

Knock it Off, I Love You, a one-man show

By Jake Alexander

(Lights up. Any stage. A microphone. Jake stands there.)

JAKE

I know what you're thinking. Most of you saw me on the stage and thought "oh, no". Right? "Oh, no. Here he comes." This is something I learned from my father: that you can size up a person immediately after seeing them once. And as a result, you can tell what a person is thinking. Some of the things I've learned from my father are wrong. (A beat.) So the lights came up, you saw me on stage, and you said to yourself "oh no." Or maybe it was "oh no. he's got visual aids." Because that's worse, right? A white man, alone on a stage, with visual aids? Here comes the man-splaining. But either way, you said "oh no. Something is happening".

Okay. Well. Let's get started.

I wanted to share a story about my father. Not too long ago, my father and I weren't speaking for two months. Now, for comparison's sake, I speak to my father at least once a week. That's where we started. It wasn't always that way. Growing up, my father and I had a strained relationship. It wasn't always good. It wasn't always bad. I'll talk more about that later. He's the type of Dad that relates to his kids through bad jokes, surface-level conversation, basic activities. I know that two months doesn't seem like a long time. Some people never speak to their dads. Some people have never had the opportunity to speak to their fathers. Some people don't know their dads, and so the idea of speaking to them is like, ten levels away. But think about it this way: in the first two months that your mother was carrying you in the womb, you grew eyes, ears, a nose, mouth, and your lungs. In two months, you learn to breathe, see, and hear. Two months is enough time for growth. This is interesting: there was a recent survey of people who had just experienced breakups and they were asked when it's appropriate after a breakup to start sleeping with someone new. The average answer was two months. Two months is enough time for loss, as well.

So how do we get to two months of not speaking? To get there, you need to know how my father has taught me. Parents have different ways of passing along life lessons to their kids, right? My father has this habit of delivering these lessons, delivering truths, when you don't expect them. James Madison said "I do my best thinking laying down." Bud Alexander is the same way. It's usually when he's sitting or lying down, and you don't even know that he knows you're in the room. And it'll come out of nowhere. You could be watching TV, something about bigfoot on the Discovery Channel, and he'll say something like "I don't know if we're meant to know what's beyond this life". Whoa! Usually it's when he's in bed, and you walk by his bedroom door and he calls out to you. You don't even realize he's awake. The TV is on, he's got about four different cats sleeping on him. And he'll call out to you. You'll step into this room, my father shrouded in darkness like an ancient mage you're not supposed to look directly in the eyes, and he'll deliver a lesson so fast it'll give whiplash. And you better be ready to catch it. My father has taught me so many things.

You probably need some context: My father and I grew up in the same small town in south-eastern Connecticut called Uncasville. You may have heard of it. In college it was a joke that I was “the pride of Uncasville”. And that’s funny because: what’s there to be proud of in Uncasville? And there’s a simple answer! Who here has heard of the Mohegan Sun Casino? (*audience interaction, can be as long as Jake would like*) The Mohegan Sun Casino is in my backyard. That’s what we have to be proud of. Uncasville is, of course, located on a Native American Reservation, the Mohegan Reservation, which was inhabited by the Pequot Tribe, and is named for Chief Uncas who served as the head of tribe starting in 1637, which I never learned in school. What I learned was they helped the white settlers and fought against the British alongside those settlers in King Phillip’s war. They left out the smallpox. And the fact that those settlers turned on Uncas and eventually executed him. Uncasville is a part of the larger township of Montville, Connecticut which I’m sure you also haven’t heard of. There’s also a Montville, New Jersey, and if you google “Montville-comma” it takes eight entries until you get to Montville, Connecticut. Of the 2 Montvilles in the United States, Montville, Connecticut isn’t even in the top seven. The last entry before you get to “Montville, CT” is “Is Montville, New Jersey a good place to live”, and in that article, I’m not kidding, someone commented “it’s better than Montville, CT”, which assumes 1. that there is at least one person in the country who has lived in both places, and 2. that this one person lived in both places for long enough to develop a strong opinion about both places, and rank them online. And Montville, Connecticut lost. That’s nothing to be proud of.

What’s most interesting about Uncasville, and the larger township of Montville, CT, is that it desperately wants to be in the South. Everyone loves country music and the show “Yellowstone”. (A beat.) What if that was all I said? No: Montville tries hard and it tries in a couple different ways. Montville is, overwhelmingly, conservative. The majority has voted for republicans since Bill Clinton. Clinton really let them down. It’s overwhelmingly white. Socio-economically, it’s not great. The economy is built on a casino, so, there ya go. A majority of the citizens are gun-owners, and the 2nd amendment was listed within the top five issues of concern while citizens were voting in the last election. For all those times they have stop the looters and rioters from attacking the two post offices. Or if that pack of white-tail deer ever get out of hand on route 32.

Montvillians are incredibly loyal people. They love their town. They feel they have a lot to be proud of. For instance, they’re proud of the football team that went 5-9 last season and had a 36% winning rate. They love local sports. If they ever decide to reboot Friday Night Lights, Montville CT would be an excellent choice of locale; except this show would just be about a small town that loves watching “Friday Night Lights”.

My father grew up in Montville so he’s some of the things I just listed.

He likes local sports. He’s a big fan of the UConn women’s basketball team which is actually a requirement to living in CT. You physically can’t move there until you claim allegiance to Geno Auriemma.

He is a conservative. He votes Republican. He’s not a gun-owner, but he’s friends with gun owners. He believes in personal freedoms that Americans all have a right to, and at times he has complained about the deer population in south-eastern CT.

He's worked hard all his life, mostly in manual labor. Since the age of 14 my father has worked with his hands. Here's a fun fact: my father is a chimney sweep. That sounds made up, but it 100% true. Here's one of my favorite photos of my father (*shows photo of Bud on a rooftop*) He understands masonry and brick work, and knows none of the words to Chim-Chimery.

He's proud of the schools that taught and nurtured his three kids. Montville has these signs when you enter the town that say "Montville CT: We're proud of our Schools", which can be called into question considering the education budget has been slashed four times in the last seven years. My father grew up in this school system, had some of the same teachers and administrators, got in trouble in some of the same classrooms. His education was my education for awhile until it wasn't.

In a lot of ways, my father and I were on the same track for awhile until we weren't, and it's not just about going to some of the same schools. You can look at my early life and my father's early life and see they were similar. We even looked similar until we didn't. Here's a photo from highschool- this is my junior year. (*shows Jake's school photo from highschool*). And here is a photo of my father at the same age (*shows photo of Bud in front of the Herb's truck*). The only difference, truly, is the mutton chops. And I mean that! In this photo my father is standing in front of a truck from a local Montville Diner/Deli called "Herb's Country Deli and Restaurant". My father worked here in highschool, and so did I. The two other people in this photo of my father, I also worked with. I feel like most people look like their parents in high school. So to prove that's not the case: here's a photo of me from the last four years. (*Shows photo of Lilo on Jake's shoulder*) If you thought I was going to do this whole show without showing a photo of my cat, you're a fool. Now, here's a photo of my father with *his* furry friend (*shows photo of bud with Bandit on his shoulder*). This is a raccoon my father raised from a baby, named Bandit. Bandit used to help my father clean chimneys. My father once told me, and I don't know if there's any truth to this, that Bandit would carry tools up to my father. Bandit didn't understand tools or masonry, *but* knew all the words to Chim-Chim-ery. My cat Lilo knows that if she can't find me one of room, she should yell until I call out to her.

But there's a definitive split that happens in our two paths, when we start to diverge from one another. And I think it's because of some of these differences that my father and I have sometimes had a tumultuous relationship.

So when does this split happen? The truth of it is I have no fucking clue. There is no one thing I can point that starts the divergence in our paths. But here's what I know: My father didn't go to college; I did. My father made a family in the same place he grew up in; I'm making mine in New York City. My father lives ten minutes away from his childhood home; I live two hours from mine. I never wanted what my father wanted. And for awhile I thought my father didn't make these decisions, but rather that his life unfolded this way because he didn't try to be anything other than what he always was. So I always tried.

(A beat.)

There are lots of little moments where we start to drift apart, and here's one: one time my father was picking me up from my first job at a local convenience store and deli. It was Montville's version of a family bodega, the name of which I won't tell you because they're well-connected and I do think there is a Montville Mafia comprised of conservatives and gun-owners and the football team that went 5-9. I worked at this place before it was legal because I never learned about child labor laws, and I was told my little hands were the perfect size for restocking cartons of cigarettes. Really, I went to work early because of something I learned from my father: that if you have put in a day of work, you have earned the right to do whatever you want. And that if you haven't worked at all, you have earned nothing, especially not a vacation. My father would come home from work doing manual labor in the summertime, and he'd come through the door and look around at my sisters and I, sitting in the AC and watching Friends on the DVD player, comfortable and not hot, and he'd always say "what did you do today?" And it terrified us! Because if your answer was "nothing", that was a problem. Because he'd give you something to do. See, he had just worked all day, and was able to do whatever he wanted, which was to sit on the couch and go to bed at 6PM. But his kids, on the other hand, had spend all day on the couch doing whatever they wanted, and hadn't earned it. He thought we should've done something, anything. Something productive. My father is all about productivity. What was worse was if you were supposed to do something and didn't. Like if you hadn't thawed the chicken for dinner like you were asked, or vacuumed. Because if he learned you hadn't done something you were supposed to do, and instead did nothing, you better start running. My dad would see our doing nothing, and he'd say "knock it off." My father loved to say "knock it off". This is phrase that can be used in a lot of different ways, and it worked. We would, indeed, knock-it-off. Here, it meant "go do something other than nothing". Knock it off, because you're smarter than that. Knock It Off: go be productive. And pick up some sticks while you're at it.

In the early months of being a child laborer, I learned something huge from this job. And it's this: sandwiches taste better when they are made for you by someone else. This is true, this is an actual fact. Here's a tweet I found two months ago, when I was preparing for this show. (*show pictures of UberFacts Tweet from 4/14/22*) So I went to work early because: One of the perks was that we, all the child laborers, could get a sandwich after every shift. Of course, sandwiches had been made for me before, as a child. But I didn't appreciate what I was getting. My mother deserves a medal of honor for that sandwiches that she made for me. My grandmother deserves a Nobel peace prize for always having sandwich-fixins' in the fridge. I think the height of culinary culture is re-learning that you can just order sandwiches made by someone other than you. I've never looked back once I re-saw the light. I will never make another sandwich for myself. If and when I have kids, I'll be making them their sandwiches and I will tell them "this is the height of culinary culture. Never make yourself a sandwich. That's wrong." I will pass down this knowledge.

So, my father was tasked this day to pick me up after my shift, and I've worked all day and I've earned my freedom and also I've got this sandwich. And he says "what did you do today" and I had an answer! And I start unwrapping this sandwich as we get onto the highway. Montville, amazingly, has two post offices, but about 30 highways. Because we'd love for you to visit Cohegan Rock, but you can also get out if you want. On any of our 30 highways. And my father sees this sandwich, and he says "gimme a bite". Now: I've worked all day, so I can do whatever I want. I wasn't allowed to be paid on the books, but I'm allowed to say "this is my sandwich, I've

earned this sandwich, and you will not get a bite of this sandwich.” But I don’t yet know that I’m not allowed to say “no” to my father. And to deny this man a bite of my sandwich was a cardinal sin. It was the worst thing I could’ve done.

So my father says “That looks like a good sandwich, gimme a bite”. And I say “no”, and he says “knock it off, give me a bite.” And I then I take it way too far and yell “you didn’t do anything today”!

I should break down why this escalated so quickly My father and I used to get into these fights. And they’re not necessarily about anything huge, like the bite of a sandwich, but they get blown up so that they’re huge. I suppose that’s just the way my family fights. We learned pretty early on that to win a fight, you had to fight dirty. It went like this: Person A says Thing A, which was usually just an opinion about something Person B had done. Then, Person B had to say Thing B, which was devastating and personal and not at all related to Thing A. This is now what the fight was about. Thing B is now the conflict, so Person A has to raise the stakes by saying another opinion which is an attack on Person B’s character, again not at all related to Thing A, which is how we got here. Usually there’s also Person C saying Thing C, which was whether they agreed with Thing B or not. That can either help Person A or help Person B. So now the argument is Thing B said by Person B about Person A, supported or refuted by Thing C, and not at all related to Thing A, the reason we were fighting in the first place.

So today, the fight is with my father, Person A, and me, Person B. “That looks like a good sandwich, gimme a bite?” which is Thing A. And I say “no”, and he says “knock it off, give me a bite.” And I then retaliate with “you didn’t do anything today”, Thing B, which is not related to Thing A. But I’ve made it personal, I’ve landed the perfect zinger. The thing he’s been throwing at me for years, I’ve used to perfection! So now the argument is really about whether my father did anything today of meaning. And my father raises the stakes even further to say “I brought you into this world and I can take you out of it”, which is now Opinion A. Now my dad does something that surprises me: he pulls over the truck. We are on one of the 30 highways, heading home from my illegal job, cars zipping past us at 70mph, and my father and I are arguing so much that he has to stop driving. He has decided that in order to win this argument, he must pull over the car. He wants the bite of this sandwich, which I believe he does not deserve, and he believes he has earned just because he had sex with my mother approximately fourteen years ago. It’s a battle for the ages. And he will not start driving, he will not take us home, until he has received a bite of this sandwich. So what do you do when the world’s most stubborn man and the child he raised to be just a stubborn are caught in this stalemate? You, the child, give him, the man, a bite of the sandwich.

My father isn’t always so stubborn, particularly not about a sandwich. He’ll eat anything, really. But his politics have been immovable of late. He’s always asking what’s going on with NY politics as if I’m in charge. He loves to ask when NY is going to figure it’s shit out, as if I have any say in the matter. “When is de Blasio going to get that budget worked out?”, and all I can say is “I woke up at noon today, I’m not sure.” My father is aware Bill deBlasio is no longer mayor of NYC, but that doesn’t matter. And in the summer of 2020, when the protests were going on, he was equally miffed with the state of NY.

I believe racism is structural and institutional. I believe we can't fix the problems unless we tear it all down and start over. We should defund the police. We should have more community resources. I yell ACAB. But I didn't learn about any of this in school, instead we watched "Roots" three times in the four years of high school. I didn't go to any protests in 2020. I remember having a conversation with a friend, a woman of color, who told me "black men should not be leading these protests. It should be the white men." And she's right. We should be putting ourselves in the line of fire, in front of the cops, to be hit and tear gassed and taken away in vans. To be corralled onto bridges and trapped. But I didn't attend any protests because of the pandemic, and the crowds, and the curfew, but more importantly, because I was scared. I was scared of what might happen. And I'll own that and admit that. It was wrong.

I don't go to the protests, but one of things I do instead is I download this app that let's you listen to police scanners in real time. And I help track my friends who are protesting on their phones and let them know where arrests are being made, if any situations are getting out of hand, if they should get off the streets. And I feel this a good use of my time. And my mother, who is worried about NY and what's going on and whether I am safe, calls me one day and asks if I'm protesting, and she puts me on speaker phone, but I don't know this. First mistake. So: I tell my mother what I've been doing. And I don't know that my father is there, and is listening. It's never a good thing when you don't know where your father is. We should be tracking our fathers at all times. There should be an app for that. We should know their whereabouts always.

Cut to a week later: I haven't heard from my father in awhile. He hasn't called, hasn't answered any of my calls. Both of my sisters have heard from him, know his whereabouts, but I do not. And it's because I did something wrong. My father not talking to me is the silent version "what did you do today?" And the answer was "actively disrespecting and fighting against the work of the public safety officials" which was worse than "nothing". It was worse than having the AC blasting and watching Friends on the DVD player. So my father won't return my calls, and so I have to go to the expert on my father which is my mother. And I say "Mom, what's going on with Dad? Is he mad at me?" And if you're asking, then the answer is yes. And she says "yes" and I say "why?" which if you're asking it's because you did or didn't do something. And she says "it's about the police scanner". She tells me he overheard what my girlfriend and I were doing, and didn't like it because he supports law enforcement. He thinks they are here to protect and serve and any protest against that is ridiculous. So I call my father and leave a message to say "don't be mad at me for this" and he calls me back. And that's when he says "knock it off, the police are here to protect you". Before, "knock it off" meant "do something, you've been doing nothing", and now it meant "do something, but not like that."

But this isn't when my father doesn't talk to me for two months. Amazingly, this disagreement ends after that phone call.

What this all stems from, as I understand it now, is my father's strange ways of saying "I Love You". My father loves his children, his wife, his life deeply. He cares so much, he just doesn't say so outright. He worries so much, but he doesn't say so outright. And that's because he doesn't know how to say so outright. He doesn't know how to express any of that. But I didn't know this; not when he pulled over the car or when he came home from work asking about what we did that day or when he was up on the roofs cleaning chimneys as a side job to support his

loved ones. It's not until I saw how far apart my father and I are that I understood he just wanted to say "I Love You". He just doesn't always say those words.

My father didn't come from nowhere. He's a product of his environment. He's a child of divorce. His parents split up when he was a senior in high school. Which back then, a "child of divorce" meant "a child forced to choose sides". When his mother and father got divorced, he picked his mother's side. He has an older sister, who ultimately chose his father, and a younger brother, who didn't have a choice at all and had to stay with their mother. My father stood by his mother, severed ties with his father, who, similarly, he had a tumultuous relationship with. It wasn't over sandwiches, or anything like that. My grandfather was an alcoholic and abusive and moved out after the divorce. And for a few years my father supported my grandmother, stood by her in every way he could've. That's what he does. He's loyal. Not only to Geno Auriemma. My father has taught me to be loyal, even if it's not for the right reasons.

(A beat.)

The fight about the police scanner is **not** what my father and I don't speak about for two months, because we've gotten better at dealing with our conflicts. Which is to say, I moved away and it's easier to avoid confrontation with distance than pull over the truck to the side of the highway. If I'm home for a short visit and we have a fight, it's easier to just give him the bite of the sandwich because I'll be gone soon anyways.

The fight is because my father and I were as far apart as we have ever been. I wasn't the younger version of him he saw anymore. I was someone new. I was someone new far away.

Around the same time as the protests, I'm unemployed, and my father is disappointed by this fact. Because it's not just that the pandemic has put me out of work, but I'm actively seeking better employment. I don't want to go back to work at the place I was working at because I feel it would put me in danger, because I want something else. I've learned a new lesson, but this time not from my father: I've learned that my worth is not tied to having a job like it always has been. I've always had a job, my sisters have always had jobs, my parents have always had jobs. To not have a job is to be sitting on the couch in the AC watching Friends on the DVD player. And while I worried about what I'd do or how I'd survive, I had a new understanding that I didn't need to justify it. I wanted something more.

My father believes in working for a living. He's a capitalist, but I didn't learn this word in school, but I was taught that there are two types of people in our society: those with jobs, and communists. But I really didn't know how much my father's definition of worth was tied to employment until this moment.

My father is old fashioned, he like phrases like "pound the pavement". Because he thinks that the world still runs like that. He thinks I should be running towards any job available, as if I'm going to run onto a construction site and say "gimme a job!" and they'll simply give me one because I got there first. As if it doesn't matter what qualifications I have or my past employment experience. He's also a fan of the phrase "knocking on doors", like any business will hire someone who knocks on their doors and doesn't apply online. The world of the internet has no

doors, but my father doesn't understand that. And our weekly phone calls start to include things like "are you out there pounding the pavement?" or "Out looking for work?" And I'm realizing that it's really damaging to me. I learn that it's *been* really damaging to me, this idea that I didn't matter unless I did something with my days. I was diagnosed with Generalized Anxiety Disorder when I was in college- I've suffered from panic attacks, bouts of anxiety, loss of memory, countless other symptoms, including needing to tell my story in public. But it's the first time I've ever said anything like this to my father: I ask him to stop asking me if I'm out "pounding the pavement". Because he wasn't acting like I expected a parent to act: supportive, loving, caring. I'm sending out resume every day. I apply for jobs, and have virtual interviews, and pray for employment, and all because I feel guilty. My father makes me feel guilty about it all.

This argument lasts a week. I ask him to stop using these phrases, I tell him they're bad for my mental health. That's Thing A in this argument. And my father, in true fashion, raises the stakes of the conflict. He says Thing B, he says: "you're too sensitive." Now, I've just told him, in a sense, that I *am* sensitive about this topic. So, he's not wrong. And I come back with "it feels like I don't matter to you unless I have a job", which is Opinion A. And my father says "you're not doing anything!". (A beat). He basically confirms my worst fear. I don't matter. And it goes on like this for a few days: he calls, using the phrase "pounding the pavement", and I keep reiterating my argument "just tell me I'd matter without a job" and he keeps saying "why don't you find work? Just find work!". And eventually I can't take it anymore and I go the expert on my father, my mother, and I ask her to intervene. She does, but it makes it worse. My father calls me the next day and says "you're so sensitive, you're running and crying to your mother". And I hang up the phone on him. We don't talk the next day. And I'm talking to my sister, Person C, and they tell me Thing C: My father believes I'm wasting my education. And this seems contradictory to me. He wants me to be using my education to it's fullest, but he also wants me to take any job I find. And I'm furious. I can't believe it. So I call him immediately and I say the most devastating thing I've ever said to my father: "You didn't even go to college, what would you know?!" And my father hangs up the phone. (A beat.) This time I made the argument about something else. This time I pulled over the truck. This time I tell him to fucking KNOCK IT OFF. Be a dad who doesn't need their son to be doing anything. Just be a fucking dad. (A beat). We're as far apart as we have ever been. So much so I don't even feel like his son.

When does the split happen? I don't know. I don't know that we're meant to know. It's that fucked thing that flew around the internet for awhile a few years back- (*show tweet that says "one day our parents put us down and never picked us back up"*). I don't think we are meant to know when we are growing up. It just happens.

This time I actually do know what you're thinking: how can a parent not speak to their child over something like this? How can a parent seemingly abandon the child during a period of anxiety, of stress, of frayed mental health?

(A beat.)

My father surprises me often. When I was leaving that job at the local convenience store/deli with amazing sandwiches that they make for you, I was having a hard time with the owners

because of a disagreement. And the owner made me cry one day. He really laid into me, and I had never had anyone who wasn't related to me tell me I disappointed them. And my father picks me up from my shift that day, and I don't have a sandwich because I can't process these new emotions, and he sees I've been crying and he goes back into the business to tell this owner not to speak to me that way. He stands up for me even though it means no more sandwiches for him and even though he's not at all involved in the conflict. It doesn't affect him. But it's his kid, and he loves his kid. My father has done this countless times, even when he doesn't have to. Telling *other* people to knock it off is another way of saying I Love You to your family.

But we aren't speaking for those two months. Two months has gone by. I've grown lungs, and eyes, and ears; I can see and breathe and I'm getting angrier and angrier with my father with each passing day.

It's not the first time we haven't spoken for a little while. It's the longest amount of time. The problem with stubbornness is that it usually works. This time it's different. I'm more skilled at being uncomfortable, because I've taken the NYC subway for the last six years. I'm good at sitting in discomfort. I am my father in more ways than I wish I was, and in some ways I want to be more like him. In this case I will win. And it's in this moment, after I've written about my relationship with my father, after I've asked him to not say "pounding the pavement" and "knock on doors", that all I want is for my father to be something he can't be. I want him to acknowledge that I would've deserved the sandwich even if I didn't work before. I want him to say that the sandwich was earned, no matter what I did all day. No matter if my answer to the question was "nothing."

And, it happens. But not like that.

He calls. We say I love you. I ask him what he did that day. He says "knock it off".

A few weeks later he starts asking if I'm out "pounding the pavement" again. But this time I tell him I'm not, and it doesn't seem to matter. We've knocked it off. We've surprised each other. And that's how we move on. That's how we go back to what it was before. We're a little closer than we were. We might not be back on the same path as we were before.

(A long beat.)

The ending of the story I was telling you before: After my grandparent's divorce, and my father choosing his mother's side, she then started dating another guy, someone who she would eventually marry. So, my father went over to her house one day, the house he grew up in. And there was a "sold" sign on the front lawn. And she was gone; she had moved to Florida, seemingly over night. And this was how he, my twenty-year old father, was finding out. That the person who raised him, the person he chose, had left him behind.

So my father's ability to push away his loved ones doesn't come from no where. My father's ability to distance himself from his kids, even when he may not want to, is because he's a product of his environment. My father didn't know he was growing up until after it had already happened. (A beat.) I don't have a relationship with my grandmother who moved to Florida. I've

never met my uncle, my father's younger brother. I loved my grandfather, my father's father, who he reconnected with after his mother left him in Montville. Their relationship informed my relationship with my father. It's complicated. It's difficult. And I wouldn't trade it for anything else.

I was home for the holidays this past year and my father told me that his younger brother was in the hospital. His mother had called him to tell him the news. My father doesn't take the call, deletes the message. But he calls me into his room that night when I think he's already asleep. This night he says "promise me you'll never lose touch with your sisters". I tell him I won't. He says "I promise I won't ever lose touch with you". And I say "okay. Good." And that's the end of it. Truism delivered. Be on your way. Whiplash and all.

See, it wasn't that he wasn't saying "I love you". It was that I didn't see *all* the ways he was saying it. He hasn't let a week go by where he doesn't call to ask me what I did that day. My father didn't come from nowhere. I didn't come from nowhere, either.

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking "oh, no. It's over now, isn't it?" Well. Knock it off. Thanks very much for listening.

(End of show.)