MORE TIME WITH FAMILY

written by

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

CLOSE ON AN IPAD SCREEN. A GUY IS STARING AWKWARDLY BACK AT US, WAITING FOR A VIDEO CHAT TO BEGIN. MEET TOM RIZZO. A WELL-MEANING, OPTIMISTIC DAD AND HUSBAND -- BUT CURRENTLY FRUSTRATED BY THE DIFFICULTIES OF KEEPING UP WITH A FAMILY HUNDREDS OF MILES AWAY. ON SCREEN, WE SEE THE WORDS: "CONNECTING TO HOME." FINALLY, TOM'S FACE SLIDES TO A CORNER SQUARE, AND THE REST OF THE SCREEN FILLS WITH...

...THREE KIDS (EDDIE, JESSIE, AND MACK) AND A MOM (CINDY), WHO ARE JOCKEYING FOR POSITION ON THE CHAT. IT'S A CHAOTIC SCENE FILLED WITH FACES AND FINGERS.

MACK (ON SCREEN) JESSIE (ON SCREEN)

I wanna hold it! Give it!

CINDY (ON SCREEN)

Don't grab! Everyone gets a turn,

unless we break the iPad -- then

Daddy's gone forever.

POP WIDE. WE ARE...

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT (DAY 1)
(Tom, Cindy, Eddie, Jessie, Mack)

TOM SITS ON THE EDGE OF A BED IN A MEDIOCRE HOTEL ROOM, HOLDING THE IPAD.

TOM

Guys? I'm just seeing thumb. Thumb's

covering the camera. 'Kay, now we got

giant eyeball. (THE KIDS APPEAR AGAIN)

Heyyy! There you are! Miss you guys!

JESSIE, AN ADORABLE 8 YEAR-OLD GIRL, HOLDS UP A DRAWING.

JESSIE (ON SCREEN)

Daddy, look at the picture I made!

TOM

Wow, is that Shrek?

JESSIE (ON SCREEN)

(OFFENDED) No, it's you!

CINDY, TOM'S WIFE, APPEARS. AMAZING MOM, RUNS THE HOUSE LIKE A DRILL SERGEANT, AND SOMEHOW HAS ENDLESS ENERGY -- WE'LL DISCOVER WHY LATER. THEY HAVE A FUN, CUTE RHYTHM TOGETHER.

TOM

Hey...(SEXY) What are you wearing?

CINDY (ON SCREEN)

(RE: HER SHIRT) Uh... yogurt, and something that looks like blood, but is actually... (TASTES IT) blood. How 'bout you, sexy?

TOM

I am totally naked -- except for khakis and a fleece.

CINDY (ON SCREEN)

Where'd they send you this time?

TOM

I think I'm in Oh-ma-hidaho? All I know is, there's yet another high school quarterback I have to convince to be the future of Rutgers football, and a pretty sweet gas station where I just picked up dinner. (HOLDS UP A CAN OF SPRAY CHEESE, THEN) They just told me I won't be back until Tuesday.

EDDIE, THE OLDEST SON, GRABS THE IPAD. HE'S 10, AWKWARD, KINDA OVERWEIGHT -- BUT WITH AN AMAZING CONFIDENCE THAT IS BORDERLINE DELUSIONAL.

EDDIE (ON SCREEN)

Come on, man, are you serious? You're gonna miss my first basketball game of the season.

TOM FEELS TERRIBLE.

TOM

I know, I'm sorry, buddy. I really thought I was gonna make this one. Hey -- maybe you guys can bring the iPad to the game so I can watch. I'll curse at the ref, and then Mom can hide me in her bag.

MACK, THE YOUNGEST SON, POPS UP AND SHOUTS IN A HUSKY VOICE.

MACK (ON SCREEN)

Dad! We got a turtle! He looks like you too!

MACK GRABS THE IPAD AWAY FROM EDDIE, AND TOM'S SCREEN BECOMES CRAZY WITH EARTHQUAKE-LIKE MOVEMENT AGAIN.

CINDY (O.S. THROUGH SCREEN)

Mack, put it down, don't run with the-

THE PICTURE FREEZES AND A WORD APPEARS: "DISCONNECTED."

TOM

Once again, it's just you and me, iPad. (BEAT) What are <u>you</u> wearing?

<u>CUT TO:</u>

<u>INT. OMAHA LIVING ROOM - DAY (DAY 2)</u>
(Tom, Omaha Mom, Omaha Dad, High School Kid)

A QUAINT, HOMEY, NEEDLEPOINT-Y LIVING ROOM IN OMAHA, NEBRASKA, WITH A FEW MOUNTED DEER HEADS ON THE WALL. TOM, IN A RUTGERS POLO, SITS ACROSS FROM A MOM, DAD, AND THEIR HIGH SCHOOL SON -- CLEARLY WINNING THEM OVER.

TOM

As a recruiter, I look at stats, I watch game tape, but what I focus on, and what I see in you, are the intangibles. Are you a leader? Are you a quality human being? Because at Rutgers, we're more than a football team. We're a family.

OMAHA DAD

Well, that means a lot to us, Tom. 'Cause family's what we're all about.

HIGH SCHOOL KID

Yeah, Mom and Dad were always there for me. I don't think they missed a single game I played in.

TOM

(HIT HARD BY THIS) Not a one, huh? No business trips, surgery, dead uncle, nuthin'?

OMAHA MOM

Nope. We even had our own cheering section. (RE: DAD) This one could not stop painting himself blue.

OMAHA DAD

No I could not. I've got an angry rash on my chest goin' on two years now. But it was worth it.

TOM

(WITH A LUMP IN HIS THROAT) Well, it's great that you're so involved.

OMAHA DAD

Of course we are. These years fly by so quick. They're gone before you know it, am I right?

THAT'S IT FOR TOM. AFTER ALL THESE YEARS ON THE ROAD, HE'S HIT A WALL, AND HE HAS AN EPIPHANY. ALL OF A SUDDEN, IT'S LIKE A HUGE WEIGHT IS LIFTED FROM HIS SHOULDERS.

TOM

You are totally right. I gotta go.

OMAHA DAD

What?

TOM STUFFS HIS PAPERS INTO A ROLLER BAG BY HIS FEET.

TOM

Look, you seem like wonderful people, with your oatmeal cookies and (RE: THE DEER HEADS) the stuff you shot, but I have my own family. I've made my own people. And I am their leader. I've been on the road for fifteen years. I should be going to my kid's games and painting myself blue until I get an angry rash. I want to grab them, lift up their shirts and blow on their bellies. I can't do that to your bellies. That would be weird.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

And it’s also an NCAA rules violation.

Good luck to you, but I gotta get home.

TOM GRABS HIS ROLLER BAG AND HEADS FOR THE DOOR -- BUT THE BAG GETS CAUGHT BETWEEN THE COFFEE TABLE AND THE COUCH. HE YANKS IT A COUPLE TIMES, THEN, TRYING TO MAINTAIN HIS HEAD OF STEAM, TAKES THE LONG WAY AROUND THE COUCH AND GOES.

CUT TO:

INT. RIZZO KITCHEN - DAY (DAY 3)
(Tom, Cindy, Eddie, Jessie, Mack)

A MODEST BRICK HOUSE IN RUTHERFORD, NEW JERSEY, A CUTE WORKING-CLASS SUBURB. CINDY RIZZO, TOM’S WIFE, IS TRYING TO WRANGLE THREE KIDS -- EDDIE (10, DRESSED IN KNICKS GEAR), JESSIE (SMART 8 YEAR-OLD GIRL, READING A THICK NOVEL AT THE TABLE), AND MACK (6, THINKS HE’S A NINJA, SWINGS A SWORD AROUND). IT’S THAT INSANE SPRINT OF TRYING TO GET THEM DRESSED, FED, AND OUT TO SCHOOL BY 8 AM.

CINDY

Okay, we’ve got two minutes to get out of here. Your bus driver is evil, and she loves to see me run. Jessie, we get it, you’re smart -- stop reading and eat. Eddie, did you finish your homework?

EDDIE

Who cares? I’m going right from high school to the NBA. So you all better start kissing up to me, unless you don’t like money.

CINDY

Okay, you crazy monkeys, backpack up and move out!

EDDIE AND JESSIE SCURRY AROUND AND GET THEIR BACKPACKS ON. THE DOOR FLIES OPEN, AND INTO THIS CHAOS WALKS...TOM.

TOM

I’m home! I took the red-eye!

SURPRISED, CINDY THROWS OUT A “HEY, BABE.” THE KIDS AD-LIB “DADDY!” AND RUN OVER TO HUG HIM. AS CINDY GRABS HER COAT...

CINDY

We gotta go! Love your dad later!

TOM

And I’m here for good! I’m not gonna be on the road anymore!

CINDY

(TOO DISTRACTED TO PROCESS THIS) What?

(LOOKING THROUGH THE DOOR) Oh my god the bus is on the corner!! Everybody, move! (TO TOM) Grab Eddie’s permission slip, it’s on the bulletin board.

TOM RUNS OVER TO A HUGE BULLETIN BOARD WITH TONS OF STUFF ON IT -- IT LOOKS LIKE THE ONE CLAIRE DANES PUT TOGETHER TO CATCH THE GUY ON “HOMELAND.” TOM’S EYES DART AROUND.

TOM

This is the work of a madman. Where?

CINDY

It’s pink.

TOM

There’s twenty pink things!

CINDY

I’ll do it, just gimme Jessie’s jacket.

TOM

(LOOKS AROUND) I’m seeing boots, socks, fairy wings, not seeing jackets.

CINDY

Just stand against the wall.

TOM QUICKLY TURNS INTO THE WALL.

CINDY (CONT'D)

Okay, you don't have to face the wall.

TOM TURNS BACK, AS CINDY RUNS OVER, GETS THE PERMISSION SLIP, AND YANKS JESSIE'S JACKET FROM A HOOK.

CINDY (CONT'D)

(RE: JESSIE AND EDDIE) I'm gonna run

these guys to the bus. I'll be back

for Mack, he doesn't go 'til noon.

SHE GRABS SOMETHING FROM THE COUNTER, SHOVES IT INTO HER MOUTH FURTIVELY, THEN USHERS JESSIE AND EDDIE OUTSIDE. ON THE WAY OUT, SHE KISSES TOM. HE REACTS TO THE TASTE.

TOM

Did you just eat a Peanut Butter Cup

for breakfast?

CINDY

What? No. Did I? I don't know.

Gotta go.

IN A FLASH, THE DOOR SLAMS SHUT, AND TOM IS LEFT JUST STANDING THERE. NOT EXACTLY THE HOMECOMING HE WAS HOPING FOR. HE LOOKS OVER AT MACK. BEAT.

TOM

Want me to blow on your belly?

MACK

No thanks.

AND WE...

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

ACT ONE

SCENE A

FADE IN:

INT. RIZZO KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - DAY (DAY 3)
(Tom, Cindy, Mack)

MACK WATCHES TV IN THE LIVING ROOM. CINDY CLEANS UP THE KITCHEN, AS TOM FINISHES TELLING HER WHAT HAPPENED.

TOM

...so I just called my boss, said, “I can’t do this anymore,” and I quit. Just like in the movies!

CINDY

Wow, this is huge, I’m kind of in shock. I mean, the idea that I’m gonna have a husband in this time zone every day -- it’s kinda freaking me out.

TOM

I know -- I’m really here! No more mini-bars, no more tiny hotel soaps -- I get to have all normal size things now!

CINDY

It’s great. I’m thrilled. One little question -- how are we gonna pay for stuff now?

TOM

I'm gonna run my parents' diner. You know they've been begging me to take it over for years.

CINDY

So we can really afford to do this?

TOM

It'll be a little bit of a cut for us, but it's worth it to be together. Every Sunday night we can all gather at the diner, like I used to as kid, only now I'll be the patriarch, dispensing my wisdom. (OFF CINDY'S LOOK) What?

CINDY

I'm just not quite sure what wisdom you're talking about.

TOM

I've got wisdom.

CINDY

Like what? "Man with hand down pants is happy man?"

TOM

You know what? He is happy, but that's not where I was going. (THEN) So, come on, isn't this all gonna be fun?

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Going to the kids' games, gathering around the microwave to make popcorn... (CONFIDENTIALLY) And it'll be great for us too. I sneak out, middle of the day, we throw on some Michael Bublé, and before you know it, we're getting busy with our Bublés.

SHE LAUGHS, THEN...

CINDY

Okay, but life here isn't all popcorn and daytime sex.

TOM

Hey, I know what life here is like. It's not like I was <u>never</u> home.

CINDY

Yeah, but even when you were, you were working half the time. And when you came out of your office, you were just "happy fun dad."

TOM

Would you have preferred "scowling and drunk dad"?

CINDY

No. I'm just saying, you never had to deal with any of the details of actually running this house.

TOM

I know more than you think.

CINDY

(BEAT) Where do we keep the spatulas?

TOM IS FROZEN. HE SLOWLY MOVES TO A DRAWER AND STARTS TO OPEN IT. CINDY SHAKES HER HEAD.

TOM

You haven't proven your point, it just means I don't flip things a lot.

CINDY

I'm not blaming you, there's just a lot you don't know. (RE: THE CRAZY BOARD) Like, today, I have to drop off Mack, go to the market, pay bills, return seven hundred emails about the school book fair because other moms are <u>insane</u>. Then two seconds later the kids'll be home, going on the internet, looking at horrible things, one of them'll probably throw up, then we pass out and do it all again tomorrow. Just not sure when during all of that your Bublé makes an appearance.

TOM

Okay, Cindy -- these kids are gonna live at home for ten more years, <u>max</u>. Why all the tension? Let's try to enjoy them, and go our separate ways as friends.

A BIT STRESSED, SHE GRABS SOMETHING FROM BEHIND THE COFFEE MAKER AND STARTS QUICKLY TOSSING STUFF INTO HER MOUTH.

TOM (CONT'D)

(CURIOUSLY) Are you popping pills?

CINDY

What? No! (THEN) They're Skittles.

HE PUTS HIS ARMS AROUND HER WAIST.

TOM

Hey, why don't I take Mack to school today, and I'll be here when the circus gets back? You spend your whole life taking care of everybody else. You deserve a day for you.

CINDY

But...where would I go? What would I do? The only thing that pops into my head is pulling into the parking lot at 7-11 and taking a nap in the car.

TOM

Or maybe do something a non-homeless person would do. Go to a spa, have a stranger put rocks on you. Or put rocks on a stranger -- I trust you.

CINDY

Okay. But this is important. Mack's been having trouble separating at drop-off. He cries, he hangs onto my leg. Just walk away.

(MORE)

CINDY (CONT'D)

He's little but he's cunning, and he'll work your emotions like a speedbag.

TOM

I got this, don't worry. You just have fun and relax -- don't text, don't call, don't fax -- not that you would, that'd be strange. Now, git!

SHE GRABS HER PURSE AND KISSES HIM. AS SHE HEADS OUT...

CINDY

Alright. (RE: THE BIG BOARD) Everything you need to know is on this board. Just follow the pieces of yarn -- it all makes perfect sense. (SPOTS SOMETHING ON THE BOARD) Wait.

SHE MOVES A PIECE OF YARN TO ANOTHER EQUALLY CONFUSING SPOT. THEN, RELIEVED...

CINDY (CONT'D)

Now it all makes sense.

TOM BLINKS, AS SHE GOES, AND WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE B

INT. GALAXY DINER - DAY (DAY 3)
(Tom, Stan, Barb, Burnsy, Mack, Francis, Customer, Extras)

ONE OF THOSE GREAT, CLASSIC DINERS. ORIGINAL VINYL BOOTHS, SINATRA PLAYING. A WARM PLACE WHERE PEOPLE HAVE GATHERED FOR YEARS. STAN, TOM'S BRASH, OPINIONATED, OLD-SCHOOL ITALIAN FATHER WHO OWNS THE PLACE, PASSES BY HIS WIFE, BARB -- A LITTLE FLIGHTY, NOT TOO BRIGHT, A WORRIER AND SUBSERVIENT TO HER HUSBAND. AS USUAL, SHE'S MANNING THE REGISTER.

BARB

(WORRIED) Stan. Where's Tom?

STAN

He said he'd be here at ten, it's ten-

oh-five.

BARB

Do you think he's dead?

STAN

No, Barb. Why do you always assume

people are dead?

BARB

One of these times I'm gonna be right.

STAN

Why do you want to be right?! You're

like the grim reaper with a perm.

TOM ENTERS WITH MACK, WHO RUNS INTO HIS GRANDPARENTS' ARMS. AD-LIB HELLOS, AS EVERYBODY HUGS IN A BOISTEROUS, EXTENDED ITALIAN FAMILY WAY. BARB GIVES MACK A DONUT.

STAN (CONT'D)

(TO TOM) Hey, Meatball! What's Mack

doing here?

TOM

Oh, I'm taking him to school.

STAN

Why are you taking your kid to school? Aren't you the man?

TOM

Dad, men do this kind of thing now.

STAN

All I know is, I changed one diaper in my life. Opened it up, saw what was inside, never did it again.

TOM

Yeah, you told that story at my wedding.

STAN

Hold on a sec. (TURNS TO A CUSTOMER AT A TABLE) What can I get you?

CUSTOMER

I'll have scrambled eggs and toast.

STAN

You want bacon or sausage with that?

CUSTOMER

Can I actually get some sliced tomato on the side?

STAN

Nope. I didn't fight in a war to serve vegetables! You'll have bacon.

STAN TURNS BACK TO TOM.

STAN (CONT'D)

Can you believe that guy?

TOM

I think tomatoes sound pretty normal.

STAN

(BEAT, REALIZING) Oh my god. Are you a (CAN BARELY SAY IT) vegetarian?

TOM

No. But it has always seemed weird to me -- I mean, why do we stop at dogs and cats? We run around the planet eating everything that moves, but we see a dog and we're like, "Who's a cute boy?"

GREG "BURNSY" BURNS, TOM'S BEST FRIEND, ENTERS IN HIS BLUE LOCKSMITH JUMPSUIT. BURNSY'S A BIT OF A DARK GUY. IF YOU'VE GOT A PROBLEM, BURNSY WILL MAKE YOU FEEL WORSE ABOUT IT.

BURNSY

I <u>thought</u> that was your car! Only a big shot keeps his Toyota hatchback so shiny.

TOM

Burnsy! What's up -- besides you looking hot in that jumpsuit?

BARB

I always love seeing you boys together -- just like when you were kids.

STAN

And neither of them are dead, how 'bout that, Barb?

BARB

Not yet!

TOM

I'm glad you're here, I got big news. I'm off the road for good!

BARB

That's wonderful! A man belongs with his mother.

BURNSY

(DISTURBED) What do you mean off the road? Off the road how? Why?

TOM

I'm finally gonna take over the diner. You two shouldn't work so hard anymore.

BARB IS THRILLED. STAN LOOKS LESS CONVINCED.

BARB

No we should not! We've been saving up for our retirement, and it's finally time! We should be on an island somewhere, in flip flops, drinking pineapple drinks with non-threatening locals.

STAN

You know, Meatball, running this place isn't that easy. You think you just open the doors here and the eggs start cooking themselves?

TOM

Come on, Dad, it's a family business, I worked here my whole life.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

I know how the place runs. And

Francis can fill in the gaps.

ANGLE ON FRANCIS, A FORTYSOMETHING MAN WHO WORKS THERE AS WELL, AND CLEARLY DOESN'T LIKE WHAT HE'S HEARING.

FRANCIS

Sure, happy to help. As the Assistant

Manager, it'll be fun to teach my new

boss how every single thing works.

FRANCIS MARCHES OFF. STAN STILL SEEMS UNSURE.

STAN

There's accounting, payroll, on the

Fourth of July we do flag toothpicks

now -- did you know that?!

TOM

I get it, I gotta bone up on the

toothpick situation. You'll ease me

into it. Just take tomorrow morning

off, see how it feels.

STAN

(BEAT) Alright. But the only music we

play is Sinatra. The man was

practically my father.

BARB

He came in here <u>once</u> looking for a

payphone.

STAN

I held his hat!

STAN HEADS INTO THE KITCHEN, AS TOM SITS DOWN WITH BURNSY.

TOM

I'm not sure they should watch my kids anymore. You put old people and kids together -- who's watching who?

BURNSY JUST LOOKS AT HIM SERIOUSLY.

BURNSY

So did you officially quit? Has the paperwork gone through, can you get out of it?

TOM

Actually, Manny, my boss, told me to sleep on it. Said he's seen a few guys try the "I wanna spend more time with my family" thing and sometimes it doesn't stick. (LAUGHS) Funny, right?

BURNSY

I don't think it's funny at all. I think it's spot on.

TOM

Come on, I want to be closer to my kids. Aren't you close to your kids?

BURNSY

Close how? Like, so close I can never have sex in my own house? I got five boys and a pet bird who talks, it's hell in there. Last night, just to get some peace, I slept in my locksmith van on a pillow made of keys.

TOM

So you don't think I did the right thing.

BURNSY

Well, let's break it down. You're a married man with a family, but you got to spend twenty days a month in hotels, eating wings, going to football games, and surfing porn without having to clear your history. And you said, "Screw this, I'm outta here." Why don't you tell me if you did the right thing?

TOM

Most people would put family above Buffalo wings, but that's why I love ya. (CALLS TO MACK) Mack, school!

BURNSY

If I had a bad day, I'd just picture you in those Marriotts, drinking free lobby coffee, driving rental cars...You were Hertz Gold! Hertz Gold, man. Your name was up on that board. I wrote a song about you!

MACK RUNS OVER TO TOM, AND THEY GO. BURNSY CALLS AFTER THEM.

BURNSY (CONT'D)

(SINGS) *Fly, Tom, fly! Like an air-o-plane in the sky!* (OFF TOM'S LOOK) It's better with the full band behind it.

CUT TO:

SCENE C

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL HALLWAY/CLASSROOM - DAY (DAY 3)
(Tom, Mack, Teacher, Extras)

MACK IS SOBBING AND CLINGING TO TOM'S LEG AT THE DOOR TO HIS KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM. IT'S JUST WHAT CINDY SAID WOULD HAPPEN, BUT THE REALITY IS STILL BREAKING TOM'S HEART. MACK'S SUPER SWEET KINDERGARTEN TEACHER APPROACHES.

TOM

Okay, buddy, I really should go now.

TEACHER

Come on in, Mack, we've got a great project going with glitter.

MACK

She's mean! Don't leave me. I thought we'd be together now, Daddy.

MACK HAS FOUND TOM'S SOFT SPOT.

TOM

We are, I want to, but... (SNAPPING) Ah, screw it! (SCOOPS MACK UP)

TEACHER

Lots of kids have trouble separating-

TOM RUNS OFF WITH MACK. THE TEACHER CALLS AFTER HIM.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

But if you give him a minute, I'm sure he'll be fine.

TOM

(TO MACK, AS HE RUNS) Everything'll be okay. Let's go get you a new toy.

CUT TO:

SCENE D

INT. RIZZO LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN/DRIVEWAY - DAY (DAY 3)
(Tom, Eddie, Jessie, Mack)

TOM AND MACK ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF A WII TENNIS MATCH. MACK COULDN'T BE HAPPIER. NO TRACE OF THE CRYING WE SAW BEFORE. TOM LOOKS CONCERNED -- HE KNOWS HE'S BEEN PLAYED.

TOM

Wow, you sure cheered up quick. Were those tears even real?

MACK

(LYING) Um...yeah. Serve it up!

WE KICK INTO A MONTAGE OF TOM'S DAY ALONE WITH THE KIDS:

--LATER. TOM'S STILL PLAYING WII, NOW SWEATING HIS ASS OFF.

TIME CUT TO:

--EVEN LATER. MACK'S STILL UP AND PLAYING. TOM SLUMPS ON THE COUCH, EXHAUSTED, FLICKING THE WII WITH HIS WRIST.

MACK (CONT'D)

Again! Play again!

TOM

We've played a hundred times. Do you know how many games my father played with me? One. It was called, "Shut up and cut the lawn."

JESSIE AND EDDIE BURST INTO THE HOUSE AND WALK BY TOM, DROPPING JACKETS, BACKPACKS AND SHOES AS THEY GO.

TOM (CONT'D)

Guys! Made a little mess on your way in here. Can you pick this stuff up?

JESSIE/EDDIE

(FRIENDLY) No thanks!/Yeah, no!

TIME CUT TO:

--ON THE DRIVEWAY, A BASKET IS HUNG OVER THE GARAGE. TOM AND EDDIE GET READY TO SHOOT SOME HOOPS.

TOM

Alright, little man. Rutgers told me I had to swing by to see this hot new b-ball phenom. Let's see whatchu got!

EDDIE

(WITH ATTITUDE) Oh yeah. Watch me nah...

EDDIE TAKES A SHOT. IT'S AN AIRBALL THAT BANGS INTO THE GARAGE DOOR. EDDIE GRABS THE BALL AND DRIBBLES, BUT IT KICKS OFF HIS TOE AND DOWN THE DRIVEWAY. AS HE RUNS AFTER IT, TOM LOOKS CONFUSED -- HE HAD NO IDEA HIS SON WAS QUITE THIS BAD.

<u>TIME CUT TO:</u>

--JESSIE'S AT THE KITCHEN TABLE, HER HOMEWORK SPREAD OUT.

JESSIE

Dad, can you help me with this math?

TOM

(CONFIDENT) I sure can. (LOOKS AT WORKSHEET, CONFIDENCE GONE) Adding fractions? What are you, in college?

<u>TIME CUT TO:</u>

--AGAIN ON THE DRIVEWAY. EDDIE IS COOLING DOWN, DRINKING GATORADE. TOM IS IN FULL-ON COACH/DAD ENCOURAGEMENT MODE.

TOM (CONT'D)

So, big game on Saturday. Wanna work on your shot a little more?

EDDIE

Nah, I'm good. I'm already like the tenth best player in my grade.

TOM

But practicing's how you get better. Everyone can get a little better.

EDDIE

Have you been in my room, yo? It's wall to wall trophies. I pretty much have never lost.

TOM

That's true. But those are more "participation" trophies. You're moving up to a new league now, where there's actual winners and losers.

EDDIE

Whaddya mean?

TOM

Not everyone gets a trophy.

EDDIE

(BEAT) Whaddya mean?

TOM

Well, there's just the one trophy that goes to the team that wins. Like in real sports. Or did you think every team wins the Super Bowl every year?

EDDIE

Okay, just to be clear, I am getting a trophy, right?

TOM

(ENCOURAGING) Well, you could if you practice, and help your team win. By...you know...getting the ball into the basket. Which I'm not seeing a lot of going on here.

EDDIE IS HURT. IN A WORLD WHERE EVERY CHILD IS A WINNER, NO ONE HAS EVER CRITIQUED HIM BEFORE. TOM TRIES TO BUY IT BACK.

TOM (CONT'D)

Yet. I'm not seeing it yet. But with hard work you can totally get there.

EDDIE

And then I'll be on the Knicks?

TOM

Noooo.

EVERYTHING EDDIE HAS EVER BELIEVED ABOUT HIMSELF HAS BEEN SHATTERED. HE RIPS OFF HIS HEADBAND, THROWS IT TO THE GROUND, AND RUNS INSIDE. TOM CALLS AFTER HIM.

TOM (CONT'D)

Come on, NBA guys are freaks. Their feet are bigger than your brother!

CUT TO:

SCENE E

INT. TOM AND CINDY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (DAY 3)
(Tom, Cindy, Eddie, Jessie, Mack)

TOM, CLEARLY EXHAUSTED FROM THE DAY, LIES ON HIS BED IN SWEATS AND RUBS HIS HEAD. CINDY ENTERS.

CINDY

Hey babe! Thank you so much for today. I got a massage, got my hair blown out, and I did end up taking that nap at 7-11, it was fantastic -- the guy who sells weed in the parking lot made sure no one bothered me. How'd it go with the kids?

TOM

It was great, it was good. I think they're finally in bed, so I got that done. I did have a slight issue when I took Mack to school -- in that he did not stay at school.

CINDY

Oh my god. What happened?

TOM

I caved! But you should've seen his face! He was crying, there was a fracas about glitter -- it all went by so fast.

CINDY

I told you he'd do that! You were supposed to just walk away!

TOM

And then the rest of the day, he worked me like I was a hired party clown! When I was a kid, my dad would take naps, and my mother would freak out. “Everybody out of the house! Your father is sleeping!” I tried to rest for one minute, and Mack was poking me in the face. Literally opening my eyelids. “Wake up, play more Wii, more Wiiiii.” (THEN) Oh, I bought him a Wii.

CINDY

Well, did you at least help them finish their homework?

TOM

(BEAT) I did not. Because I suck at math! I can’t add fractions -- I get nervous when the pizza guy comes, and I have to do the change and the tip at the same time! I just hold up balled money like I’m from a small town in Belgium. (WITH ODD ACCENT) You need more of this? More for you?

CINDY

(RUBS NECK) Aw, man. I can feel my massage starting to undo itself.

TOM

One other little thing. I might have caused Eddie to quit basketball.

CINDY

What?! What happened?

TOM

What happened is, he's bad. He's sooo bad! And yet he's got like a billion trophies, so he's deluded.

CINDY

I know. So?

TOM

Well, I was just trying to teach him that hard work pays off. But I ended up... telling him he'd never be a Knick -- was that wrong?

CINDY

So I'm gone for one afternoon, and you crush his boyhood dream?

TOM

To be fair, it was more than an afternoon. It's 8:15. (OFF HER LOOK) I didn't feel right lying to him just to boost his ego.

CINDY

I don't lie to boost his ego, I lie because I don't have time to get him a new activity.

(MORE)

CINDY (CONT'D)

The carpools to practice are all worked out. And his gym's near a really nice Starbucks. You have to fix this!

TOM

The only way to fix things with Eddie is a time machine back to when the NBA was all white guys in short-shorts.

CINDY TAKES TOM'S HANDS AND LOOKS HIM IN THE EYE.

CINDY

Okay, Tom, I'm happy you're back home - - but we had a system here. You gotta follow the system, or you're gonna get us all killed.

MACK AND JESSIE APPEAR IN THE DOORWAY AND AD-LIB "HEY MOMMY," ETC. CINDY BRIGHTENS IMMEDIATELY.

CINDY (CONT'D)

(HUGS THEM) Heyyy, missed you guys!

TOM

Aaand they're up again. I've been trying to get them down for an hour.

CINDY

Alright, get to sleep. For real this time.

SHE GRABS HER WALLET, AND HANDS THEM EACH A FIVE DOLLAR BILL. THEY TAKE THE MONEY, KISS HER, AND GO.

TOM

(BEAT) What just happened?

CINDY

Oh, I give them five dollars each to stay in bed. (OFF HIS LOOK) Not every night, but sometimes you gotta grease the wheels to get things done.

TOM

So let me get this straight. You're all over me for messing up your "system." But you're lying, and bribing -- you're like a small-time mob boss!

CINDY

Maybe I am. But guess what? Small town mob boss makes a small town run. No one questions the boss. And you shouldn't either.

TOM

Or what? You'll disappear me?

CINDY GRABS SOMETHING FROM HER NIGHT STAND DRAWER AND STARTS TO HEAD TOWARDS THE BATHROOM.

TOM (CONT'D)

Whoah, whoah, what is that?

CINDY

Nothing.

TOM

Show me what's in your hand.

HE CROSSES TO HER, AND SHE RELUCTANTLY SHOWS HIM.

TOM (CONT'D)

Oh my god, is that an Easter bunny head? You're addicted to candy!

CINDY

No I'm not!

HE TAKES THE CANDY FROM HER.

TOM

Yes you are! That's how you have so much energy -- this whole place is running on sugar! Easter was a really long time ago. How many bunnies did you buy?!

CINDY

I bought 'em all, okay?! I bought 'em all! Now gimme back my bunny!

TOM

No. It's almost Halloween, you're about to get a lot more candy!

CINDY

Tom, I'm serious. Give me the bunny.

TOM

Jesus, your eyes are going black. What's going on around here? When I used to come home, everything seemed so normal.

CINDY

That's because when you'd come home for a few days, and you'd be stressed about work, we just wanted to show you a good time. It was kinda like we were doing a play. A happy play, where everybody always got along, and everything ended up okay. But now you're seeing backstage. Without the bright lights and pretty costumes that make it pleasant for the tourists. It gets weird back here. Now gimme the freakin' bunny.

TOM SLOWLY HANDS HER THE BUNNY. AT THIS MOMENT, HIS CELL PHONE RINGS. HE STEPS INTO THE BATHROOM AND ANSWERS.

TOM

(INTO PHONE) Hey Manny... Yup, still here....Have I changed my mind? Um...

TOM LOOKS AT CINDY, GNAWING ON HER CHOCOLATE BUNNY HEAD.

TOM (CONT'D)

(INTO PHONE) I'm gonna need another twenty-four hours.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

SCENE H

INT. GALAXY DINER - DAY (DAY 4)
(Tom, Stan, Barb, Burnsy, Extras)

TOM, STILL WORKED UP FROM HIS TIME AT HOME, IS BEHIND THE COUNTER, WITH A LINE OF KETCHUP BOTTLES HE'S TRYING TO CONSOLIDATE. HE'S BALANCING ONE BOTTLE ON TOP OF ANOTHER AND WAITING FOR THE LAST DROPS TO FALL. IT COULDN'T BE GOING SLOWER, AND IT'S DRIVING HIM CRAZY. BEAT. BEAT. LONG BEAT.

TOM

(TO KETCHUP) Go! Come on! Slide, you red douchebag, slide!

STAN AND BARB ENTER. TOM CROSSES OVER.

TOM (CONT'D)

Guys, whaddya doing here? I thought you were gonna take your first morning off.

STAN

Your mother is trying to kill me.

BARB

It was wonderful. We went on a lovely walk.

STAN

This one with the walks. I work my whole life so I can spend the rest of my days walking around like an idiot? Why are we walking?! We own a car!

TOM

Well, you two are a delight. Thanks for stopping by.

STAN

(OFF A CUSTOMER'S PLATE) Is that a mother-loving avocado on that plate? (TO TOM) What do you think this is, Spring Break in Cancun?

THE CUSTOMER LOOKS UNCOMFORTABLE. TOM PULLS STAN ASIDE.

TOM

Dad, if I'm gonna run this place, you're gonna have to open your mind to-

STAN

To what? Vegetables on the side?!

TOM

Avocado isn't even a vegetable, it's a fruit!

STAN

What kind of man would know that?! You think Frank Sinatra ever used the word "avocado"?

BARB

That's because they weren't invented yet!

TOM

Dad, you have no idea what Frank Sinatra thought about avocados. You were not his friend!

STAN

I held his hat!

BARB

Stop fighting, you two! Our baby's home, he's alive, it's a blessing. Let's go for another walk.

STAN

Great. Another walk. We'll turn around, just to make sure the other half of my face gets sunburned.

STAN STORMS OUT. BARB FOLLOWS. REVEAL BURNSY, WHO HAS ENTERED AND OVERHEARD THE END OF THIS FIGHT.

BURNSY

Wow. You have made some great choices with your life. How's it going at home? You guys "close?" You all getting really "close" yet?

TOM

Very funny, dude.

BURNSY

But the sex was great, right? All that adventurous, playful married sex?

TOM

Yeah, turns out, between homework, bills, and never-ending bedtime, there's not a lot of time for romance. Me and Cindy are basically business partners in a horrible non-profit organization.

BURNSY

Okay, listen. (SLAPS HIS KEYS ON THE TABLE) My van is right outside, it's gassed up. Let's go to the drugstore, buy you a toothbrush, a deck of cards, and some jerky, and drive your ass to the airport.

TOM

No! (THEN) Maybe! It's weird, I just feel like I'm in the way. Like I'm some kind of...

BURNSY

...part mom, part dad, useless hermaphrodite just hanging around the house?

TOM

Well, I wouldn't say "hermaphrodite."

BURNSY

I would.

TOM

No. There's gotta be a way to turn this around. I'm not one of those clueless, incompetent dads, I'm just out of practice.

BURNSY

See, that's why I love you, Tommy. You've always been an optimist.

(MORE)

BURNSY (CONT'D)

Remember when you wanted to get Don Mattingly to speak at our high school graduation? You wrote to him, you pushed, and you never gave up. And who ended up speaking?

TOM

The guy who owned that carpet store on Route Three.

BURNSY

That’s my point. Things don’t work out.

TOM

I just thought it was gonna be good times, with microwave popcorn and blowing on people’s bellies. Since I’ve been back, I haven’t blown on one belly!

BURNSY

(RAISES HIS SHIRT) If it’ll get you in the van, have at it.

OFF TOM’S LOOK, WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE J

INT. RIZZO KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (DAY 4)
(Tom, Cindy, Stan, Barb, Eddie, Jessie, Mack)

AFTER WORK, TOM ENTERS INTO THE KITCHEN, HOLDING A BOX OF MICROWAVE POPCORN. HE SEEMS KINDA DESPERATE.

TOM

(CALLS OUT) Hey everybody, I'm home! I got popcorn! Yup, we're gonna eat popcorn and start blowing on bellies -- that's what we're gonna do now, it's gonna be awesome.

HE PUTS THE POPCORN IN THE MICROWAVE, TURNS IT ON, THEN HEADS INTO THE LIVING ROOM. STAN AND BARB ARE JUST SITTING THERE ON THE COUCH. TOM STOPS SHORT. CINDY APPROACHES AND QUIETLY SAYS THROUGH A TIGHT SMILE...

CINDY

Hi, Tom. Your parents said that when you take over the diner, they're gonna officially retire. Apparently, in our living room.

STAN

Hey -- I upgraded you to the premium cable channels. Your bill's gonna blow up in about a month.

TOM BLINKS. JESSIE ENTERS, MAD, AND SPOTS TOM.

JESSIE

Thanks a lot, Dad. I got a zero on my homework and had to miss recess so my teacher could show me how to do it!

CINDY

(RE: HER ARM) Yeah, also -- thanks for this bite mark.

(MORE)

CINDY (CONT'D)

Now that Mack thinks he can have a fit and get out of kindergarten, drop-off was a nightmare. He bit me. One of his baby teeth came out in my arm. It's the grossest thing that's ever happened to me.

AT THAT MOMENT, EDDIE STORMS DOWNSTAIRS, CARRYING A HUGE PILE OF SPORTS TROPHIES.

EDDIE

I'd like you all to know I'm officially quitting basketball. Maybe you can give these to another kid whose heart hasn't been ripped out.

EDDIE DROPS THE TROPHIES AT TOM'S FEET AND GOES BACK UPSTAIRS. THE FAMILY COMPLAINTS ARE PILING UP ON TOM, AND HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S STARTING TO LOSE IT.

STAN

What was that about?

CINDY

(RE: TOM) This guy here told Eddie he's never gonna be on the Knicks.

STAN

You're a one man wrecking crew, aren't you, Meatball? Having you back home has been a real treat for all of us.

CINDY

And guess what? He snores now.

TOM

(FINALLY SNAPPING) Okay, everybody, I get it!

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

I came home and I screwed things up! But I'm here now, so you're all gonna have to get used to it. Yeah, I fell for Mack's cuteness at drop-off, and his tears, and snot. But it's gonna happen again. Because he's adorable, and I'm a very weak man. And Jessie, I think it's <u>good</u> that your teacher is the one teaching you math. Because I'm not your "math guy." Right now, I'm thinking seven times eight -- I got nothing. All I know is, it's around a hundred. And with Eddie, I was just trying to teach him that in basketball you have to develop some actual skills besides wearing a Knicks jersey and saying "yo" a lot. And Dad, avocados aren't crazy. I might even serve smoothies! That's blended fruit, so deal with it! You're <u>all</u> gonna have to deal with it. Maybe I am a wrecking ball. But I'm blowing someone's belly, and I'm blowing it now! And if one of you doesn't get over here, I'm blowing the turtle!

CINDY

(QUIETLY) Is something burning?

TOM

My popcorn!

TOM LEAPS INTO THE KITCHEN AND RETURNS WITH A BURNT, SMOKING POPCORN BAG. HE TEARS IT OPEN, BECOMING EVEN MORE UNHINGED.

TOM (CONT'D)

This whole thing is a mess. (SHOVES BURNT POPCORN IN HIS MOUTH) But it's our mess, now. 'Cause I'm not going anywhere. And we're gonna be close. And I'm eating popcorn...that is too hot to be in my mouth!

THE FAMILY JUST STARES IN STUNNED SILENCE. TOM'S A BIT EXHAUSTED FROM THIS OUTBURST. FINALLY, STAN STANDS UP.

STAN

(EXHALES) Well, I think I speak for the entire family when I say...you're not one to talk about basketball skills. You were no superstar yourself.

TOM

(BEAT) That's what you took from this?

STAN

Yeah. You were a big round kid -- the only thing you were any good at was planting yourself in the lane and taking a charge. Why do you think I call you Meatball?

TOM CONSIDERS, THEN HIS EYES GROW WIDE AS HE GETS AN IDEA.

TOM

Don't make any plans tomorrow -- we're gonna watch my son play basketball!

TOM RUNS UPSTAIRS.

CUT TO:

SCENE K

INT. EDDIE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (DAY 4)
(Tom, Eddie)

EVERY SINGLE THING HAS A KNICKS LOGO ON IT. TOM RAPS ON THE DOOR AND ENTERS. EDDIE'S LYING ON HIS BED AND LOOKS UP.

TOM

Hey, bud. Look, I'm sorry I hurt your feelings before, but you can't quit.

EDDIE

What's the point? I suck and I'm never gonna be on the Knicks.

TOM

Sure, you may not have "skills" in the traditional sense. But I'll tell you what you do have -- the intangibles. You're a great kid. You got heart. You're just missing one thing.

EDDIE

Neck tattoos?

TOM

No -- a signature move. Something you can do that no one else can.

EDDIE

I can eat a whole frozen pizza by myself.

TOM

Good. But I got a better idea.

CUT TO:

SCENE L

INT. SCHOOL GYM - DAY (DAY 5)
(Tom, Cindy, Stan, Barb, Eddie, Jessie, Mack, Coach, Ref, Extras)

TOM AND FAMILY ARE IN THE STANDS, WATCHING EDDIE'S GAME. EDDIE IS SITTING AT THE END OF THE BENCH, SWEATS STILL ON.

TOM

Okay, ten seconds left, we're down by twenty-seven. We got this.

CINDY

Are they ever gonna let Eddie play?

COACH

Rizzo, you're in!

EDDIE WHIPS OFF HIS SNAP-ON SWEATS. THE OTHER TEAM IN-BOUNDS THE BALL. A FAST, TALL PLAYER DRIVES HARD TOWARDS THE BASKET. EDDIE RUNS INTO THE LANE, PLANTS HIS FEET HARD, CLOSES HIS EYES, AND BRACES HIMSELF FOR IMPACT.

TOM

Watch this.

THE PLAYER FROM THE OTHER TEAM SLAMS INTO EDDIE, WHO FLIES BACKWARDS AND GOES DOWN HARD.

REF

Charging! (POINTS THE OTHER DIRECTION) Red ball!

TOM, CINDY, AND THE REST OF THE FAMILY CHEER.

STAN

(TO TOM) Son of a bitch, Meatball. You taught him your move.

EDDIE, FLAT ON THE GROUND, MANAGES A DAZED THUMBS UP, AND WE...

CUT TO:

SCENE M

INT. GALAXY DINER - NIGHT (DAY 5)
(Tom, Cindy, Stan, Barb, Burnsy, Eddie, Jessie, Mack, Extras)

THE WHOLE FAMILY -- KIDS, PARENTS, GRANDPARENTS, AND BURNSY -- SITS AROUND A BIG TABLE. IT'S BOISTEROUS, STUFF IS SPILLING.

TOM

Little toast to Eddie! Great game.

EDDIE

(BACK TO COCKY) Yeah, I think I just might make it to the Knicks after all.

TOM

(BEAT, WEARY) Okay.

BARB

Tommy, your father has something to ask you. It isn't easy for him. He's not very good with the asking, he's more good with the telling. Go ahead.

STAN

Look...we're not ready to leave the diner. The business is all yours, we've saved plenty of money. It's just...your mother and I have been working together and arguing and wiping up gravy here for forty years. (TAKES BARB'S HAND) It's the best Stan and Barb we know how to be.

TOM

(TOUCHED) Well, of course you can come back. Do you think you can manage to be here and let me take the lead?

STAN

Absolutely. It'll be fun, the three of us working together. And you will be completely in charge when we die.

TOM

Wait, when you die?

STAN

That's right. (THEN, HAPPILY TO GROUP) Hey, pass me those mozzarella sticks, they look lonely over there.

TOM SHAKES THIS OFF, THEN LOOKS AROUND AT HIS FAMILY GATHERED HERE, JUST AS HE IMAGINED.

CINDY

So is this where you bless us with some of your ancient wisdom?

TOM

You mock, but I got some great stuff. (TO KIDS) Fatherly wisdom coming atcha! (HE'S GOT NOTHING, THEN FINALLY) Did I ever tell you guys that Mom and I met right here at the diner?

EDDIE

Please god not again.

TOM

It was the summer after college, I'm back home, waiting tables here. And this very sophisticated New York City girl, lost in New Jersey, walks in to ask for directions. It's your mother.

EDDIE

We know. We so know.

TOM

She sits right at that table. I turn to Grandpa and say, "I'm gonna marry her."

STAN

He actually said, "That chick has amazing cans."

CINDY

Really? Right in front of the kids?

TOM

Anyway, I went over, poured her a cup of coffee, and she never left.

CINDY

I left two minutes later.

TOM

Okay, true. But I gave her wrong directions on purpose. She came back. And we fell in love.

CINDY

Yeah, we did.

TOM

And she never wanted to go back to the city again. Because this is home. So I guess my wisdom is...there's no place like home.

A BEAT OF SILENCE.

CINDY

You do realize that's not your wisdom.

STAN

Yeah, good one, Dorothy.

THE GROUP GOES BACK TO TALKING. EDDIE SCOOPS SOME KETCHUP ONTO A FRENCH FRY AND THREATENS TO SMEAR IT ON JESSIE. STAN AND BARB START BICKERING ABOUT SOMETHING. MACK CIRCLES THE TABLE LIKE AN AIRPLANE. IT'S A MESS -- AND TOM'S LOVING IT. TOM'S CELL PHONE, ON THE TABLE, RINGS. HE DOESN'T NOTICE, BURNSY DOES.

BURNSY

(RE: PHONE) Tom, it says "Manny."

Isn't that your old boss?

TOM

Yeah. That's alright. Let it ring.

TOM GIVES CINDY A KISS. BURNSY JUST SHAKES HIS HEAD.

BURNSY

You were Hertz Gold, man.

WE CUT OUTSIDE, AND SEE THE CELEBRATION CONTINUE THROUGH THE WINDOW. MUSIC, MAYBE SINATRA, COMES UP BIG, AND WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. TOM AND CINDY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT (DAY 5)
(Tom, Cindy)

CINDY'S IN BED, EATING CHOCOLATE. TOM CLIMBS IN NEXT TO HER.

CINDY

(OFFERING IT UP) Bunny?

TOM

(TAKES A BITE) You know, if I was on the road right now, we'd probably be texting each other cute, sexy messages, instead of lying here in sweatpants eating six month-old candy.

CINDY THINKS FOR A BEAT, THEN GRABS HER PHONE FROM HER NIGHT STAND, AND TYPES SOMETHING. HIS PHONE DINGS. HE GRABS IT AND READS THE TEXT THAT JUST CAME IN.

TOM (CONT'D)

Well, that's inappropriate.

HE TYPES SOMETHING BACK. HER PHONE DINGS. THEY GO BACK AND FORTH A FEW TIMES. TOM READS A PARTICULARLY PROVOCATIVE MESSAGE, THEN PUTS HIS PHONE UNDER THE COVERS, SNAPS A PRIVATE PICTURE, AND SENDS IT. IT DINGS ON HER PHONE.

CINDY

(RE: PICTURE, CONFUSED) Wow.

TOM

(LOOKS AT HER PHONE, THEN) Oh, that's not me, that's the bunny.

THEY START MAKING OUT, AS WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW