… they had to read the news while inside a tiger's mouth. That would really make things exciting.

CAMPBELL

Wouldn't the tiger just eat them?

SAMMY

Depends on how good a newscaster they are. If their stories are engaging enough, the tiger will stop chewing and listen.

TOOLEY

Yeah. That sounds plausible.

CAMPBELL
Sounds good to me! Can we bring in the tiger?

GAIL
Um…

CHUCK AND JIM
Gail goes first!

GAIL
I'll call you.
(She runs off.)

X.

(Lights up on TODD.)

TODD
This show is called DON'T DATE MY MOM.

MOONEY
I don't know if –

TODD
It's called DON'T DATE MY MOM.

SAMMY
It sounds really fresh.

TODD
NOBODY BETTER BE GETTING FRESH.

SAMMY
No I mean the concept is fresh.

TODD
THERE'S NOTHING FRESH GOING ON HERE!

MOONEY
Can we see a clip?

TODD
Why?

MOONEY

Just to see what the show is like.

TODD

All right. But don't get any ideas.

(MOM enters. She's dressed up a bit.)

(TODD enters the scene. He is also the host.)

TODD

Okay Mom you have only one rose to give out, and there are only two bachelors left standing after I kicked the other ones off the show. They will now give their final pitch.

(DARIEN enters. He's dressed up.)

DARIEN

Mildred, the time that we've spent together has been very special –

TODD *(interrupting)*

What are you talking about?

DARIEN

That night on the canoe – that was magical.

(TODD does not like this at all.)

TODD

I think I can be the man for you. I can take care of you. I can be there for you. And also, check out this body –

DARIEN

Whoah! Whoah! Hey! No! No!

TODD

I know we're just getting to know each other, but when I kissed you –

DARIEN

What? Mom?!

MOM

What?

DARIEN

What is wrong with you?

MOM

He seems like a very nice man.

DARIEN

No way! No way! Out! YOU WILL NOT DATE MY MOM.

MOM

Darien - ?

DARIEN

Let's hear from contestant number two.

(BRAD enters.)

BRAD

What's up?

DARIEN

Okay Brad – this is your last chance to earn that rose.

BRAD

Right. I'm looking at you right now, baby.

DARIEN

She is not your baby. She is not your baby. I am *her* baby and she is not your baby. There is no other baby here.

BRAD

And you look so smokin' right now –

DARIEN

Word of advice. My mother enjoys quiet nights watching television on the couch. So if you could tailor your speech to that, or possibly crocheting that would be great.

MOM

Don't listen to him, Brad. I think it's time to party.

BRAD

Then I'm your guy. Cause partying is all I do.

MOM

I like the sound of this.

DARIEN

No you don't. You don't like it at all.

End of Excerpt.
To purchase this play, visit www.concordtheatricals.com