

LOVE AND COMMUNICATION

by

James Christy

REPRESENTATION:

The Susan Gurman Agency, LLC  
1501 Broadway, 30th Floor, NY NY 10036-5601  
Tel: 212 749-4618 Fax: 212 864 5055

James Christy  
99 Leigh Ave.  
Princeton, NJ 08542  
(917) 604-2175  
Jchristy1515@yahoo.com

Copyright 2015

## **CHARACTERS**

MEGAN HOLDEN: Mid 30s. Caucasian.

ROB HOLDEN: Mid 30s, Megan's husband, Caucasian.

JULIA: Mid 30s, professional.

SILVERMAN: 40s, may be short.

REGINA: 30s/40s, Latino or African American. Also plays PARENT #1.

EPHRAIM: Early 20s. Also plays PARENT #2.

## **TIME/PLACE**

The present. A mid-sized town in New Jersey.

**ACT I****SCENE 1: LIVING ROOM - EVENING**

Megan sits at a child-sized table. She has a notebook, a stop-watch and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich cut up into small pieces. Stage left of the table there is a worn sofa.

The living room is connected to a small eat-in kitchen stage right that has a counter with three stools. On the counter is a tray of mail.

Megan is holding up an Elmo doll and looking out at the audience, speaking to her son Sammy, who's not seen.

NOTE: Sammy's location throughout the play should generally be indicated as in the direction of the audience, so he is not invisible in the playing space but usually off-stage. Exceptions noted.

MEGAN

Eyes. Where are Elmo's eyes?

(long beat)

Sam. Sammy. Look at me, where are Elmo's eyes? Sam. Can you point to Elmo's- Sammy, sit down sweetie--

She starts to get up, guiding him to sit, then stops and sits back down.

MEGAN

Good! Good sitting down. Okay, now point to Elmo's eyes..

She looks at the doll as she holds it out further in front of her now.

MEGAN

No, those are his knees honey. But good try. Eyes, you see?

She puts her finger on Elmo's eye.

She puts down the doll and makes a mark in her spiral notebook, which we see is filled with graphs. She looks up and smiles sympathetically.

MEGAN

Okay sweetie, almost done.

She takes out the stopwatch and pushes a button, then quickly puts it on the table. She moves through the following very quickly.

MEGAN

Do this.

(she touches her nose)

Good, do this.

(she claps her hand)

Alright, do this.

(she rubs her belly)

Okay, do this...Sammy. Sammy, go like mommy... Okay good. Now do this.

(she shakes her head)

Good boy! You want a sandwich?

(gesturing to plate)

"Yes, mommy."

(beat)

Come on, say "Yes." Good! Good, sweetie, now: "Mommy"... Sweetie, pay attention. Say "mommy..." Hands down. Hands down, sweetie. Okay? Hands down.

Megan grabs at her hair and bends over as if she's being pulled.

MEGAN

(sharply)

Ow, get off!

She shakes her hands free of her hair in a wrenching motion.

MEGAN

(stern)

No pulling!

(she recovers, holding her head)

You okay? I'm sorry sweetie but no pulling.

Megan brushes at her hair with her hands and shakes her head. The stopwatch makes a loud beeping noise, she turns it off.

MEGAN

Okay, break time, sweetie. You want to jump? Go jump.

Megan touches her hair as she watches Sammy go to a corner, apparently to jump on a trampoline.

Blackout.

## **SCENE 2: SPLIT SCENE: CONFERENCE ROOM/AUDITORIUM - DAY**

Julia, Executive Director of Turning Point, a high-end school for children with autism. She is speaking to a group of parents. We see three of the audience members, Rob, Parents #1 and #2, either on or off stage.

JULIA

There are only two types of therapies for children with autism. Applied Behavioral Analysis -- ABA -- and everything else. Gluten-free diets, fish oils, chelation: many of you are trying treatments that aren't science-based. I know you want results. But these things take time. And your child's time -- especially between 2 and 5 years old when the brain does so much of its development -- is something you can't waste.

Lights shift. We're in an auditorium.

Silverman, mid 40s, addresses a roomful of parents. Megan is in the audience.

SILVERMAN

How do you teach someone to play?

He picks out a woman in the audience and barks:

SILVERMAN

"You! play!"

(he pantomimes putting pieces  
in a puzzle)

"Enjoy placing this piece of hard board that's cut out into the shape  
of a horse into the slot where it clearly belongs! Take joy in this!"

(beat)

And, shockingly, it doesn't work. Sure, he might do it, he might even  
get better at it. But he doesn't *like* it. It's not fun.

(beat)

So what do you do? You put him to work. Since he doesn't know how to  
enjoy life we give him less opportunities to have fun. Because the  
experts say there's only one treatment. ABA. A lot of ABA.

He holds his hand out to Megan as if offering her  
a food item.

SILVERMAN

"Do what I say and you'll get something good."

He then takes his arm back, holding the food item  
away.

SILVERMAN

"Don't do what I say, you get nothing."

(he looks around)

Sound fun?

(he looks around)

Megan shakes her head. Silverman looks out to two or three  
audience members, including Megan.

SILVERMAN

I asked you a question, does that sound fun? That sound fun to you?

MEGAN

No.

SILVERMAN

No. Now imagine it for 30 to 40 hours a week. That's what the experts  
say he needs, right? So even after he's done at his ABA school he  
comes home and you have him match and point and repeat till he can  
hardly see straight.

Eventually you feel like a drill sergeant barking orders at a confused little soldier.

(beat)

So you've lost faith. And that's a good thing. Because ABA doesn't work. All that data, all those graphs and charts are not making your son any better.

Lights shift, back to Julia.

JULIA

(beat)

How many of you here are happy with your school's program?

She looks out at the audience, nodding.

JULIA

Right. This stuff isn't easy. It takes planning, training and money. At Turning Point, we develop a unique, science-based education plan for each child. That could mean sign language for non-verbal children, mobile devices with apps to help with speech and facial recognition, we'll use any behavioral intervention that has a scientific basis. We take data, see what works and adjust the plan as needed.

Lights shift. Back to Silverman.

SILVERMAN

So you turned from ABA to LAC -- we love abbreviations in this business. LAC is Learning Architect Consultants because we help parents build relationships.

(he smiles)

I used to ask parents what they want, what their goals are. I don't have to any more. College? A job? His own apartment?

He shakes his head, looking at a female audience member.

SILVERMAN

You know what it is? A hug. You want him to give you a hug. Not for a cracker, not because he's told, but because you're his mother and he feels like giving you a hug. Maybe you didn't know it yet but that's why you're here.

(back out to audience)

And guess what, when he learns the joy of that hug, that's when he'll be motivated to really learn. You see, he's not talking to you because he doesn't have anything to say.

(beat)

We'll change that. Together. The only thing you need, the demand on you, is belief. You need to believe that this will work for your child. If you have that expectation, you and your family will never look back.

Lights down on Silverman, focus back to Julia.

JULIA

Most of you know we don't have any openings for this fall. I still had today's open house because we want you to learn from us--

A PARENT calls out from the audience.

PARENT #1

Do you know when you might have an opening?

JULIA

I don't.

PARENT #2

And what's the tuition?

JULIA

The tuition is very high. But almost all of our students are sent to us from districts that support the placement financially.

PARENT #2

(interrupts around "support")

How much is it?

JULIA

92 thousand.

PARENT #1

Dollars?

JULIA

Yes, dollars.

PARENT #2

That's practically double what Harvard costs.

JULIA

At Harvard they'll put one graduate assistant in front of a class of 200 students. I know, I went there. We have one highly-skilled instructor for each child-

PARENT #1

And my kid has a teacher that doesn't even know how to say his name. How is this fair?

(not stopping for a response)

JULIA

(overlapping)

It's not.

PARENT #1

(overlapping)

I mean, this place would be perfect, really perfect for Jaron [juh-  
RON]. But you say there's no room to put him. I mean you tell me,  
Miss, what am I supposed to do?

JULIA

I'm sorry to say this but find a good attorney.

PARENT #2

That's just unconscionable. Her kid can't get a decent education if she can't pay for the right lawyer?

Rob stands, looks around at the audience.

ROB

I'm sorry, can you people quit whining and shut the fuck up?

(beat)

How is it her fault that you don't have the money to hire a lawyer?  
Explain that to me.

PARENT #1

I wasn't saying it was her fault. I'm just saying this isn't fair.

ROB

(more sympathetic)

It's not. I know that.

(beat, he turns to Julia)

Anyway, I just want you to know I appreciate what you're doing. What you've built here, your commitment to helping kids, all of it.

JULIA

Okay, um, at this point I invite you all to view the classrooms. You can watch from the one-way mirrors. Thank you all for coming.

The meeting breaks up. Rob walks from the audience and approaches Julia. He's holding a folder with a packet of information about Turning Point.

ROB

Hi. I'm, uh, sorry for the outburst.

JULIA

Don't worry about it.

ROB

I just -- I don't get the hostility.

JULIA

Comes with the territory.

ROB

It does? God. Well you handled it well. The people in our school system can be so condescending.

JULIA

They have tough jobs, I don't envy them.

ROB

I know. I just don't want one of them to have the last word about my son's education, you know?

JULIA

I don't blame you.

Beat.

ROB

So you went to Harvard?

JULIA

Undergrad. Got my Masters at Penn.

ROB

I got my MBA at Penn. When were you there?

JULIA

Graduated in 2001.

ROB

I was '02. We could know people in common.

JULIA

I doubt it. Grad Psych didn't mix much, especially with the Wharton crowd...

ROB

(smiling)

Right.

JULIA

So does your son have a diagnosis?

ROB

Yeah, from a neurologist. But we're actually interested in getting a psychological assessment too. You do those, right?

JULIA

Sometimes. Where are you?

ROB

Greenville.

JULIA

And he's in the system there?

ROB

(nods)

Hopefully not for long. So what's the process for assessments?

She smiles, gets out a business card.

JULIA

Send me an email with your information. I might be able to find some time later next week. Things get crazy for me when school starts.

He takes card.

ROB

Excellent, thank you.

(he holds out his hand)

I'm Rob.

JULIA

Julia.

They shake hands. Rob holds her hand a split second longer than necessary. Blackout.

**SCENE 3: ROB AND MEGAN'S HOUSE - DAY**

Rob and Megan in their kitchen. Megan puts on a pot of coffee, while looking at a baking tin with what looks like a deflated loaf of home-made bread.

Rob is crouching down holding a dustpan near the foot of the kitchen counter and looking at Sammy.

ROB

Sammy. Sammy, c'mon buddy, sweep. Sweep it in buddy.

He pantomimes sweeping into the dustpan.

ROB

You see? Try it buddy. No, Sammy you need to look.

(raising his voice slightly)

Look at what you're doing, hold it down here. No, all the way down at the bottom.

MEGAN

Don't talk so much.

ROB

What?

MEGAN

Just try to guide him without words. Let him try to work it out.

ROB

Oh, Jesus. We'd be here all night. Is that it, this LSD program--

MEGAN

(overlapping)

LAC, thank you.

ROB

(overlapping)

--it's a use-the-force kind of thing?

MEGAN

No, but it's not a ram-it-down-his-throat kind of thing either.

Rob shoves the dustpan aside as they watch Sammy run away to the trampoline.

ROB

That's what happens if you don't show him what to do. He just runs away and jumps on the goddam trampoline.

Rob goes to the notebook and makes notations on one of the pages in the book. Then goes to the kitchen counter and sorts the mail.

MEGAN

Just be thankful you have short hair.

ROB

What?

MEGAN

Nothing.

Megan again peers at the loaf of bread as she goes through Sammy's bookbag.

MEGAN

Can't get this goddam bread to rise.

ROB

Looks edible.

MEGAN

That's quite a high bar.

She opens a notebook in Sammy's bookbag.

MEGAN

Good one today.

(takes out a small notebook)

"Hi Megan! Worked on matching and word games today. Sammy's doing his best. He's such a beauty!"

ROB

Doing his best, great.

She stops, put the notebook down, looks at Rob.

MEGAN

I want to take him out.

ROB

(absently)

So do I.

MEGAN

Now. I don't want to send him back on Monday.

Rob stops what he's doing, looks at Megan.

ROB

So what then?

MEGAN

I'll stay with him myself until we figure out the school situation--

ROB

So then you're not working.

MEGAN

I'm hardly working now.

ROB

It's not a good time to go to one income.

MEGAN

I'm not saying forever. We'll find a school by September. For now, he's not getting anything out of this, let's end it.

ROB

We'll build a stronger case if we keep him there.

MEGAN

I'm sorry, you want to keep him in the substandard school to prove a point?

ROB

We need to give the district's program a chance first, all three lawyers have said this.

MEGAN

The lawyers don't have to see their kid in that classroom. When I got there to pick him up today, that kid Franklin was standing up on his desk jumping up and down, and there were two kids crying right next to him, probably scared he might fall on them, and the goddam teacher just had her hand out, like waiting for him to reach out to climb down instead of picking his ass up-

ROB

(overlapping)

She's afraid of getting sued if she touches him.

MEGAN

(overlapping)

So Sammy and the other kids were basically being ignored because the aide was just sort of staring... This is all from 30 seconds of peeking through the window.

ROB

Write it down.

MEGAN

(overlapping)

What?

ROB

(overlapping, no pause)

We have to document this stuff, it's good.

MEGAN

It's good?

ROB

It could help our case.

Megan calls out to Sammy.

MEGAN

Honey, honey, no chewing sleeves.

(back to Rob, determined)

He's not going back there.

ROB

(throws up his hands in  
surrender)

Fine.

Megan moves towards Sammy.

MEGAN

Hey you. What do you think, sweetie? More hang time with mommy? I think this calls for a party.

(to Rob)

Daddy, you want to have a dance party?

ROB

If it's time to dance it's time to dance.

He walks calmly towards the stereo.

MEGAN

Oh no.

Rob stops at the stereo, shuttles to a song. Megan looks at him, then back at Sammy.

MEGAN

Sammy, is daddy gonna do the crazy dance?

Rob shakes his head seriously.

ROB

Absolutely not. I have far too much self control for that.

MEGAN

I think he will.

He turns on a Ray Charles song and at first bobs his head mildly. Megan takes Sammy's unseen hands and sways them to the rhythm.

Rob's head bobs begin to get more abrupt.

MEGAN

Here it comes.

Rob shakes his head as if fighting it. But he starts to make singular silly dance moves, jutting out his elbow, then reining himself in.

MEGAN

He's doing it! Crazy dance!

ROB

No crazy dance!

Rob moves closer to Megan and Sammy, crazy dance now in full swing. Crazy dance is crazy and fitful, with much spinning and random leg kicking, with only a minimal connection to the music. It is spectacularly silly.

MEGAN

Oh my!

(to Sammy)

This is a good one. You see Daddy? Crazy crazy!

Crazy dance reaches its crescendo. Megan laughs, gestures to Sammy.

MEGAN

C'mon sweetie, you want to dance crazy like Daddy?

A beat. Sammy has apparently run back towards the trampoline.

Rob sees this and stops the crazy dance, disappointed.

MEGAN

Sweetie. Come back sweetie.

Megan begins to follow Sammy, trying to get his attention.

ROB

Forget it.

She stops, stands next to Rob as they watch Sammy jump. Megan touches Rob's shoulder, but he turns away and shuts off the stereo.

Rob goes to the kitchen counter, picks up the Turning Point brochure.

ROB

You gotta see this place. They don't waste one second there. It's so focused.

He holds out the brochure, Megan looks at it, turns it over. Gestures to a picture.

MEGAN

Was she there?

ROB

She presented.

MEGAN

She's pretty.

ROB

She's not bad.

MEGAN

(reading flyer)

She went to Penn.

ROB

Yeah, '01. I talked to her afterward.

MEGAN

You flirt with her?

ROB

No.

Megan takes out a big box of Legos, urges to Sammy to come to her with a silly gesture/face.

MEGAN

(teasing)

That your plan? Cozy up with the principal?

ROB

She's the Executive Director and I talked to her for 30 seconds.

MEGAN

I was kidding. Touchy...

She starts building a simple Lego tower, apparently hand over hand with Sammy at times.

MEGAN

2001. She graduated one year ahead of me and look what she's doing.

ROB

Don't start.

MEGAN

It's just depressing, that's all. I mean the woman built a school. I can't bake a loaf of gluten-free bread.

Megan keeps building the tower but takes time out to make faces at Sammy, possibly holds a lego out to him on her toes.

ROB

You've been a little busy. When things settle down you can finish your thesis--

MEGAN

No one wants to hear what an aging stay-at-home mom thinks about Cubist architecture in Prague, okay?

ROB

How do you know that if you don't finish it?

MEGAN

I'm sorry. I just don't want to talk about it now.

Megan helps Sammy put a lego with a plastic flag on top of the tower. But in doing so the tower falls apart.

She and Rob watch Sammy run away. Then they both look back at the ruined tower.

ROB

Fine.

Blackout.

**SCENE 4: LIVING ROOM**

\*

Megan is on her laptop watching a video. Lights go up on Silverman.

SILVERMAN

Okay, now, who can tell me the first goal for Phase 2?

AUDIENCE

(a few voices call out.)

"Face" "Make him watch you. "Look."

SILVERMAN

Right. Looking at your face needs to be as fun as going on a ride at an amusement park. How do you do that?

He steps out towards the audience, in peoples' faces, his voice suddenly booming.

SILVERMAN

BIG expressions, BIG sounds, BIG gestures of love! Did I get your attention?

(checking audience response)

Good. You get zero points for subtlety. Surprise him. Reading him a book about a horse? You should be able to neigh. Who can neigh?

Silverman looks out to the audience.

SILVERMAN

Who can neigh?

From off-stage or recorded, a few weak neighs.  
Megan may even try her own neigh.

SILVERMAN

That's it? You call that a neigh? How 'bout this: \*

Silverman suddenly gets on his hands, rears up his legs like a horse and gives a stunningly lifelike horse sound.

SILVERMAN

Yes, it should be *that* fun! If you fail, fail big! You should both be laughing and enjoying each other. Not sitting and pointing and graphing and ABA drudgery. Think of it a performance. Because it is. And you have a tough audience. This is why we ask you to take video, so you know which things work.

(beat)

See, every extra second he's looking at your face, in your eyes, is a chance to learn something real, how to interact, how to be human.

(beat)

If you have questions, talk to your consultant or log on to the site for support. If you're still stuck, send me an email. Stay strong and keep believing.

Megan closes the window and looks at her computer screen. She opens a new window and begins typing.

MEGAN

Dr. Silverman. I came to your presentation Monday, and have been going through the DVDs. First, I just want to say, this program -- it's the first time I've felt I can do something to get to know my son better. So thank you.

(beat)

My husband thinks it's a scam, basically. To get a consultant we'll have to put it all on our credit cards. Or I will.

(beat)

Is there anything I can tell him that could change his mind? It just seems like he's bothered by the approach. He saw something in the flier about hugs. I'm sure you're very busy, but if there's any advice you have I'd appreciate it.

She clicks send and sits back.

Immediately we hear a noise indicating incoming mail. She clicks again to open it. As she does so, lights go up on Silverman across the stage.

SILVERMAN

Megan, Thanks so much for writing to me. I'm sorry I can't write you a note personally due to the volume of emails I get. But hopefully this automated response can answer most of your questions.

(beat)

From your email it's clear you're concerned about the emotional side of autism. You're not alone. Your consultant can show you how you can get your son or daughter more emotionally involved in your life... That's what we're all about.

(beat)

It seems from your note you're concerned about finances. Our consultants can set up a payment plan that works for you. Your relationship with your son or daughter is too important to let money get in the way.

(beat)

I hope this email has been helpful to you. If it hasn't, please pick up the phone and talk to one of our consultants. Stay strong and keep believing.

Lights down on Silverman. A long pause as Megan keeps staring at her screen.

MEGAN

Okay, that was really creepy. If you're not going to send a real response, that's fine, but don't try to sell me some pseudo-personalized crap based on some words I had in my email.

(beat)

If this is something that can really help kids then you shouldn't sell it like it's Amway. I'm sorry but that's how I feel.

**SCENE 5: STAGE**

Julia appears.

JULIA

I've got some time on the 19th at 10 o'clock. Bring Sammy here to the school, it will take about 90 minutes. Generally takes about a week or two to write up the results. If you need it faster let me know.

(beat)

I generally don't get into giving advice about other programs. Especially when parents disagree and want me to be a tiebreaker. But you saw my presentation so you can probably guess what I think about something like LAC. Tell your wife to be careful.

(beat)

And no apology necessary for last week. No, I guess we don't usually hear the F word in our Q&A sessions. But, I appreciated the support. See you next week.

**SCENE 6: ADMINISTRATION BUILDING CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING**

Megan and Rob sit in small chairs across from Regina, who sits behind a desk with a large stack of green file folders. She opens one of the files, shuffles papers, looking for something.

REGINA

I'm so sorry about the heat. I've talked to building management about the air conditioning in these conference rooms I don't know how many times.

(beat)

Okay, so here we are. First I need you to sign this to certify your attendance.

She holds out a set of documents to Megan and Rob with a pen. Rob takes the document and scans it.

REGINA

(sighing slightly)

It just certifies that you attended this meeting on this date.

ROB

Okay. I just was looking at it... My father was a lawyer so I have this habit of reading things I sign.

MEGAN

He has to read everything on those little credit card receipts. I won't shop with him anymore.

REGINA

I was just explaining the purpose of the document.

Rob signs and passes to Megan who signs without reading, hands it back to Regina. Regina pulls out an audio recorder, puts it in the middle of the desk and turns it on.

REGINA

At this point with your permission I'm going to record this meeting. Just pretend it isn't there.

Rob and Megan stare at it while Regina finds her place.

REGINA

Okay, you are Robert and Megan Holden and we're here to discuss the education plan for Samuel Holden. He is your son?

(they nod)

I need you to verbalize your responses please.

MEGAN

(looking at the recorder)

Yes, we're the parents of Samuel Holden. We call him Sammy.

REGINA

You can speak in a normal voice.

REGINA

And we received notice that you have removed Samuel from the Riverview summer program.

MEGAN

Yes, that's right. We felt it wasn't--

REGINA

(cutting her off)

We'll discuss that when we get into the recommendations.

(Regina hands out two sets of documents)

Now this is the current draft of the educational plan.

(Megan hands one to Rob, who  
pages through it.)

It starts with the assessments, which were performed by a three-member child study team and focused on Samuel's cognitive, social and physiological capabilities. You also got an outside assessment, which has been included in the file--

ROB

Right, so if there's a difference in the assessments?

Regina sits back, impatient.

REGINA

Okay, now Mr. Holden I'm going to ask you to let me finish before we do questions. Is that okay?

ROB

Sure, I'm sorry.

REGINA

Okay, please turn to page four, under Behaviors.

She waits for Megan and Rob to find the page and slowly and deliberately reads from the document.

During the exchange Rob grows increasingly impatient at being read to from a document he has in front of him.

REGINA

Samuel presented with mild hand gestures but displayed no disruptive behaviors and his demeanor indicates that he does not pose any danger to himself or others.

(they all turn the page)

Assessment of receptive and expressive language skills indicated limited verbal acuity but responsiveness to basic verbal prompts. Given these factors, Samuel's cognitive level is estimated at 30-36 months and 36 months would be low-normal for his age. So his cognitive ability is within the normal range.

ROB

That's -- I don't get that logic.

REGINA

I'm sorry?

ROB

He's almost four, how is a cognitive level of 30-36 months normal--

REGINA

(overlapping)

These are broad estimates, I wouldn't get too caught up in the numbers--

ROB

Then why give them?

Megan gestures to Rob to back off.

REGINA

The estimates help provide a baseline so we can understand where Samuel is and track his progress.

ROB

(nodding)

Fine.

Regina reads again, perhaps more deliberately now.

REGINA

Samuel's social skills were rated on a standard adaptive behavior scale, and scored a 67 which is below normal. His abilities to interact are limited, but he can maintain eye contact for short durations.

(turning another page)

In the Motor domain, he demonstrates delays in coordination and fine motor, placing him in the 28 month equivalent, just under normal.

Rob mouths the last three words along with Regina.

ROB

(overlapping)

Just under normal.

REGINA

Excuse me?

ROB

(gestures to the document)

I'm sorry, reading all this it seems--

(stops himself)

I'm just eager to get to the results.

REGINA

Are you in some kind of rush?

ROB

No. There's no rush. I'm just saying we have this in front of us, we don't need you to read it all out loud.

REGINA

(overlapping)

This meeting helps us determine an education plan for your child. It's not something we want to hurry through. If today isn't convenient for you we could reschedule for another time.

ROB

No.

MEGAN

No, we understand. Please go ahead.

REGINA

(she finds a place lower on the page)

Under Summary. While Samuel Holden does display certain deficits that may benefit from behavioral intervention, these deficits are not far outside of the general population. Now, questions?

ROB

(flipping pages)

Would you--

(he stops himself)

This is obviously, very detailed -- and I appreciate the, uh, the effort that went into it.

(Regina stares blankly)

But, for example, to say that he "successfully mastered complex matching with multiple objects," seems a bit of an overstatement, they showed him--

REGINA

(interrupts)

A partially prompted response is acceptable if the student is able to complete the action--

ROB

(interrupts)

They gave him the answer. That's beyond a partial prompt--

Rob shakes his head and flips forward in the document.

REGINA

If you'd like I could set up a separate meeting with our study team to discuss the criteria for mastering tasks?

Rob is reading now, ignoring Regina. Shows Megan the page he's on.

ROB

No, that's not necessary.

Megan looks down at the page Rob's pointing at.

MEGAN

You're recommending Riverview?

REGINA

We're not up to the recommendations--

ROB

Even though there's not *one* ABA-trained instructor--

REGINA

The lead teacher is a credentialed special needs educator--

ROB

She's completely overwhelmed.

REGINA

I've known Lydia for 6 years, she does not get overwhelmed.

MEGAN

It's not her, there isn't enough help. Sammy has autism. He needs direct, one-on-one attention--

REGINA

Our assessments didn't show those kinds of delays in Samuel.

A beat.

ROB

So -- I'm sorry, you're disputing that he has autism?

REGINA

Mr. Holden, this is not a dispute, it's a process to--

ROB

(holding the document)

Is this saying that my son doesn't have autism? Can you tell me that?

REGINA

The study team does not provide a medical diagnosis.

(beat)

But our assessments show him to be functioning at a level just below typical--

ROB

Well, have you seen the results of our assessment?

(he gestures to another set of documents)

REGINA

Yes, the study team reviewed them.

ROB

This is an independent analysis from a real doctor.

REGINA

Are you suggesting members of our assessment team are not independent?

ROB

They're hired by the district.

REGINA

Of course.

ROB

Well, then I think the word independent is a stretch. The district pays their salary, what side would they take?

REGINA

(interrupts)

No one is taking sides, Mr. Holden. These people have dedicated their careers to helping children get the education they need.

ROB

Did they consider schools outside of the district? Private schools.

REGINA

Mr. Holden, are you familiar with the term least restrictive environment?

MEGAN/ROB

(practically in unison)

Yes--

REGINA

Bussing a child to a private institution -- and I use the word institution judiciously -- is by definition restrictive. That's not warranted for children functioning at such a high level as your son.

ROB

Such a high level? Have you met our son?

REGINA

(overlapping)

Yes I have--

ROB

(overlapping)

He's almost four years old and he can say ten words. And even those are barely recognizable.

REGINA

I don't think it's useful to focus on what a given child can't do. Riverview has an integrated classroom that includes typical children whom Samuel can learn from--

ROB

He's not ready for that.

REGINA

Mr. Holden, how do you expect Samuel to make progress if you have such low expectations? Now if you believe in him, have a little more faith, he may surprise you.

Rob stares at her, incredulous. His voice is quiet but menacing, no longer a pretense of civility.

ROB

Did you just tell me I don't believe in my son?

(beat)

That I don't have enough faith? Is that what you said?

REGINA

I was encouraging you--

ROB

(overlapping, not stopping)

Are you fucking insane? I'm supposed to have faith that you and your pathetic, low-rent school system will help fix my son?

REGINA

Right now you should stay focused on your son's educational plan--

ROB

That's the focus of my entire life. And you have the nerve to tell us we need to have more faith in our son?

MEGAN

(sharply)

Honey, shut up, now.

This jars Rob, who sits back.

REGINA

Sir, if you can't control your emotions I will conclude this meeting--

ROB

(he calms himself)

I believe in my son.

REGINA

No one is suggesting you don't believe in your son.

Rob nods. Megan squeezes Rob's hand.

REGINA

Now, on page 11 is a summary of Samuel's educational plan. You already scanned ahead to see the recommendation. You can take some more time to look it over now.

(She lays a pen on the desk)

ROB

We're not signing this today.

REGINA

Well, if you don't sign the educational plan you should be aware that could delay services from being provided.

ROB

(Rob holds out the document)

You're saying if we don't sign today that you won't even offer him the services in the IEP?

REGINA

(glances at the audio tape)

You are free to take time to review the document. But we can't begin to implement it until it's signed.

ROB

I just said not today.

REGINA

(nods absently)

That concludes this session. We will hope to finish the process at our follow up meeting in two weeks.

(beat)

I thank you both for your time.

She turns off the audio recorder, nods to them blankly as she gathers her papers. Rob takes Megan by the shoulder and they exit.

**SCENE 7: STAGE**

SILVERMAN

Megan. First of all, I'm sorry about the auto-reply. I used to respond to every email myself but with the volume I get now it's really impossible.

(beat)

Okay, about the money. The program costs a lot because my consultants get rigorous training and the technology is expensive. We do give scholarships, if you decide to go forward I'll look at your application myself.

(beat)

Forget trying to convince your husband. I could send you reams of data showing how our outcomes are better than ABA, it'd be useless. He'll change his mind if he sees the program work. In the meantime I want you to do something for me. Find an activity you can do with Sammy that *you'll* enjoy. Something creative. And no words. Just focus on the activity. Take a video of it and send it to me along with the intake form. No charge, I'll be your consultant for now until you make up your mind.

(beat)

I'm sorry you got an Amway vibe. You should know this program is my life and I believe in it with all my heart. Hopefully you will too.

**SCENE 8: CLASSROOM AT TURNING POINT - DAY**

We see Julia working with Sammy, Rob standing at the back of the room. She's effusive, fun and authoritative.

JULIA

You see that bead? That's a super bead! Put it through the string and watch what happens. Yay! Oh man, look at that. One more. Good, you're quick, slim!

(beat, she whispers this)

You want to put it on? You'll have super powers.

(now suddenly loud/intense, a  
rush of words/airplane noises)

There it goes, he did it, Sammy's gonna fly. Woosh, whoosh, woosh, look at you go!

(gesturing off stage)

Okay fly-boy, this here's Colleen, you hang out with her for a while.

Julia picks up a notepad as she catches her breath. Rob steps up towards her.

JULIA

Jesus, that kid's got some eyes.

ROB

I've never seen him play with a stranger like that. Never.

Julia makes some notes on her pad.

JULIA

I didn't act like a stranger.

(looking down at her pad)

So he makes good eye contact, can attend well, he just needs to work. So you're in Greenville?

ROB

Yeah. They're brutal.

JULIA

I'm familiar. Who's your lawyer?

ROB

We're -- getting one. My wife wanted to keep things civil--

JULIA

There's plenty of time to be civil once your child is in a decent school.

(again checking notebook)

You said you're home schooling now?

ROB

Yeah, for now.

JULIA

(Rob nods)

How's that going?

ROB

Um, okay, I guess.

(Julia nods)

I take it you're not a fan of home schooling.

JULIA

It puts a lot of pressure on parents. I don't recommend it.

ROB

We're hoping it's just until September... How often are there openings here, really?

A beat.

JULIA

I -- can't really talk about the status of any current openings with a prospective parent.

ROB

(smiling)

I think you just did. "Any current openings" means there's a current opening.

JULIA

(smiling despite herself)

No, not necessarily. I didn't say that.

ROB

What didn't you say?

Julia makes a look as she decides to tell Rob.

JULIA

The father of one of our kids got a job transfer to California. So the boy might have to go at the end of the month.

ROB

Might?

JULIA

(beat)

Mom's going out to check the schools this week. If she doesn't find one she likes she won't go.

ROB

The parents are ready to split up to keep their son in your school?

JULIA

You didn't hear any of this from me.

They both stare at Sammy.

ROB

I think he'd be such a great fit here. I do.

JULIA

He's a sweet kid.

(turning to Rob)

There's nothing I can do for you if your district won't pay for a private school.

ROB

I know.

(beat)

But if they will?

JULIA

(staring at Sammy)

If they will then we can talk.

#### **SCENE 9: STAGE**

Regina appears.

REGINA

Dear Mrs. Holden. I received your email yesterday. I am replying by post so there is a physical record of this exchange. You asked whether I would reconsider the Child Study Team's decision to place your son Samuel at Riverview school. As noted in the parental rights handbook, all requests for appeals must be submitted to the superintendent's office in writing. If you do decide to pursue an appeal I can assure you this decision will not in any way be "held against" Samuel.

(beat)

My role as your case manager is to facilitate a process that will provide the most appropriate educational plan for Samuel. That will continue to be my focus. I look forward to our meeting on the 23rd.

#### **SCENE 10: LIVING ROOM, NIGHT**

The room has been transformed for home schooling. Color coded binders, thick ABA instructional books, large graphs on the wall.

On Sammy's small table there is now a giant tower of Playdoh. The bottom is a muddle of colorful but unformed slabs, with the imprints of Sammy's hands in places. Above is a triangular structure shaped like an apartment building. It's intricately detailed, with geometric shapes layered over one another at irregular angles.

There's a stack of mail on the kitchen counter with an opened envelope out. Megan is on her computer, there's a letter out on the table next to the computer.

MEGAN

Dr. Silverman. Thank you so much for your email. It's so great of you to do this, I know how busy you must be. So I'm uploading the video. It's... whatever, it's random. A former architecture student getting all stupid with her son's Playdoh... Glad you'll see Sammy. Pictures don't really do him justice, but it'll give you an idea...

(beat)

I want to do this. We don't have the money, my husband is against it, but I don't care. It feels right. We're still doing the ABA program at home. My husband won't budge about that. So now it's just a question of whether I can do ABA and LAC without driving me and Sammy crazy.

(beat)

I was actually wondering-- I'm sure you're way too busy but -- could you be my consultant yourself? If not I understand. Thought I'd ask.

Megan puts away her computer. Rob enters, holding a file folder. Megan puts the letter in her pocket.

ROB

Hey.

MEGAN

He's down?

Rob nods as he sits at the kitchen table, opens the file folder and starts looking through a series of small notes. Megan sees what he's doing, rolls her eyes.

MEGAN

You're going to do that stuff now?

Rob nods, Megan begins straightening the room.

ROB

Holy shit, she misspelled his name. Who can't spell Sammy?

(he reads)

"Sammie," with an IE, "had a nice day today. He liked the cookies with his lunch."

(he picks up another one)

"Sammie did well today. Please pack more pretzels for snack time."

(putting it aside)

These were supposed to be program updates about his progress for Chrissakes, every one of them was about food.

MEGAN

It's his biggest motivator.

ROB

Oh, here's a good one. "Nice day today! Sammy played in the playground during break period. Very sunny outside!" What is she a frigging meteorologist?

MEGAN

You said it, the woman was overwhelmed.

ROB

(reading)

Angela? Who the fuck is Angela?

MEGAN

Yeah, I told you she'd mix them up sometimes.

ROB

"Angela did well today. Her behavior was good." Poor Angela's parents, missing that nugget of information. This is good, the lawyer can use stuff like this.

Rob binds the notes with a small clip and puts them in a folder.

MEGAN

What's the point of vilifying that woman?

Megan is cleaning up Sammy's small table and begins molding a slab for her Play-doh tower.

Rob is going through the mail.

ROB

The district has chosen this woman to teach my son. We have evidence that she was not doing so competently this summer.

MEGAN

If she loses her job they'll just find someone worse.

ROB

Is that our problem?

Rob picks up the envelope that contained Regina's letter.

MEGAN

No, but it's someone's. I don't want to spend our time and money bashing teachers.

Rob examines the envelope, interrupts Megan.

ROB

What was in this?

(beat)

There's an envelope from the district.

MEGAN

(overlapping)

Oh, nothing.

ROB

(raising his voice)

I told you we need to file any correspondence for the lawyer, what was it?

MEGAN

(beat)

It was a calendar for Riverview's fall schedule.

ROB

(scoffs)

Oh.

(he throws away the envelope,  
looks at Megan)

Listen, we have an opportunity here. He has a spot at one of the best schools for autism in the country. Right? This is worth the fight.

MEGAN

She told you he has an actual spot?

ROB

Yes.

MEGAN

And they can save it for him while we try to get the district to pay for it?

ROB

No, not for long. They need to know in the next couple weeks.

MEGAN

You really think the district is going to come around in two weeks?

ROB

If we act fast, maybe.

Megan nods doubtfully and goes back to her Play  
Doh.

MEGAN

I'm hiring the LAC consultant.

ROB

What? What did you just say?

MEGAN

You heard me.

ROB

We decided we were going to wait--

MEGAN

You decided.

ROB

We don't have the money.

MEGAN

I'll talk to my dad.

ROB

Your dad? What the hell is that going to do? He lives on social security.

MEGAN

He owns that house.

ROB

You're going to make your father sell his house--

MEGAN

(overlapping)

He could get a loan.

ROB

(overlapping)

-- so we can pay for a consultant from this scam program--

MEGAN

(overlapping)

It's not a scam.

ROB

You've never brought this up about your father paying for school tuition.

MEGAN

Well, it's not something I'd like to do.

ROB

But you would for this program--

MEGAN

If I thought it could make a difference for Sammy, yes.

ROB

You know how irrational this is?

MEGAN

(looking towards Sammy)

Sammy, sweetie get down.

(turns to Rob)

You want to do your lawsuit, you go ahead. I'll do whatever you want, say whatever you want. I'm not asking for anything from you--

ROB

They aren't comparable. I'm trying to get him an educational placement in a universally respected school, you want to try a--

(he stops himself)

-- new, technique that is not science-based, not proven. It uses this herd mentality, it's all centered around one very charismatic leader-- these are all traits of a cult by the way-

MEGAN

(overlapping)

Oh Jesus, it's not a cult--

ROB

It plays on your emotions. You really think there's some way of teaching that could make Sammy be more affectionate?

MEGAN

(getting frustrated)

Don't make it sound like that's completely unreasonable--

ROB

(again cutting her off)

It is though, it's a fantasy--

MEGAN

What do you know about affection, anyway?

(this silences him)

You're colder than he is. I know he doesn't want to be touched, he has a diagnosis. What's your excuse?

Rob shakes his head, unable to respond. Blackout.

#### SCENE 10: JULIA'S OFFICE

JULIA

The family is moving to California. So as of this minute anyway, there's an opening at our school.

(beat)

I can't tell you that it's Sammy's spot. But if your lawyer gets any headway with the district, you let me know.

(beat)

About your email... I don't know what you intended in writing all that to me. If it's because you want to get your son into my school -- well I guess I wouldn't blame you. Whatever it was, it moved me. But please don't write something like that again, particularly if you're interested in Sammy coming here. It's not appropriate. I'm -- I don't mean that harshly. I just, don't think you should again, that's all.

(softly)

I'll speak with you soon.

### SCENE 12: LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Megan is on her laptop reading an email. Silverman appears.

SILVERMAN

Megan, Oh my God that Play-doh tower is one of the coolest things I've ever seen. How did you do that? It's unbelievable. And your work with Sammy was great. You are a natural at this, you're enjoying it, you're making it fun, and that *will* rub off on Sammy.

(beat)

I don't want to badger you about doing the ABA. You're not the first to try doing both. But here's what you need to understand. ABA is a kind of behaviorism, right? That's not just about autism, that's the idea that you can teach a brain to change behavior with certain conditioning. Like when they first tried to get people to wear seat belts. It was a massive conditioning campaign: snap on this little belt, you're less likely to die. People get that. So now when I get in my car, my body is conditioned to put on that belt without thinking. That's behaviorism and it's perfect.

(beat)

The problem is that approach is the *least* likely to work for someone with autism. Sammy's brain doesn't learn the same way, the little synapses in his brain don't make connections so easily. So I let's start by just getting his attention, let's start by having fun with him. Let's get that little brain excited to see your face.

(beat)

So yes, you can do your ABA while you tease him, and hug him, and make it as interactive and silly as you can. Your husband doesn't need to know there's fun involved...

(beat)

I'd be honored to be your consultant. And I'm waiving your fee. I do this from time to time, keeps me connected to the program. By the way I took some architecture classes myself. I'd be curious to read your thesis. Talk to you soon.

Megan begins writing an email.

MEGAN

Wow, I don't know what to say. I know how busy you are, this is amazing... I know you're probably right about the ABA. It definitely wears him out. Both of us. I was working with him this morning and he was just being so loopy and unfocused and I just gave up. Not outwardly, but inside. You know how you say you have to expect your child to succeed? Sometimes I don't. Sometimes when I look in his eyes -- he's got these beautiful eyes. But they're -- indifferent. They don't seem like windows to anything.

(beat)

I'm sorry. My husband hates when I talk like this and these days he's so focused on this lawsuit. It's like he's more comfortable now that we have this enemy, and he can pour his energy into a fight, you know?

(beat)

Anyway, I'm really grateful to you for everything you're doing. Just hope I can make it worthwhile. Oh, glad you like my little tower, you're sweet. Full of shit, probably, but sweet. I don't think you really want to read my thesis. There's a reason I've been avoiding it for four years...

She hits send. She gets up and gets herself a glass of wine. After a few seconds she hears her computer, the sound is different now. Silverman appears.

Silverman

You there?

Megan rushes back to her computer and types. At times the conversation overlaps. NOTE: For the IM conversations, new lines indicate where the character has clicked "enter" to send the message.

MEGAN

Oh, hi.

SILVERMAN

Is IM okay?

I saw your screen name, thought it'd be easier.

MEGAN

(overlapping)

That's great! Hi.

Thank you so much, I can't believe how generous you're being.

SILVERMAN

I'm happy to, this is fun for me.

(overlapping)

How's it going?

MEGAN

Ugh, I don't know.

It's good, I just feel like I'm falling short on this.

Every time we try something and it doesn't work I feel like it's me, you know.

SILVERMAN

Right, you're falling short.

You submitted one of the best first videos I think I've seen and you're falling short.

MEGAN

The video was easy.

That's 10 minutes, I'm with him all day.

SILVERMAN

Okay, so let me ask you something.

What's wrong with your son?

MEGAN

Um, he has autism.

SILVERMAN

That's his diagnosis, tell me in your words.

MEGAN

He's in his own world, you know.

He doesn't connect with people.

SILVERMAN

Do you blame yourself for that?

MEGAN

Uh, no. Why should I.

SILVERMAN

Why not? You're his mom.

If he can't express love and emotion, he's supposed to learn that from you, right?

MEGAN

You don't really think it's my fault.

SILVERMAN

We're not talking about me, we're talking about you.

MEGAN

Do I think that way? Yes.

I wonder about giving him his shots, about the air here.

SILVERMAN

(overlapping)

Right.

MEGAN

(overlapping)

About drinks I had before I knew I was pregnant.

SILVERMAN

(overlapping)

Right, okay.

MEGAN

(overlapping)

But the researchers say it's genetic, right?

SILVERMAN

So what? His genes came from you, right?

MEGAN

Right.

SILVERMAN

So either way, whether it's nature or nurture, it's still your fault.

MEGAN

So, what, you're trying to make me feel bad?  
Because it's working.

SILVERMAN

I'm making a point. When you say "I'm falling short," you're blaming yourself. If you want to really connect with Sammy, you need to lose all that.

MEGAN

Well how?

SILVERMAN

By giving in to the possibility that this could actually work.

MEGAN

What does that mean?

SILVERMAN

See, ABA tells you that people with degrees are better equipped to reach your son than you, right?

MEGAN

I guess.

SILVERMAN

I say bullshit. I say there's no one with the potential to really know Sammy more than you.  
And once you drop all those charts and graphs and just focus on each other, it'll happen.

MEGAN

(quietly)

I want that.

I do.

I just have a hard time envisioning it. You know?

(beat)

SILVERMAN

Do something for me.

MEGAN

What?

SILVERMAN

Sit back in your chair and take a deep breath.

(she does so)

Now think about your son in 25 years.

She shrugs her body and rolls her eyes.

MEGAN

Oh God.

SILVERMAN

Just try it, hear me out.

MEGAN

Okay, sorry, fine.

She takes a big sip of her wine, puts it down,  
sits back in her chair again.

SILVERMAN

Try to picture him.

Think about how his face will take shape around those eyes.

He's 30 now. Do you see him?

Long pause. There's a shift in sound/lighting. The  
IM convention goes away.

Silverman is now watching Megan.

SILVERMAN

He's wearing something formal, elegant.

MEGAN

I see him.

SILVERMAN

Good. Now he's standing there across this room, this gorgeous room,  
with high high ceilings and polished wood floors, surrounded by  
family and friends. And he's walking over to you now.

Silverman walks over to her.

SILVERMAN

He walks with confidence, with this smile. You've never seen such a knowing smile from him, with so much understanding and humor and sympathy.

(Silverman approaches Megan)

And he puts his hand out to you...

Silverman puts his hand out to her as Ella Fitzgerald's "At Last" fades up. She stands with him.

SILVERMAN

...and wipes away your tears gently from your cheeks. He puts his arm around you.

(Silverman does so as he talks.

They dance.)

And you dance. He leads and you dance, following him. And he leads you so gracefully, anticipating your movements, understanding where you want to go, how you want to move, completely in rhythm.

They dance in silence.

SILVERMAN

(a whisper now)

You're the only people in the world. Even in front of all those people. On this day, on his wedding day, you're more connected to him than with anyone you've ever known.

She nods, savoring the moment.

He pulls away from her gently and walks back to the other side of the stage. Megan sits back in her chair and closes her eyes, hugging herself with her arms.

**END ACT I**

## ACT II

## SCENE 1: JULIA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Rob and Julia in her bedroom, half-dressed. Julia sits up.

JULIA

So the lawyer has all the paperwork?

(Rob nods)

Good, that's your best chance.

ROB

He said there's no way it can happen so soon.

JULIA

How soon?

ROB

You said the slot needs to be filled by the 10th. That's two and a half weeks. I'll be lucky if my lawyer can file a complaint by then, let alone get a response.

JULIA

Yeah, that's not much time.

(Rob nods)

No one told you this would happen overnight. If you want to get him in a good school, any good school, you'll have to fight.

ROB

I know. I'm just... we have no plan for the fall right now, and there's this spot available, it's so frustrating. And Megan, you know, she's doing the ABA, but she's so caught up in this LAC thing--

(Julia rolls her eyes)

She was talking about mortgaging her father's house for this, it's crazy.

JULIA

I've had parents come in here and tell me to name my price for a spot in my school. One mother offered me unlimited use of her family's jet.

ROB

Jesus.

JULIA

I mean, I understand, but there have to be boundaries, you know.

ROB

Of course.

Long pause. Julia shifts slightly in the bed, possibly tugging the blanket to cover herself.

ROB

This stuff, this process, it does things to you...Last night I was in my car. And I was thinking about our case manager. This smug, stupid woman who could literally have an impact on what kind of life my son will lead. And I just sat there in traffic, seeing her condescending smile, thinking about what I'd like to do to her.

JULIA

Like what?

ROB

(quietly)

Beat her senseless. Pound the shit out of her until she loses consciousness.

(visualizing it)

And as I beat her, in my head she gets a sense, starts to understand what this is doing to me. And it--it was so satisfying. Just imagining it.

Julia stares at Rob.

JULIA

Rob. That's deeply fucked up.

ROB

Yes. Yeah, I know it is. Obviously I wouldn't do it.

JULIA

You've had thoughts like this before?

ROB

(rolling his eyes)

Not, like, often.

JULIA

Have you, uh, have you talked to someone about this?

ROB

I shouldn't have mentioned it.

JULIA

Those are violent fantasies. I'm sorry, but you don't just ignore something like that.

ROB

So what, I should borrow more money to go to therapy?

JULIA

If you need to.

ROB

Listen, I was just talking. I promise I'll call someone if I feel I'm endangering myself or others.

JULIA

Do. I can give you a number if you want.

Rob nods.

ROB

Can you help?

JULIA

Help what?

ROB

With our case. Is there something you can do, talk to someone in our child study team.

JULIA

Listen, the child study team in Greenville couldn't approve a bus transfer.

ROB

Okay, well, maybe you could talk to someone else at a higher level.

JULIA

Is this why you came here?

Beat. Julia gets up from her bed and abruptly begins putting on her clothes.

ROB

I came here to talk to you, that's all.

JULIA

This is fundamentally wrong, okay. On many levels. I appreciate that you're trying to do the best you can for your son.

ROB

Please don't take this out on Sammy. You mentioned there was a slot open, I'm just trying to figure out if we could make this work.

Julia is looking for a piece of clothing.

JULIA

We have an admissions process, you understand? I can't go around that. And you don't have the support of your district anyway.

Rob sees what Julia is doing, grabs the item of clothing from his side of the covers and holds it out to Julia, looking the other way.

ROB

Listen, I just told you that about the case manager because I can't talk about this stuff with my wife-

JULIA

(suddenly shrill)

Oh my god, please don't tell me about your wife. Okay? Please, for God's sake.

Julia fumbles with the article of clothing as she's trying to dress.

ROB

(flustered by her reaction)

Okay. I was just--

JULIA

I'm sorry. I just, this is all a bit too much for me.

ROB

Yeah, I know. I'm sorry, I am. I just meant -- what I said before, those were just things that have flitted into my head--

JULIA

(overlapping)

I understand.

ROB

(overlapping)

I'm not going to go psycho on my child study team.

Julia nods, clothing issues resolved. She settles herself. Rob sits back on the bed.

JULIA

(softly)

I know. I wasn't judging you.

(beat)

About a year after I started Turning Point I testified for parents suing this district. It was my first time on the stand and the district's attorney knew it. He twisted my words, I got rattled and my testimony did more harm than good. And after he won, I went to his office. Which wasn't an appropriate thing to do. When I got there I was literally shaking and I asked this guy how he could live with himself if he ruined this kid's chance for a better life. But I was such a mess I could hardly get it out and started hyperventilating.

(beat)

And he got me a glass of water and calmed me down with a lot of BS about how we all really wanted the same things but had a different approach. And I drank the water and he said he was very sorry I was so upset and he wanted to see me home. And he did. And the whole way to my apartment I thought about that boy. And I had this instinct to grab the wheel and swerve off the road to make this guy feel for a second the uncertainty that that boy's family lives with now. Instead I let him come into my apartment. And he stayed. And I kept seeing him for almost two years.

(beat)

I have about five years, realistically, to have a good chance of having kids. And I think I'd be a good mom.

ROB

Of course you would.

JULIA

Shut up. My point is, this--  
(gesturing to Rob)  
--was a mistake.

ROB

(overlapping, quietly)  
I know.

JULIA

(overlapping, not stopping)  
Another mistake. And it can't happen again.

ROB

I know, I'm sorry.

JULIA

Tell your lawyer to enter your complaint right away. End of the day  
Friday at the latest.

ROB

I'll ask if he can.

JULIA

If he gives you problems let me know and I'll talk to him.

ROB

(tentatively)

Okay. Why?

JULIA

There's a call I can make. I can't promise anything. It can't happen  
again, you understand? Ever.

Rob nods, Julia turns away. Blackout.

## **SCENE 2: ROB AND MEGAN'S HOUSE - MORNING**

Megan is typing an email on her laptop.

MEGAN

So I uploaded the last video. I think Sammy's lost interest in the  
Play-doh tower. Can't say I blame him. Rob has too, he asked if it  
was permanent. He's with Sammy this morning. He's really trying.

It's just-- it's hard right now. We're three weeks away from the school year and don't have a place for Sammy, the home schooling is tough and I'm not bringing in any income.

(beat)

It's not much of a loss. Ever since we got the diagnosis, my work seems like such bullshit. I touch up pictures for home design magazines. So I get these assignments with these pictures of homes where everything is just perfect: the house and the space and the light and the furniture. This tremendous care has been taken to make this space a reflection of some kind of sensibility. Like if you live in a space like this your life would be on a higher plane, you'll feel smarter, dress better, have better conversation, better sex.

(beat)

It's such a lie. Because I look at them and they seem so empty. There is nothing to them, you can't imagine people really living there. These are the houses people want to live in, or even just look at pictures of, and they seem so lonely to me. They're like these alone spaces.

(she shakes her head)

Oh my God, you're going to think I'm a crazy person. I'm enclosing the unfinished thesis. If you can get through the first ten pages you can be my new thesis advisor.

### SCENE 3: LIVING ROOM - MORNING

Rob sits at the small table, holding out a book that has large objects and numbers next to them. He looks out at Sammy.

ROB

Sammy, point to the one. Can you point to the one? No, one. This is a one. One truck. Try again, point to the one. Sammy, look at me. Good. Okay point to the one.

(He puts his hand over Sammy's hand)

There, that's the one. Okay? Alright point to the two. Sam. Sammy Daddy's talking to you, sit up. Sit up, Sammy.

(getting frustrated)

Sammy, sit up, we're not finished.

(louder)

I mean it Sam, sit up now!

A beat.

ROB

I said sit the fuck up! I know you understand me, you know we're still working here. Now when I tell you to sit up you fucking do it!

He raises his hand at Sammy as if about to hit him. A long beat.

He closes his eyes tightly, shakes his head and takes a deep breath.

ROB

Okay, Sammy, time to sit up. C'mon buddy.

(he helps Sammy into his seat)

Sorry, buddy. Daddy's sorry.

(He stares at Sammy, unsure what to do.)

Alright, let's try a puzzle instead, huh?

(He reaches over to a small stack of toys and pulls out a puzzle)

How about the dinosaur puzzle?

Megan enters carrying groceries. She watches them working. Rob takes the individual puzzle pieces out and guides them into the right slots.

MEGAN

Good, honey. No words. You're doing so much better with that. How's he doing?

ROB

I get too impatient.

MEGAN

(laughs)

Oh Jesus honey, who doesn't?

(Rob shakes his head)

So you spoke with the lawyer?

ROB

Yeah, he got everything in.

MEGAN

Good.

Rob shrugs, picks up a Tigger doll, gestures to Sammy, while Megan puts bags on the kitchen counter.

ROB

(to Sammy)

Hey, you want to see Tigger dance?

He pushes Tigger's stomach, waiting for a response.

MEGAN

Oh, Tigger's busted.

Rob nods his head, oddly dejected by this.

ROB

He says it's usually a couple weeks before the district even reviews it, let alone responds.

He puts down Tigger and picks up the puzzle again.

MEGAN

Well, don't be all down about it. At least he got it in. So can we cancel the next meeting with the district?

ROB

No we still go, just don't sign anything.

(another puzzle piece goes in)

Good one, Sam. Brachiasorous.

MEGAN

Even if he doesn't get this spot, if we win against the district hopefully we'll get the next one. There or at another good school.

ROB

Yeah. But to be honest I don't even know that we ever had a real chance at this slot.

MEGAN

Why not? I thought she told you it was his.

ROB

Yeah, she did, at one point. But you know how people are.

MEGAN

What, you don't trust her?

Long beat. Rob sits back, abruptly drops the puzzle game. They both watch Sammy move towards the trampoline.

Rob speaks quietly, still gazing at Sammy.

ROB

I slept with her.

MEGAN

What?

(Megan processes this, stares at him blankly.)

What did you just say?

(Rob still stares at Sammy)

How did that happen?

ROB

I met her after the evaluation to get her feedback. We went for coffee. She talked about some books she had on doing ABA at home. I asked to borrow them and we went to her place to pick them up.

MEGAN

And you slept with her?

Rob nods. A beat. She watches Sammy climb up on a cabinet.

MEGAN

(sharply)

Down, Sammy. Get down.

(they both watch)

Down, sweetie.

They watch Sammy run back to the trampoline.

MEGAN

So what now, how am I supposed to react to this?

ROB

I don't know.

MEGAN

Will you be sleeping with her again?

He shakes his head.

ROB

She had -- some kind of breakdown.

MEGAN

She slept with you once and then she had a breakdown?

ROB

I don't know what to call it, basically.

MEGAN

This sounds like a very pathetic affair, honey.

He looks at her for the first time.

ROB

I'm sorry.

Long pause. She shakes her head.

Rob reaches for her hand, she snaps it back in a wild, uncontrolled motion. She settles herself and whispers.

MEGAN

Don't touch me.

Rob closes his eyes and nods his head. Long silence. Megan picks up Tigger, looks towards Sammy.

MEGAN

You know I was always so thankful that he got your eyes. Those limpid pools. But when you try to get them to focus on you, you realize, how -- blank they are.

(back to Rob)

And now, you drop this bombshell, and it's like you're staring out with this same glaze.

ROB

Listen, I'm sorry. It wasn't a planned thing.

She turns away and gestures to Sammy.

MEGAN

Sammy, come on, let's go to the park sweetie.

Blackout.

**SCENE 4: STAGE - NIGHT**

Silverman appears.

SILVERMAN

...but what struck me about it, you know you say you're having this hard time getting back into it and you're a different person now then when you wrote it, but it seems so relevant. I mean to what you're doing now with Sammy. You're talking about this thing, the building, that on the outside is so beautiful and fascinating, but it's hard to penetrate, so hard to see into. You know your point, it seems to me, is that the Cubists failed because they didn't make the interior spaces come alive. You want buildings to reflect the energy of the people that inhabit them, right? You want to open up possibilities for relationships and ideas and communication. And playing with shape and movement on the facade is a start, but only a start. You see? This is exactly the point of what we're trying to do now with Sammy.

(beat)

I'm sorry I'll get off my high horse, everything doesn't come back to LAC. You're talented and you should finish it.

Lights down on Silverman.

**SCENE 5: LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Megan is holding a glass of wine, sitting at her laptop, staring at it. Not moving. She finally takes a deep breath and types.

MEGAN

Are you there?

Lights up on Silverman.

SILVERMAN

Yes, hi.

MEGAN

You're always on late at night.

SILVERMAN

Yeah, I'm a night guy.

MEGAN

In your book you say you're a morning person.

SILVERMAN

That's the book persona.

MEGAN

There's a book persona and a real persona?

SILVERMAN

I guess.

MEGAN

My husband says it's like a cult of personality.

SILVERMAN

Ha.

Most people tell me I'm pretty boring.

MEGAN

Oh, right.

You invented this new kind of therapy.

You've made it into this huge operation.

SILVERMAN

That's the product.

MEGAN

No, it's not just the product.

It's you.

This has changed me.

SILVERMAN

Well, you're doing the hard work--

MEGAN

No, I don't feel that way.  
You know, I doubt myself.  
And then I hear from you and it's like you give me this energy.

SILVERMAN

(overlapping)

That comes from you, it's always been there.  
Plus, you said your husband's been trying.

MEGAN

Ha.

SILVERMAN

What?

MEGAN

He had an affair.  
I don't think that's the right word.

SILVERMAN

He cheated on you?

MEGAN

Yeah.  
But, it's weird. He did it to--  
(stops herself)  
I don't want to talk about it.

SILVERMAN

OK.

(beat)

So what are you going to do?

MEGAN

I don't know.

Another long beat.

SILVERMAN

Are you going to stay with him?

MEGAN

I don't think I could do this by myself.

SILVERMAN

People would help you.

MEGAN

Yeah, I guess. I really don't want to talk about it.

SILVERMAN

OK, sorry.

MEGAN

How did you read 330 pages of an unfinished Master's thesis in two days?

SILVERMAN

I was interested.  
It helps me know you better.

MEGAN

This is so weird.  
I mean for you to spend so much time on me.  
You can't do this often.

SILVERMAN

I've never done anything like this before.

MEGAN

I really want to meet you.

SILVERMAN

I want to meet you too.

MEGAN

When? You're only three hours away.  
I could come there, get coverage for a night.  
How about this weekend?

SILVERMAN

I don't want to disrupt your routine.

MEGAN

It wouldn't be disruptive, he can put Sammy to bed.

(beat)

I'm just saying I want to see you.

I mean you're maybe my closest confidant at this point

It would be nice just to have a real conversation.

(beat)

Are you there?

SILVERMAN

Yes.

I want that too.

MEGAN

Well when, then?

SILVERMAN

It might not be what you expect.

MEGAN

I wouldn't expect anything.

How about Friday?

Sammy has after-school that day.

I could be up there by 6 or 7.

(beat)

If I'm imposing, just tell me.

SILVERMAN

No, I want to.

There's something you need to know before you see me face to face.

NOTE: **One** of the following lines should be used only if it suits the actor playing Silverman. Otherwise it should be cut.

MEGAN

(quietly, with a smirk)

That you're not -- tall?

That you're not -- thin?

Beat.

SILVERMAN

That wasn't me.

MEGAN

What do you mean?

Is this the "persona" thing again?

SILVERMAN

I'm not Silverman.

MEGAN

What?

Longer beat.

SILVERMAN

I'm not him. My name is Ephraim. I work in the IT group here.

MEGAN

Your name is Ephraim?

Silverman nods his head awkwardly. Looks around, puts his hands in his pockets and exits.

MEGAN

Could you please explain what the hell is going on?

Ephraim, early 20s, scruffy, enters and stands where Silverman was.

EPHRAIM

(beat)

I was on call handling customer care.  
I got your email and replied to it myself.

MEGAN

What?

So I'm talking to some kind of LAC customer care person?

EPHRAIM

Actually I'm in the IT department  
But we cover customer care sometimes.

Silence. Megan stares at her screen.

MEGAN

So this whole time you've just been bullshitting me?

EPHRAIM

(overlapping, "not at all"  
starts after "bullshitting")

Not at all, I was totally sincere.

MEGAN

Except that you were pretending to be someone else.

EPHRAIM

Right. But I believed what I said.  
I believe in the program.

MEGAN

You're not even a consultant, you're an IT guy?

EPHRAIM

(murmurs)

I'm in IT.  
I wouldn't say I'm an "IT Guy."

MEGAN

Why not?

EPHRAIM

That's just not how I define myself.  
I'm also an actor and performance artist.

MEGAN

(raising her voice)

I'm sorry, did I just mischaracterize you?

EPHRAIM

(overlapping)

I'm just clarifying.

MEGAN

(overlapping)

Was that anything like the way you've mischaracterized yourself for  
the past two weeks?

EPHRAIM

You have a right to be upset.  
You do.

MEGAN

Thank you. I appreciate that.  
I can't talk to you anymore.  
Don't email me, don't IM me.

Megan abruptly shuts off her computer and closes the laptop. She sits back on the couch, dazed.

She gets up and goes to the kitchen towards the coffee maker. She stops, staring at the Play-Doh tower on the counter. She abruptly picks up an empty wine bottle and beats down on the tower violently, then throws bits and pieces of it down on the ground and across the room.

She calms down, keeping a piece of Play-Doh and kneading it in her hands, shaking her head.

MEGAN

(under her breath)

What a fucking idiot...

She begins to clean up her mess. The phone rings. She stares at it, picks up.

MEGAN

Hello.

EPHRAIM

Hi. Ms. Holden?

MEGAN

Yes.

EPHRAIM

It's me. Ephraim. From LAC.

MEGAN

What did I just say?

EPHRAIM

You said don't IM and don't email.

MEGAN

Right. So you figured that meant I wanted you to find my number and call me.

EPHRAIM

I just wanted to explain myself.

MEGAN

Listen, I don't want to hear from you, I don't want to talk to you--

EPHRAIM

(overlapping)

I know, don't hang up--

MEGAN

(overlapping)

And if you try to get in touch with me again I'll have you fired.

EPHRAIM

Right, well, actually--

MEGAN

(interrupts)

Is this, so they tell you to do this, respond to people as Silverman? They have a whole phone crew of fake-Silvermans?

EPHRAIM

Oh, God no. You replied to the auto-reply, which just goes into general customer care. I was on call.

MEGAN

And you just decided to email me back as Silverman.

EPHRAIM

Yeah.

MEGAN

Why?

EPHRAIM

You know, I really don't know. I just felt like I wanted to talk to you.

MEGAN

As Silverman.

EPHRAIM

No, as myself. But I didn't think you'd be as likely to talk to me if you knew I was a computer technician handling customer care issues.

MEGAN

Well, I probably wouldn't.

EPHRAIM

And then when it started, you know, I liked it. I liked being him. It felt good. And I, I think I was good at it.

MEGAN

You're a better Silverman than Silverman.

EPHRAIM

(moved)

Wow, thank you. Thanks, that means a lot.

MEGAN

You're welcome. I'm still going to have you fired.

EPHRAIM

Yeah. Well, not to burst your bubble on that but I'm not sure how long I'm going to stick around anyway.

MEGAN

You're quitting? After how you sold this to me? You've been like a frigging preacher--

EPHRAIM

Well, I was Silverman.

MEGAN

Right. So it was all acting. Or performance art.

EPHRAIM

A little of both, yeah. But I wasn't lying either. I mean I think it works, or it works for most people.

MEGAN

So why are you leaving?

EPHRAIM

I don't know. This changed me.

MEGAN

What has.

EPHRAIM

Talking to you. As him.

MEGAN

Has changed you.

EPHRAIM

I'm always so wrapped up in my own shit that I can't talk like this with anyone. Even though we weren't physically together and I was playing someone else, I was still able to reach you, you know. Just like you're trying to reach Sammy.

MEGAN

You told me you were going to help me get to know him.

EPHRAIM

(quietly)

I know, I was trying--

MEGAN

You don't jerk people around like that, you know... I thought I had this -- expert helping me.

(beat)

I thought we had a connection.

EPHRAIM

You did, we did, that's what I'm saying. It just wasn't what you thought it was.

(long beat)

Who did he sleep with?

MEGAN

What?

EPHRAIM

Your husband, the short-lived affair.

MEGAN

The woman who runs the school where we're trying to send our son.

EPHRAIM

Wow.

(beat)

Did that work?

MEGAN

No, doesn't look like it.

EPHRAIM

Listen, I understand you're upset and everything. But if you want-- I'd still like to meet you.

MEGAN

Ephraim, I'm married and I have a son with autism. What do you possibly think--

EPHRAIM

I know. I mean, just to say hello. I wasn't talking about anything more.

MEGAN

You send me an email next time you do one of your performance pieces.

EPHRAIM

Okay, I will. Listen, I meant what I said about your thesis. It knocked me out. And... you need to have your own life, you know?

(Megan nods, kneading Play Doh)

You seem like a good mom.

MEGAN

(shaking her head)

Thanks Ephraim. You seem like a good actor.

Megan hangs up. Surveys the Play-doh wreckage, begins to clean it up.

Rob enters. Sees the mess, goes to get himself a glass of water.

ROB

You want to tell me what happened?

MEGAN

Not really.

He nods. Begins to help her clean up, trying to put the crushed tower pieces in piles. Megan throws them in a trash bag.

MEGAN

I don't think I can do this anymore.

ROB

What?

MEGAN

All this. Teach him at home. It's not working.

ROB

Okay. So what then?

MEGAN

I don't know.

ROB

It's not like we have a lot of options, honey. There's no advantage to going back to Riverview now.

MEGAN

(interrupts)

I wouldn't send him back there anyway.

ROB

You won't teach him at home, you won't send him to the only school available to us. I'm sorry, what do you want to do?

MEGAN

I think I need to get out of this house.

ROB

What does that mean?

MEGAN

I don't know. Maybe go to my dad's for a while.

ROB

What--

(beat)

What will that accomplish? You understand, we have an immediate problem here. He needs 30 hours a week, we're agreed on that, right?

MEGAN

(interrupts around "30 hours")

I was thinking of visiting their school.

ROB

What?

MEGAN

Brick Township has a good autism program in their public school.

ROB

I know that.

(shaking his head)

You're talking about moving in with your father?

MEGAN

I don't know. Or an apartment nearby.

ROB

You want to move to the shore?

MEGAN

You know he loves the beach.

ROB

It's an hour and a half away, 2 hours from my job. \*

(beat)

What is this, what are you saying?

MEGAN

I'm saying it's something we could consider. For a while.

ROB

Splitting up.

MEGAN

It's like we're on these separate tracks right now, doing -- maybe well-intentioned, but equally stupid things. And none of it's helping Sammy.

ROB

You want to be a single mom dealing with all this? This is not a typical situation where we can just throw up our hands because we're not getting along--

MEGAN

Maybe you should have thought of that before your -- coffee.

ROB

(quieter, damage control mode)

Honey, listen--

MEGAN

I don't want to do this now.

ROB

When do you want to do it?

MEGAN

I don't know. Right now I'm tired and I want to go to sleep.

Blackout.

**SCENE 7: ADMINISTRATION BUILDING CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING**

Regina is sitting alone in the conference room.  
Rob enters, putting away his cell phone.

ROB

Hi, good morning. She's running a little late, she'll be here in a minute.

Rob sits, Regina nods. Silence.

ROB

I want to say something to you. My lawyer would kill me for this.  
(deep breath)  
This process has caused my wife and I a lot of stress.

Which I haven't handled well. I blamed you. For this, what we're going through. That wasn't fair.

REGINA

What's the point of you telling me this, Mr. Holden?

ROB

I'm trying to learn to be empathetic -- to see others' point of view.

REGINA

I know what empathetic is.

Long pause.

REGINA

You feel empathy for the minority families in this community with kids at Riverview?

ROB

I don't see what that has to do with our situation.

REGINA

Of course you don't.

Megan enters, Regina either doesn't notice or doesn't acknowledge her.

REGINA

They don't have connections and lawyers. So what kind of education do their kids get?

ROB

I don't know.

REGINA

You don't care.

ROB

It's not my primary concern, no.

REGINA

Exactly. You don't care about our children. And you expect us to do extra for yours.

Megan looks at Regina, bewildered.

MEGAN

So, did we start?

REGINA

(looking at her watch)

No. I need both of you to sign this document before we can start.

(she hands the document to Rob,  
who signs and passes on to  
Megan)

MEGAN

(to Regina)

I'm sorry, what were you just saying?

REGINA

It doesn't matter.

MEGAN

It matters to me.

Megan signs and hands the document to Regina who files it in her binder. She hands copies of a large document to both Megan and Rob.

REGINA

Page two, placement recommendation.

(she reads, by rote)

Based on a review of the current data, it has been determined that Samuel Holden's functional goals would be best met in a program more tailored to his areas of need. The district recommends Turning Point Learning Academy. District will arrange for transportation to and from the facility and after-school programming--

Megan finally interrupts.

MEGAN

You're, wait, you're really going to send him to Turning Point?

REGINA

Was something not clear to you?

MEGAN

No, I'm just surprised. This is -- amazing! What happened?

ROB

What about home consulting?

REGINA

(looking down, reading again)

10 hours a week of home consulting services through a certified provider to be determined jointly--

ROB

(interrupts, to Megan)

LAC's a certified provider.

MEGAN

I can't believe this.

(beat)

So what, the lawyers reached some kind of settlement?

Regina turns to the final page of the documents and turns them around for Megan and Rob to sign.

REGINA

If you agree to the placement, you can sign here.

Rob quickly signs.

MEGAN

Can you not tell me how this happened?

Rob passes the document to Megan. She's still staring at Regina.

ROB

It doesn't matter now, he's in the school--

MEGAN

I'd just like to know how he got in the school.

ROB

What difference does it make?

(gesturing to the document)

Sign it.

MEGAN

(to Regina)

This is such a big change. Something must have happened.

REGINA

Yes. Something happened.

Long beat.

MEGAN

(appealing)

I'd, I'd really appreciate it if you tell me.

REGINA

Jim Fitzpatrick got a phone call. Five minutes later he came out with instructions for a new placement.

MEGAN

Who was the phone call from?

Regina looks at her, then at Rob.

REGINA

She really doesn't know? Because I *know* you know.

MEGAN

Know what?

REGINA

Julia Moore, the principal of Turning Point, she and Fitzpatrick were-  
(she stops herself)  
"seeing" each other. She made a call and now there's a new IEP.

Megan processes this. Turns to Rob without thinking. As if confirming a weather report.

MEGAN

So he's getting in because you slept with a woman who slept with our school district's lawyer?

Rob looks at Megan, stunned.

REGINA

Oh shit, are you serious?

ROB

Honey, just sign the piece of paper and we'll talk about it later.

Silence. Megan leans over and signs the document.  
Regina looks at Rob.

REGINA

Well congratulations. And now our already struggling district will have \$90 thousand dollars less this year for other kids--

ROB

(cutting her off)

Oh, please, we're supposed to feel guilt over that? They could shower you with money and you people wouldn't come up with a decent education for those kids.

Long beat. Rob starts to exit.

REGINA

(quietly)

It won't matter.

ROB

What?

REGINA

In the long run it won't.

ROB

What do you mean?

REGINA

You pull all the strings, do whatever you have to do to get your son into a place like that.

(bear)

Why? You really think it'll make a difference?

ROB

(overlapping)

Of course we do.

REGINA

(overlapping)

Your son has autism, you understand? You think they can change that?

ROB

I think it gives him the best chance, yes.

REGINA

Right, they push him and prod him and give him the special kid's Blackberry or whatever and at the end of the day he'll still have autism. You know what'll change?

(a fierce whisper)

You'll feel better. That's all.

Rob stands, staring at Regina.

MEGAN

(overlapping)

That's enough.

REGINA

(overlapping)

All this stuff you've done to get your kid into the classiest school? It's about you. Not your boy.

Rob takes a step towards Regina. He may be shaking. Megan touches his shoulder, calming him.

MEGAN

Honey.

(turns to Regina)

We just wanted to find a decent place for our son. That's all.

Regina begins organizing her files and stands up to exit. It doesn't appear as if she's going to respond until she reaches the door.

REGINA

My nephew has ADHD. Now it's a different situation than Samuel's. But my sister sends him to Riverview. You think she loves her boy any less than you do?

MEGAN

Of course not.

REGINA

She doesn't have a choice, she's got no money for a lawyer. So don't pretend this is fair.

MEGAN

Fair? I didn't say it was fair.

(sharply)

My kid is three and can't say Mommy.

(her voice falters slightly)

Is that fair?

Regina looks at Megan for a beat, then looks down.

REGINA

No, it's not. That's not fair.

Regina exits, leaving Megan and Rob alone in the conference room. Long pause. Megan sits back.

MEGAN

So how did you find out about Julia and Fitzpatrick?

Rob, still standing, looks around the room.

ROB

You really want to talk about this here?

MEGAN

What, did you hire a private detective?

ROB

A mother I met at the open house told me.

MEGAN

So you knowingly picked out this woman, got this information about her, and basically seduced her so she could do this for us?

ROB

No. I knew I wanted to get her help, but I didn't seduce her. It just happened.

MEGAN

How did it just happen?

ROB

I told you we met for coffee. We talked about ABA and Sammy's diagnosis and why she changed her major to child psychology when her dad wanted her to be a lawyer. And I'd just seen her working with Sammy, with, you know, more passion and fun than anyone we've had.

MEGAN

Including me.

ROB

No, I just mean it wasn't a job for her. I know you think ABA can be, sort of, rote. And it can, but you know, it wasn't with her.

(beat)

And seeing that, talking to her, there was this... connection. For both of us I think. I mean she asked me if I wanted to borrow the books. I didn't feel like I was seducing anyone.

MEGAN

But you soldiered through it...

ROB

(acknowledges this)

Yeah. But, when it happened, it felt so wrong. I mean we'd talked so easily before, and then, afterward, just being near each other was so awkward. All I saw on her face was this -- pain I just caused. I hadn't thought about that. I hadn't thought about you.

(beat)

Paige asked me how Sammy's doing today. And you know, I try to be positive but I found myself saying things like "closed off" and "hard to reach." And I see her look at me. I sit five feet apart from this woman and sometimes I'll go a week without saying a word to her.

(beat)

And you know it hit me, in the look she gave me, that she was making this connection. About me and my autistic kid. That this is from me, you know?

MEGAN

No honey.

Rob's speech gets choppy through the following passage.

ROB

This total inability to see the world from another perspective. I mean to him, Sammy sees people as just these things. Things that want something from you, things you can't understand, things that don't mean anything to you when they're not there. You know? And I -- get that. I know that feeling. And you know -- *I'm* trying to get *him* changed. When I have no idea, no fucking clue how to deal with people myself.

(beat)

So all this shit with the schools and the therapies -- I mean, you know, what if Regina's right? It might help but it won't -- change him.

MEGAN

You can't think that way.

ROB

I don't think that way enough. I don't. This is who he is. I think about him as a broken thing that needs to be fixed. My son.

MEGAN

I think about how our lives would be if he hadn't been born.

Rob processes this. Maybe closes his eyes. Speaks softly.

ROB

That's natural.

MEGAN

For a mother to imagine a world without her son? To think of it as freedom? To think that we could have had other children, typical children?

ROB

(beat)

We still could.

MEGAN

(lightly mocking)

You think that's a good idea right now?

ROB

Probably not right now.

MEGAN

I feel like I'm barely functioning as a parent for Sammy.

ROB

Oh, please, you've killed yourself with the home schooling, plus all that stuff with LAC--

MEGAN

But even that, it's -- I think it was more like therapy for me.

(beat)

You know, he would talk about visualizing your future, building the relationships you want to have. And it becomes this fantasy, this indulgence. I'd just let him do it.

Beat.

ROB

Who?

MEGAN

What?

ROB

You said "let him do it." You mean Silverman?

MEGAN

Oh, yeah. Silverman. Basically.

Rob nods, confused, but lets it pass. Looks around.

ROB

We gotta get out of this room.

Megan nods, they don't move.

ROB

He with your dad?

MEGAN

He's taking him to the boardwalk at Belmar. They have that frog jumper ride.

ROB

Oh, right. He loves that thing...What are you going to do?

MEGAN

Well, honey, you went to a whole lot of trouble to get him into Turning Point.

Rob leans in, touches her hand.

ROB

I want you to come home. I want you both home.

Megan nods, smiles and squeezes his hand.  
Blackout.

### SCENE 8: STAGE

Two months later. Ephraim appears.

EPHRAIM

I understand if you don't want to write back. I do. But I'm curious what you decided. With LAC, with the school for Sammy, your husband. I did quit by the way. I'm on a tour with a children's theatre company. It's not as easy as it sounds. The play we're doing is this sort of parable about gang violence. I play a snitch. Yesterday a kid threw a full can of Doctor Pepper at my head. It's rewarding though. Plus, I should get my Equity card.

(beat)

You're not selfish. You want to know your son better. That's what we promised you. Silverman and me. So -- you felt something for us. There's nothing wrong with that.

(beat)

I hope you'll still send me your thesis when it's done. I'll talk to you.

### SCENE 10: KITCHEN - EVENING

Megan is in the kitchen, holding half of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. On the counter we see a full-sized loaf of bread.

MEGAN

Sit down when you eat sweetie. No work this time.

(beat)

Good. Chew chew chew.

She makes a playfully huge chewing motion, leaning in towards Sammy.

Rob enters with a hamper full of laundry. Looks at Sammy.

ROB

He looks beat.

She nods her head.

MEGAN

Yeah, he is. Swimming kicks his ass.

They both look at Sammy.

ROB

How's he doing with it?

MEGAN

Good. He's not drinking the water as much.

Rob picks up Sammy's Spiderman bookbag and takes out a notebook.

ROB

They need more socks? Didn't we just send in extra socks?

MEGAN

She says he chewed on them.

ROB

Why doesn't he have shoes on?

MEGAN

They take off his shoes for a lot of the floor games. Plus he takes them off himself on the bus.

ROB

So what, then they throw them out?

MEGAN

(nodding)

She says it's unsanitary.

ROB

God forbid the genius teacher gets her hands dirty and washes something.

MEGAN

Not in the job description.

ROB

When's Natasha here?

MEGAN

Four. She liked your video. Said it was one of the best she's seen.

ROB

I'm sure she says that to all the skeptical fathers. Anyway, it was your idea.

MEGAN

Well, you still did it.

ROB

(looking at Sammy)

It was fun.

(to Sammy)

Right buddy?

He turns to Megan.

ROB

You want a hug?

MEGAN

(turning to look at him)

Me?

ROB

Yeah.

Megan considers this.

MEGAN

Yeah, sure, I'd take a hug.

Megan puts down her sandwich and stands.

Rob puts down the notebook. They approach each other awkwardly, as if trying to remember how to hug. Then they hug.

MEGAN

We should hug more. He should see us hugging.

ROB

Yeah, it's a good model.

(beat)

And for us.

Megan nods.

They are quiet, their hug becomes less rigid, more natural. Megan's body releases into Rob's.

He rocks her back and forth.

MEGAN

What are you doing?

ROB

I'm dancing you. With you.

MEGAN

No, I like that. You dance me.

He shuffles her towards the music player, and turns on an old blues song, not necessarily a perfect song to dance to (maybe Lovin' Spoonful by Mississippi John Hurt).

They dance. Megan watches Sammy over Rob's shoulder as they dance. Lights fade out as the music gets louder.

\*