

Where is Everybody?

A full-length comedy

Kevin Daly

A retiring high school physics teacher attempts to connect with his two adult sons by engaging in his oldest son's imaginative entrepreneurial ideas.

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CHARACTERS

Jerry Beeker*(m) sixty-three*

High school physics teacher from Connecticut. There's kindness, enthusiasm, and a touch of disorganization in everything he does.

David Beeker*(m) thirty-two*

Insurance salesman. Father of two. Former musician. Jerry's youngest son.

Tommy Beeker*(m) thirty-four*

A free spirit. Often unemployed. Today he's an entrepreneur. Jerry's oldest son.

SETTING & TIME

This play is a series of four scenes and four interludes.

All scenes take place in **Jerry's** living room

All interludes take place in **Jerry's** classroom.

It is spring in Connecticut. 2015.

Scene one	-	living room	
<i>Interlude A</i>	-	<i>classroom</i>	
Scene two	-	living room	a few days later
<i>Interlude B</i>	-	<i>classroom</i>	
Scene three	-	living room	the following evening
<i>Interlude C</i>	-	<i>classroom</i>	
Scene four	-	living room	weeks later
<i>Interlude D</i>	-	<i>classroom</i>	

Scene One

At rise. Jerry's living room.

There is a couch.

A stiff reading chair.

A coffee table with newspapers, magazines, and books scattered about.

A dusty bookshelf overflowing with dusty books.

A desk littered with student papers and mugs of coffee.

A wood burning stove.

Above the stove: portrait Jerry with his two sons.

Stage right: a small kitchen with outdated appliances.

A sink overflowing with dishes.

Stage left: door to the master bedroom.

Somehow this room feels warm and welcoming.

Jerry and his two adult sons, **David** and **Tommy**, are mid-discussion.

Tommy's pitching his latest entrepreneurial idea. **Jerry's** being supportive. **David**, not so much.

TOMMY

People die all the time. It can happen suddenly without warning. Dave, I think of you and your family out for a drive, BOOM, car accident. You're all dead.

DAVID

OK, I'm done.

JERRY

Wait a minute. Hear him out.

TOMMY

Can I ask you a question? What's going to happen to your cat?

DAVID

(To Jerry)

Is he kidding me?

JERRY

It's a legitimate question.

TOMMY

What's going to happen to the cat, Dave?

DAVID

(To Jerry)

You want me to take this seriously?

JERRY

I do.

DAVID

OK, if my family and I are in a car accident the last thing I'm worrying about is my cat.

JERRY

That's his point.

TOMMY

Your cat's going to starve to death.

DAVID

Why wouldn't you feed it?

TOMMY

What if I'm in the car with you?

DAVID

Dad would feed the cat.

TOMMY

He's in the car too.

JERRY

Massive tragedy.

DAVID

I couldn't fit that many people.

TOMMY

Dad and I were driving in the car that hit you. We're all dead.

DAVID

What are the chances of that happening?

JERRY
You have to use some imagination.

DAVID
We all die in a car accident?

TOMMY
What happens to the cat?

DAVID
My mother-in-law has a key.

TOMMY
What if she didn't?

DAVID
I would get her one.

TOMMY
I want you to imagine what that would be like for the cat.

DAVID
Being stuck with my mother-in-law?

JERRY
David, be serious.

DAVID
Come on, pop. This is funny.

TOMMY
You said five minutes. You couldn't even give me thirty seconds.

JERRY
(To Tommy)
Finish the pitch. He'll listen.

TOMMY
He doesn't want to hear it.

JERRY
(Taking him aside)
He does. He does. Tell it to him the way you told me. Take a moment. He'll listen.

OK.
TOMMY

You have something important to say.
JERRY

Tommy reaches into a cardboard box lying on the floor and withdraws his invention: The Kitty Bomb.

This is too much.
DAVID

Can I ask you a question? Do people love their animals? And you're right—the chances of you, me, dad, your kids, your wife, your in-laws, dying in a car crash are probably small.
TOMMY

Probably.
DAVID

But there's people who don't have families. They have cats. If those people die in car accidents what happens to their cats?
TOMMY

They starve!
JERRY
(Can't resist)

One tragedy becomes two. That's why I invented: The Kitty Bomb.
TOMMY
(Places the Kitty Bomb on the living room table)
It's an explosive on a timer that you put in the cat food.

Stop right there.
DAVID

Every night when you feed your cat you set the timer back 24 hours. If something happens and you don't reset the timer it explodes, emptying the bag of cat food so the cat can eat until someone comes to save them.
TOMMY

Let me get my checkbook.
JERRY

DAVID

No. We're not putting money into this. Is that an explosive?

TOMMY

It's not turned on.

DAVID

You want to sell people a bomb?

JERRY

(Reassuringly)

A small bomb.

TOMMY

It doesn't have to be cat food. Dog food. Bird food. I see a whole line of pet bombs.

DAVID

Pet bombs?

TOMMY

You don't like the idea.

DAVID

You want me to put an explosive in the pantry?

TOMMY

People would buy this.

DAVID

For revenge.

JERRY

I would buy it.

DAVID

You don't have a cat.

Tommy *prepares to take notes.*

TOMMY

Tell me what don't you like about it?

DAVID
The explosion.

TOMMY
Good. That's helpful. Why?

DAVID
I have two children in my house.

TOMMY
Maybe it's not for people with children?

DAVID
Or people with cats.

TOMMY
You don't like this idea. I have others. Let me show you.

DAVID
Tommy, I don't have time.

Tommy *exits.*

DAVID
No, don't bother I need to...

(Turning to Jerry)

I told Maureen I was leaving work half an hour ago. We have a meeting at the school tonight.

JERRY
Everything OK?

DAVID
I need you to understand when I say I'm busy I'm actually busy.

(Looks at his phone, frustrated)

I can stay five minutes—at most.

JERRY
This is good for him. He needs our support.

DAVID
The Kitty Bomb?

JERRY

A little optimism. A pinch of engagement. It would go a long way.

David *picks it up. Examines it.*

DAVID

Am I safe holding this thing?

JERRY

He worked hard on that you know. He was excited to share it with you.

DAVID

You didn't give him money for this?

JERRY

A little something to get him going.

DAVID

They're going to put you both on the no fly list.

David *puts the Kitty Bomb back in the cardboard box.*

DAVID

Come on, pop. Tell me you're not worried about him.

JERRY

Actually, I'm worried about my other son. You want a soda?

DAVID

I'm good.

Jerry *pours himself a glass of homemade orange soda.*

DAVID (CONT.)

You're worried about me?

JERRY

You look stressed.

DAVID

I am stressed.

JERRY
Work or home?

DAVID
It's my dad. He calls me every day.

JERRY
I have to call or I'd never see you.

DAVID
(Pause)
I'm having a hard time at work. I'm going to miss my sales mark this month.

JERRY
How far off are you?

DAVID
I've been looking for other jobs.

JERRY
Oh.

DAVID
I have to be more focused, I've been distracted.

JERRY
By what?

DAVID
An old man and his idiot son.

JERRY
Maybe it's a good thing. Maybe it's time to go back to music.

DAVID
That's your advice?

JERRY
When was the last time you picked up your violin?

DAVID

(Disengaged)

I don't know.

(Checks the time on his phone)

If he takes any longer I'm leaving.

JERRY

Would it be helpful to you if I started picking up the boys after school?

DAVID

(Checking emails on his phone)

They have yoga after school.

JERRY

(Trying not to react to "yoga" for four year olds)

OK. I'll take them.

DAVID

(Still engaged with the phone)

Maureen takes them.

JERRY

If she's busy...

DAVID

It's easier to do it ourselves.

JERRY

On Thursday's Tommy and I attend Trivia Night at Dover Grill. We could use your expertise in the arts.

DAVID

(Locked into an email)

I don't have expertise in the arts.

JERRY

What famous Polish composer wrote almost exclusively for the piano?

DAVID

I don't know.

JERRY

Sure you do.

I really don't know.

DAVID

Chopin.

JERRY

That's great dad.

DAVID
(Frustrated with the email)

I'd like to spend more time with you and the boys.

JERRY

Yeah, me too.

DAVID
(An automated answer)

David, could you speak to me without looking at your phone.

JERRY
(As non-confrontational as he can)

Yeah. What's up?

DAVID
(Finally disengaging from the phone)

The boys. I was asking about your boys. I'd like to spend more time with my grandchildren.

JERRY

You can see them whenever you want.

DAVID

You say that.

JERRY

David *has one last look at his phone before putting it away in his pocket.*

We've been busy.

DAVID

Busy, sure. Everyone's busy. Can you make time for your father?

JERRY

DAVID

Why is it that every time I come over— all you want to talk about is how I never come over?

JERRY

Because I feel myself getting older, David. I want to be around my family. I want to be around my grandchildren. Even if it's just picking them up and driving them to an activity. I want to do that. It's not a favor to you, it's me being selfish, I want to be around the kids. So please, take me up on this offer. Use me to alleviate some of this stress.

DAVID

It's easier if you let us stick to our routine.

JERRY

This is because I saw your wife naked.

DAVID

This is because we're busy.

JERRY

I want to explain something to you, David, and I'd like you to explain it to her. I knocked, I rang the doorbell, I called both of your cell phones. What was I supposed to do? Should I wait outside in the freezing cold?

DAVID

You could've gotten back in the car.

JERRY

I assumed you would be home soon. I had a key. Why should I wait in the car?

DAVID

You didn't have to go upstairs.

JERRY

I was excited. I don't see my grandchildren often.

DAVID

So you go into my bedroom?

JERRY

I looked in the other rooms first.

DAVID

You didn't hear the running water?

JERRY

I don't hear many things.

DAVID

You shouldn't have been in there!

JERRY

This is why I'm not invited to the house.

DAVID

Who says you're not invited to the house?

JERRY

I have the Facebook, David. I see your mother with the kids all the time. Why is it different for her?

DAVID

It's not different for her. Come over whenever you want. When we're home.

JERRY

Then I'll come this weekend.

DAVID

This weekend's no good.

JERRY

You see!

DAVID

It's a busy weekend.

JERRY

This is exactly what I'm talking about. I promise you, David, I won't go upstairs unless I'm invited.

DAVID

That's for anywhere you go!

JERRY

It's your wife. She doesn't want me around.

DAVID

No.

JERRY

Admit it.

DAVID

We've been busy.

JERRY

I want to spend more time with my grandchildren. I want them to remember me in good health—not the way you remember your grandfather.

DAVID

I don't know what to tell you, pop. You can be around the kids as much as you want. Maureen doesn't think about you any differently than I do.

JERRY

Then why do you say no every time I offer to pick them up? And don't tell me it's routine.

DAVID

We have a routine.

JERRY

David, it's your wife. She's keeping me from my grandkids.

DAVID

That's right. Maureen has made efforts to excommunicate you from your own family.

JERRY

I know you're being sarcastic but it's true.

DAVID

Oh, it's definitely true. She's one semester from being a certified renal dietician but what's most important to her is the meticulous day to day scheduling of her children's routine so their grandfather will have no way of seeing them.

JERRY

I tell you this all the time: most people cannot recall palpable memories earlier than four years old. The boys turned four this year. I want them to remember me on two feet.

DAVID

You're being ridiculous.

JERRY

How am I ridiculous?

DAVID

You'll spend plenty of time with them.

JERRY

It's a diminishing number, David. You understand that right? Those boys represent what I leave behind when I go.

DAVID

Stop it.

JERRY

All four of my grandparents died before their sixties. My grandmother, on my father's side, she died in her forties. My dad, in his fifties and my mom, sixty four. One year older than I am right now. Us Beekers, we don't overstay our welcome.

DAVID

Are you sick? Is something wrong?

JERRY

The average American male lives to seventy-eight point seven years. I'm sixty three.

DAVID

Then we've got time.

JERRY

I don't know where you're doing your math. Assuming I'm average, and your mother would argue against that, I have fifteen point seven years remaining. And in how many of those years will I be myself? By the time you knew my dad he had lost his hearing and his eyesight. I want the boys to know this me. I want them to know what I'm passionate about. I want them to know what I've learned about the world, about science, and love.

DAVID

(Amused)

What did you learn about love?

JERRY

It's not meant to be funny, David. You didn't know your grandfather.

DAVID

What's gotten into you?

JERRY

When I die he'll disappear.

DAVID

Disappear? Of all the crazy things I've ever heard you say...

JERRY

Yes, of all the crazy things that's what I'm afraid of. I'm not afraid of death I'm afraid of disappearing.

DAVID

Then we'll take some pictures.

JERRY

Everything's a joke with you.

DAVID

What do you want me to say?

JERRY

I want you to be honest with me.

DAVID

I'm being honest.

JERRY

You're not. In the past three months I haven't seen my grandchildren once. I'm being cut out. Maybe you don't realize it but the evidence speaks for itself.

DAVID

I already told you...

JERRY

I've obviously upset your wife.

DAVID

Maureen has no problem with you.

JERRY

Then what did I do wrong?

DAVID

It's not anything you did.

JERRY

But it was something?

DAVID

It's nothing.

JERRY

David, you have to tell me so I can fix it.

DAVID

You want to know the truth?

JERRY

Yes!

DAVID

You don't respect the way we raise our kids.

JERRY

What? That's crazy!

DAVID

You don't!

JERRY

An example please.

DAVID

OK, for one you give them soda whenever they come over.

JERRY

I don't buy it in the store. I make it from scratch. It's a treat they only have with their grandad. A memory in their nose and tongue that will keep me alive long after I'm gone.

DAVID

We don't want the boys eating a lot of sugar.

JERRY

It's one drink!

DAVID

You see.

JERRY

What?

DAVID

You don't respect the way we raise our kids.

JERRY

You and I both know there's nothing wrong with those boys having a homemade soda with their granddad. And this has nothing to do with sugar and everything to do with me seeing your wife...

DAVID

Why are you arguing with me? Maureen doesn't want them to grow up addicted to sugar. Why can't you just honor that?

JERRY

Addicted to sugar? Do you think that's a little extreme?

DAVID

That's my point! Instead of just accepting this is how we're raising our kids you fight us on it. It makes us look like the bad guys and it makes Maureen not want me to bring them over here.

JERRY

I knew she was cutting me out!

DAVID

She's not cutting you out! I'm cutting you out!

JERRY

(Pause)

I'll stop with the sodas—if you had been this direct with me...

DAVID

That's not it.

JERRY

There's more?

DAVID

Did you tell the twins they're living in a simulated reality?

JERRY

I did not. There's a theory to explain the absence of an encounter with extra-terrestrial life that says we could be living in a simulated reality.

DAVID

They're four years old.

JERRY

We were talking about space travel. They had questions.

DAVID

Why were you talking about space travel with preschoolers?

JERRY

It was in one of their cartoons.

DAVID

Aaron had nightmares for a week.

JERRY

You didn't tell me that.

DAVID

Do you know what he said to me? We're all going to die from an existential event.

JERRY

It's a possibility.

DAVID

This is why I don't ask you to pick them up from daycare.

JERRY

I didn't mean for that to happen. He seemed very interested at the time and he was asking a lot of questions.

DAVID

A four year old was asking a lot of questions?

JERRY

You don't have to be sarcastic with me. I understand where I went wrong.

DAVID

Do you? His brother Adam can list all the ways humanity might be wiped out in the next fifty years.

JERRY

How can they change the future without being informed?

DAVID

Dad.

JERRY

OK, you're right. No more soda, and no more legitimate scientific discussions until their older. Much older.

DAVID

Did you tell them I was boring?

JERRY

Is that what they said? I didn't say you were boring. I said you have a boring job.

DAVID

I have to go.

JERRY

David, let me explain.

DAVID

Should I quit my job and live at my mother's house like Tommy? Would that make me less boring?

JERRY

You're taking my comments out of context.

DAVID

I took them from a four year old.

JERRY

All I meant was that they should dream bigger. It wasn't an insult to you.

DAVID

Dream bigger? Is that what Tommy's doing? I should quit my job and come up with a bunch of dumb ideas?

JERRY

Gary Dahl invented the pet rock and made millions. Tell me, David, was that a dumb idea?

DAVID

You tell me, pop. Was the pet rock a dumb idea?

JERRY

You're forgetting an important lesson I tried to teach you as a child...

DAVID

(With some venom)

What's the lesson I'm forgetting? That I should find ways to exploit all the stupid people out there? Is that what you want Tommy to do? You want him to make money off some crazy cat lady? He doesn't have to waste my time. He can literally call these people and ask for their credit card information. If he makes enough phone calls someone will give it to him. I'm not boring, dad—I just don't feel like exploiting stupid people. And you know what? I'm surprised, I really am. I'm surprised you're supporting this. Because I would think even you should realize how dumb his ideas are.

Tommy returns wearing a traditional Scottish kilt, a Highlander t-shirt, and a tam o' shanter cap. He heard **David**. He pretends he didn't.

TOMMY

Can I ask you a question?

DAVID

Why not?

TOMMY

(Using air quotes)

When I say "party" what's the first thing that comes to your mind.

DAVID

Politics.

JERRY

Try again.

TOMMY

OK, what if I say "good times"?

DAVID

The TV show.

TOMMY

Why do you have to resist everything?

DAVID

Why do you have to use air quotes?

JERRY

Tell him the idea.

TOMMY

When most people think of “parties” and “good times” they think of Scotland.

DAVID

What?

JERRY

You have to hear this!

TOMMY

It’s a party bus. I got the idea at your bachelor party.

DAVID

You got the idea for a Scottish party bus at my bachelor party?

TOMMY

We rented a limo and drove to the casino. Do you remember that?

DAVID

I remember my bachelor party.

TOMMY

It wasn’t fun.

DAVID

OK.

TOMMY

It was just the three of us. We’re not really party people are we?

JERRY

Listen to this.

TOMMY

Wasn’t that night supposed to be a celebration? Didn’t we want to have a good time?

DAVID

Now I’m really glad I came over.

TOMMY

Can I ask you a question? What would you pay for a party bus where in addition to the driver you also get a Scottish party guide?

DAVID

Nothing. I would pay nothing.

TOMMY

And that's not all.

DAVID

Why?

TOMMY

You have the option to get an authentic Scottish party-guide with the kilt, bagpipes, and even one of these little hats they wear...

JERRY

Tam 'o Shanter.

TOMMY

Or just a regular Scottish guy in jeans and a Highlander t-shirt. The point is this guy becomes your party guide. He drinks scotch. He has scars from bar fights. He sings folk songs. He knows when and how to talk to women. He makes you feel like a man. I'm calling it MacBuddies. Get it? Mac—

DAVID

I get it.

JERRY

Let me get my checkbook.

DAVID

That's a terrible name. And even if it wasn't we're not Scottish. You don't know anything about being Scottish. It's going to end up a caricature, you're going to insult people.

JERRY

Not necessarily.

DAVID

You don't think so? Then what do you think of my idea? It's not a party bus it's an accounting bus. You get on the bus and there's an authentic Jewish guy waiting to do your accounting.

TOMMY
That's actually a good idea.

DAVID
It's not a good idea. It's insulting!

JERRY
You could offer a whole range of services.

TOMMY
Jewish doctor.

JERRY
Jewish dentist.

TOMMY
Jewish lawyer.

DAVID
Stop it. Both of you.

TOMMY
People would pay for that.

David's phone rings during the following. He looks at the phone and chooses to ignore the call. It happens once more before he finally picks up.

DAVID
That's where you're going wrong Tommy—it's not about what people will pay for. It's about what people need. They don't need a bus full of stereo-typical Jewish services any more than they need a Scottish party guide, or a pipe bomb in their pantry. I hate to be the one to break it to you but these stupid get rich quick schemes are not real inventions. You're a college dropout who's spent the past ten years inventing ways to avoid the real world. You were going to write the next great American novel what happened to that?

TOMMY
I'm still working on a draft.

JERRY
Can't wait to read it.

DAVID
Mom paid for culinary school what happened there?

TOMMY

I was bullied.

DAVID

You were thirty. Since then you've told me you want to be a pilot, a park ranger, and a local politician. But you can't be all those things, Tommy.

JERRY

Why not?

DAVID

Because the universe doesn't bend to his imagination.

JERRY

How do you know what the universe does and doesn't do?

DAVID

He doesn't finish anything he starts.

JERRY

He hasn't found the right thing.

DAVID

(Returning to Tommy)

You went to an entrepreneurial seminar where you were surrounded by thousands of people with real ideas, real inventions, and you didn't feel the least bit out of place?

JERRY

Why should he?

DAVID

(Answers phone, it's his wife, his frustration carrying over)

What?...I'm on my way... I was just about to... Yes, I know they do but I was just... If you'd let me...

(She hangs up)

Great. Can't wait to get home.

TOMMY

I have another idea.

DAVID

Give me that notebook.

(Takes the notebook, flips through the pages)

What do we have here? What's the next big idea?

TOMMY

I like your enthusiasm.

DAVID

Here we go. Idea number seven. "Buy land in Cuba." That's all it says.

TOMMY

It's a vacation destination.

DAVID

Number twenty-seven: the unbreakable condom.

TOMMY

Yes.

DAVID

What's it made of?

TOMMY

I don't know yet.

DAVID

An alternative source of fuel.

TOMMY

That could make us a lot of money.

DAVID

This one doesn't even have words. It's a picture.

TOMMY

That's a house built under water.

DAVID

Why don't we put together a three day entrepreneurship seminar?

JERRY

David.

DAVID

T-shirts that say “Cold Turkey”. Brilliant. An automated shovel. Like a snow blower?

JERRY

OK, David that’s enough.

DAVID

There isn’t a single worthy idea in this notebook. Don’t you think that’s a sign? Don’t you think that’s the universe trying to tell you something?

JERRY

Hey! You don’t have any right to tell somebody else what they should be doing with their life.

DAVID

I couldn’t agree more.

TOMMY

Those weren’t real ideas. They were part of an exercise. We were supposed to free-write for three minutes and that’s what I wrote down.

DAVID

And what did you take from that exercise? That you should build a bomb? I’m not comfortable with you doing that kind of stuff at mom’s house.

TOMMY

Actually David, I built it in the garage.

DAVID

Where does she park her...? No—never mind, don’t answer that. This is where I leave you.

TOMMY

(To Jerry)

Did you tell him?

JERRY

Leave it alone.

DAVID

Tell me what?

JERRY

It’s nothing. You have to get home.

TOMMY

I thought the whole point was to see if he had ideas.

DAVID

Ideas for what?

JERRY

David, we've already taken enough of your time. Go. Go pick up your boys.

DAVID

Maureen's already there. What's going on?

TOMMY

Dad lost his job.

JERRY

I didn't lose my job. They're closing down both high schools at the end of the year and combining them into one.

DAVID

You're tenured. They'll have to offer you a job at the new school.

JERRY

They did. I turned it down and put in my resignation.

DAVID

Why? You love teaching.

JERRY

And so do my younger colleagues.

DAVID

Did you sign anything?

JERRY

It's done. I've been teaching physics for thirty-five years. It can be someone else's turn.

DAVID

So what was this all about? What was the plan? Why invite me over to hear Tommy's stupid ideas?

JERRY

There was no plan.

TOMMY

We're trying to find a project we can all do together. With dad out of work and you hating your job we thought it might be good timing.

DAVID

I don't hate my job.

JERRY

It was a foolish idea. I was emotional from putting in my resignation that's why I called you this afternoon. Your wife's already angry with you. You should go.

DAVID

Are you OK?

JERRY

Yes, of course I'm OK. Your brother and I got carried away that's all.

TOMMY

David, can I ask you a question?

DAVID

Yeah, Tommy.

TOMMY

If I had an idea the three of us could work on together would you be interested?

JERRY

I think we've had enough ideas for tonight. David, you can go. Truly. I'm OK.

DAVID

Let's hear it.

TOMMY

You know how when you buy something electronic it comes in that heat sealed plastic packaging?

DAVID

Sure.

TOMMY

It's always really hard to open right?

DAVID

You should do an internet search. There's hundreds of tools that solve that exact problem.

TOMMY

When was the last time you met anybody carrying one in their pocket?

He now has David's attention.

TOMMY (CONT.)

The closest thing, a pocket knife, won't make it any easier to open. I think we can create a tool that has a metal blade, like a pocket knife, but the tip heats up enough that if you held it against the plastic- the packaging would soften and be easy to cut through.

DAVID

And when I say, how do you make it?

TOMMY

I have a diagram.

Tommy *withdraws a loose page from his notebook.*

DAVID

(To his dad)

Could it work?

JERRY

I might do things a little differently. But, yeah. I think so.

DAVID

How would you heat the tip?

JERRY

Tommy suggests a small battery. I think perhaps a little bit of fuel—no different than a cigarette lighter. Either way, very doable.

DAVID

(To Jerry)

You think it's a good idea?

JERRY

I do.

TOMMY

People would buy this.

DAVID

(Beaming with wonder)

Tommy, I think you...

The Kitty Bomb EXPLODES. We hear the ringing in their ears. It's deafening. They speak at each other. We don't hear it. They don't hear it. Only ringing.

David is attempting to berate his brother. Large gestures. **Tommy** is trying to figure out what went wrong.

Jerry is thrilled. And somewhat shellshocked.

End scene.

Interlude

Jerry speaks to his eleventh grade physics class.

JERRY

Ok, Ok, settle down. I wasn't inviting your own personal discussions. It was a serious question. What do you know about Enrico Fermi? Now you're silent? For crying out loud your high school's named after him. Nothing? Not one thing?

(Swelling with enthusiasm)

He was a Nobel Prize winning physicist. A personal hero of mine. He's best known in scientific circles for his work on induced radioactivity, perhaps more famous for his work on the Manhattan Project. But I want to talk about the Fermi Paradox. I've been thinking about it my whole adult life. Basically it boils down to this: the universe is large enough that we shouldn't be the only ones in it. But all scientific evidence says that we are. That's the paradox. Why does it seem like we're alone in the universe?

(His enthusiasm mounting)

Let's focus on our galaxy. The Milky Way. There's somewhere between two-hundred and four hundred billion stars in our galaxy and our galaxy's just one of a hundred billion galaxies in the entire universe. Astronomers have already identified as many as forty billion Earth-sized planets orbiting in habitable zones of stars similar to our Sun. Meaning: at least forty billion chances for other life to exist in our galaxy alone. And remember there's a hundred billion galaxies in the entire universe. But our galaxy: Forty billion chances for life.

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT.)

Follow me now: If just point one percent of those planets harbored life, point one percent, not one percent, point one percent, life would exist on one million planets in our galaxy alone. Even if intelligent life is extremely rare, and even if it occurs on only the smallest percentage of planets conducive to life (point one percent), just in sheer volume shouldn't we expect to see some evidence of intelligent life?

(With peaking enthusiasm)

This is the Fermi Paradox! Because it was Enrico Fermi who cut to the heart of the problem with one question: Where is everybody?

Scene Two

Jerry's living room. Three days after scene one. It's late. David has secured a meeting with a venture capitalist firm to pitch Tommy's invention.

Jerry, Tommy, and David are working on the pitch. They practice the delivery.

TOMMY

Hello. I'm Thomas Beeker.

DAVID

I'm David Beeker.

JERRY

I'm Jerry Beeker.

TOMMY

And we're asking for seventy-five thousand dollars in exchange for twenty-five percent equity in our company,

ALL TOGETHER

Beeker, Beeker, and Dad

JERRY

I'm the dad.

DAVID

(To Tommy)

Remember to shake everyone's hand. Show confidence.

JERRY
He knows what to do.

DAVID
It's a reminder.

TOMMY
(Continuing)
We have an idea that will revolutionize the packaging industry.

DAVID
Don't oversell it.

TOMMY
We're extremely excited...

DAVID
We're not extremely anything.

TOMMY
The Beeker Pen. It opens heat sealed packages.

DAVID
Good.

TOMMY
We came up with the idea while trying to open a toy for my nephew.

David *holds up an example of the packaging.*

DAVID
I have twin four year old boys and I have no idea why everything we buy is wrapped in this stuff.

TOMMY
At first I tried opening it with my hands. Obviously that doesn't work. Then I took a pair of scissors. I cut this way and that way. I ended up cutting my hand before finally giving up.

DAVID
We think everyone can relate to this type of frustration.

TOMMY

(As part of the pitch)

Can I ask you a question?

DAVID

Don't do that.

TOMMY

Of all the products made to solve this exact problem how many are small enough to fit in your shirt pocket?

All three hold up their fingers to signal "zero".

TOMMY (CONT.)

The Beeker Pen is like nothing you've seen before.

DAVID

(To Tommy)

Look, by the time we get in they've probably already heard fifty other pitches and I bet everyone begins with "this product will revolutionize your life." Let the Beeker Pen speak for itself.

JERRY

It's late, David. Maybe we should give it a rest?

DAVID

Do you know how hard it is to get a meeting with a VC? We get one shot at this.

JERRY

Let's treat tomorrow as a learning experience and take all the pressure off.

DAVID

We don't have time for training wheels. This could be a legitimate source of income for us.

JERRY

Income?

(As kindly as he can)

Maybe you're taking it just a little too seriously.

DAVID

Too seriously? Dad, you're about to lose your job.

JERRY

I'm retiring.

DAVID

At the very least it's worth getting the pitch right.

JERRY

We got it right hours ago. You're overthinking it. Tommy, keep going.

TOMMY

Maybe we should postpone the meeting.

DAVID

Why?

TOMMY

So I have more time to learn the pitch.

DAVID

I'll take the lead on the pitch.

JERRY

He's doing fine. They're either going to like the Beeker Pen or they're not.

DAVID

Let's do it once more. From the beginning. With the greeting, with everything.

JERRY

It doesn't help rehearsing to the point of exhaustion.

DAVID

The Beeker Pen could potentially change our lives. Why would we leave anything to chance?

TOMMY

That's why we should move the meeting back.

DAVID

No.

JERRY

I have to teach in the morning. Let's meet here in the afternoon. We can rehearse a couple more times before we leave for the meeting.

DAVID

We won't have time for that. Our meeting was moved up.

JERRY

What time?

DAVID

10AM.

JERRY

I'll be in class.

DAVID

You'll take the day off.

JERRY

David, I have one month left of teaching.

DAVID

We need you there. You're the one who knows the mechanics of it.

JERRY

Then push the meeting back to its original time.

DAVID

I can't do that.

JERRY

Then you'll have to go without me.

DAVID

Even after I'm telling you how important this meeting is?

JERRY

Call in the morning and explain. I'm sure they'll understand.

DAVID

I rescheduled in the first place. If I reschedule again they'll think we aren't serious.

JERRY

Why reschedule without talking to us?

DAVID

Because I didn't know you'd be so unwilling to take the day off.

JERRY

Or you did know and that's why you're just telling me now.

TOMMY

What was wrong with our original time?

DAVID

Maureen scheduled a therapy session tomorrow afternoon.

JERRY

Oh David.

DAVID

Dad, I'm asking you to please take the day off.

JERRY

No. Especially now that I understand what's happening.

DAVID

Can you please not fight me on this? It's just one missed class.

JERRY

I don't like the way you went about it, David.

DAVID

I should've talked to you first.

JERRY

You should've explained to your wife that she doesn't get everything she wants the moment she wants it.

DAVID

OK, but does Tommy need to suffer for my mistake?

JERRY

(Pause)

If it was any other day I would take a half day and come to the meeting with you.

DAVID

Why not tomorrow?

JERRY

We're discussing the Fermi Paradox.

DAVID

Come on!

JERRY

I look forward to this class all year.

DAVID

You can't hold the discussion on Friday?

JERRY

On Friday they have an exam and then I have only three weeks to cover the final two chapters.

DAVID

Nobody cares about the Fermi Paradox!

JERRY

Any responsible scientist who looks up at the night's sky...

DAVID

(Interrupting)

You're really going to skip the meeting?

JERRY

It's my favorite class of the entire year and it's the last time I'm going to teach it.

TOMMY

Can I ask a question?

DAVID

Take a lap, Tommy. The adults are speaking now.

(To Jerry)

You know *I've* already taken two days off from work and you can't even be bothered to take one.

JERRY

It was supposed to be something fun we do together. You're turning it into a job.

DAVID

Because that's what we need!

(Backtracking a bit)

That's what Tommy needs. If this isn't what you wanted why didn't anybody say anything before I wasted an entire day cold calling investors?

TOMMY

We don't even know if anybody would buy the Beeker Pen.

DAVID

(Turning on Tommy)

They will if we take it seriously.

TOMMY

He doesn't want to miss his class...

DAVID

(Returning to Jerry)

We're wasting time. Are you going to take the day off tomorrow or not?

JERRY

No.

DAVID

Then Tommy and I will do it without you.

(Moving on, to Tommy)

Let's do the pitch from the beginning.

TOMMY

Can I ask a question?

DAVID

Just do the pitch, we're all getting tired.

Tommy *looks at his dad then down at his feet.*

DAVID (CONT.)

Go ahead. Start from the beginning.

TOMMY

I'd rather postpone the meeting.

DAVID

(Sigh)

If we have to go by ourselves then we'll go by ourselves. You and I can handle it.

JERRY

(Knowing)

Did you already quit your job?

DAVID

I thought this was something we all wanted.

JERRY

Oh, David. What happened?

A moment.

DAVID

(conceding the truth)

Mr. Marigold called me into his office this morning.

Jerry's living room transforms into Mr. Marigold's office.

*We are now in **Don Marigold's office**. For this **Jerry** plays Don Marigold (David's boss).*

***Jerry, as Don Marigold**, sits at Don Marigold's desk. He's reviewing employee sales numbers. He references a large printout while inputting numbers into an excel file on his laptop.*

***David, as David**, stands nervously before Marigold's desk.*

***Tommy** observes the scene without being in it.*

DAVID

Good morning, Mr. Marigold. I was told you wanted to see me?

JERRY

(Without looking up)

Have a seat, son. I'll be right with you.

***David** sits. After a moment he tries to make conversation.*

DAVID

(Referencing a picture on the desk)

Is that your granddaughter? She must be around the same age as my boys.

JERRY

David, take a look at this sales chart.

Hands over the printout.

DAVID

Right... I've been meaning to talk to you about my performance these past couple months.

JERRY

Are there any inaccuracies on that printout?

DAVID

No, sir. Not that I'm aware of.

JERRY

You look tired, David. You look worn down.

DAVID

I realize my performance has been below standard but I can assure you...

JERRY

Do you exercise? Do you eat healthy?

DAVID

I think I eat reasonably well.

JERRY

Do you get enough sleep?

DAVID

I try to. I've got two young children. My wife and I...

JERRY

(Interrupting)

I don't sleep through the night.

DAVID

Is... Is everything ok?

JERRY

I go for a walk in the evening. I cut back on red meat. I take a spoon of honey each morning. Do you know the benefits of raw honey?

DAVID

No sir.

JERRY

(Listing)

Anti-viral, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal... It reduces the risk of cancer.

DAVID

I never knew.

JERRY

I eat healthy. Exercise. Can't sleep through the night.

DAVID

I'm sorry to hear that.

JERRY

I wear a heated mask, play whale noises, the wife gives me a little tuggy. Nothing works.

DAVID

Is there something you can take? ... A medication?

JERRY

I'm not sick, David. There's nothing wrong with me. It's the numbers. I see numbers when I close my eyes. Numbers that represent people's jobs. Numbers that represent income, expense, profit, loss. Numbers that represent my father's work, they represent what I'll leave behind to my grandchildren. They're heavy these numbers. I can feel them pressing on me while I try to sleep. They make breathing difficult.

DAVID

I think I understand where you're going with this.

JERRY

David, I have eight salespeople working for this company. One of them is my son. I can't fire my son, David. You understand that right?

DAVID

Of course.

JERRY

Even if he is an idiot he's still my son. That leaves seven salespeople from whom I have to choose somebody to let go. Take a look at that printout. On the left you've got salaries. On the right you've got sales.

DAVID

Please don't fire me.

JERRY

David, this is not something I enjoy doing.

DAVID

If you give me one month...

JERRY

On that sheet I've given you three.

DAVID

(Rising from his seat)

Mr. Marigold, If I could...

JERRY

David, sit down.

(He does)

We sell insurance policies. Sales are down across the board. It's not just you but the numbers on that printout show me exactly how many policies each of my salespeople have sold and exactly how much I'm currently paying them for their work. Take a close look at that form and tell me, aside from my idiot son, who am I paying the most?

DAVID

(Without having to look)

Me.

JERRY

And aside from my idiot son who sold the least amount of policies this month?

DAVID

Me.

JERRY

And last month?

Me. DAVID

And the month before? JERRY

Me. DAVID

JERRY
David, when I hired you into this company I had expectations. Those expectations have not been met.

DAVID
Sir, if you would look at my sales numbers over my entire...

JERRY
(As Jerry)
This is an opportunity, David. You can go back to your music.

TOMMY
He said that to you?

DAVID
I don't know what he said to me. All I could hear was dad talking in my ear. Telling me how boring I am.

JERRY
I don't think you're boring. I never said you were boring.

TOMMY
Did he fire you?

DAVID
Listen...

JERRY
(As Marigold)
Do you understand what I'm saying, David?

DAVID
Sir, I have financial obligations.

JERRY
We all do.

DAVID
I bought my house before the market crash,

JERRY
You and the rest of us.

DAVID
My boys are in private school,

JERRY
What's wrong with public?

TOMMY
Is that Mr. Marigold or Dad?

DAVID
They have extracurricular classes, my wife is still in school, please give me an opportunity to earn my job back.

JERRY
I don't think you love selling insurance policies. You're not driven by it.

DAVID
Please Mr. Marigold I can't afford to lose my job.

JERRY
Are you desperate?

DAVID
I am.

JERRY
It doesn't show in your sales.

DAVID
My wife and I hit a rough patch. I was distracted. I'm focused now.

JERRY
(As Jerry)
Because I saw her naked?

DAVID

Dad, I need this job. Life isn't about doing what you love it's about surviving.

JERRY

(Marigold)

Did you call me dad?

DAVID

What? No. Mr. Marigold, please give me an opportunity to show you what I'm worth. I'm a good salesman, I've had a bad couple months but my record over the past six years will show you that I'm worth keeping around.

JERRY

Son, I don't have a budget to pay you.

DAVID

I'll take a pay cut.

JERRY

This is not a negotiation. You may have the day to... *(empty your desk and pack your belongings)*.

DAVID

Please sir. Give me one month to prove myself. I will lead this company in sales.

JERRY

I don't think you understand...

DAVID

No, I don't think you understand. These past three months have not been reflective of who I am.

JERRY

Lower your voice.

DAVID

(Lowering)

I'm the best salesperson you have.

JERRY

The numbers haven't reflected that.

DAVID

I've never been this motivated.

JERRY

Maybe that's the problem.

DAVID

No, sir. The problem's that my wife slept with her professor and I have been desperately trying to keep my family together despite the best efforts of my brother and my father.

JERRY

(As Jerry)

You're angry with us.

DAVID

I'm not angry with you, dad. I just want a chance to get my life back on track. To find normalcy again.

JERRY

You called me dad again.

DAVID

Sir, what I'm trying to explain is that my brother and my father are both dreamers. They're like cartoon characters that get hit in the head with anvils. They want me to join them but there's nothing to join. And I feel like I'm in a foreign country when I'm around them. I'm not like them. I'm like you. I think numbers.

JERRY

David, you're fired.

*The scene returns to **Jerry's living room.***

DAVID

It happened so fast it's hard to remember exactly what was said after that.

TOMMY

Why didn't you tell us?

DAVID

Because I didn't want you to think I was desperate.

JERRY

I think he meant about Maureen.

DAVID

I don't want you to hate her any more than you already do.

JERRY

We don't hate Maureen.

DAVID

By the end of the school year all three of us will be unemployed...

JERRY

We'll figure something out. If not the Beeker Pen it can be something else.

DAVID

Will you take the day off tomorrow?

JERRY

Yes.

DAVID

(With great relief)

That's great, dad. It really is. Because I know in my heart this is going to be huge.

TOMMY

Can I say something? I still don't think we should take the meeting tomorrow.

DAVID

Why not?

TOMMY

He doesn't want to miss his class.

DAVID

He just said he would.

TOMMY

I have other ideas. This doesn't have to be the only one.

DAVID

The unbreakable condom? The underwater house?

TOMMY

Sure.

DAVID

He can miss a day.

TOMMY

If we have an investor we should present our best idea. Not our third best idea.

DAVID

(To Jerry)

Will you say something to him?

JERRY

Tommy what's going on?

TOMMY

What if I told you I didn't invent the Beeker Pen?

DAVID

I would murder you.

JERRY

David.

DAVID

What do you mean you didn't invent the Beeker Pen?

TOMMY

What if I told you it was an idea I heard at the invention convention.

DAVID

You stole it from someone?

TOMMY

Is it stealing?

DAVID

Is it your idea?

TOMMY

I wanted to tell you sooner but you were excited. Dad was excited.

JERRY

It's good that you're telling us now.

DAVID

How? How is it good that he's telling us now?

(Turning on Tommy)

Why? Why would you lie to us?

JERRY

Don't yell at him.

DAVID

You couldn't tell me before I made an appointment with a room full of lawyers?

JERRY

David, that's your fault. You pushed too hard.

DAVID

How was I supposed to know?

TOMMY

This is my fault.

JERRY

It's not your fault.

DAVID

It is his fault. Who else's fault could this be? Why would you lie to us? We spent hours preparing. Why would you go through with that? Why not just tell us? Why lie in the first place?

TOMMY

We were having a nice time. I didn't want it to end.

DAVID

I should be at home making things right with my wife.

JERRY

It's not you who needs to make things right.

TOMMY

Maybe Emanuel isn't going to do anything with the idea.

DAVID

Maybe you need to not speak ever again. Who's Emanuel? The inventor?

TOMMY

He's not an inventor. It was just a brainstorming idea. He may have already forgotten it.

DAVID

Until he finds out we're making money off it.

TOMMY

Maybe he won't know.

JERRY

Let's not go there. David will call the investors and cancel the meeting. That's the first thing.

DAVID

Right. Then I'll have to find a way to tell Maureen I'm unemployed.

TOMMY

Can I ask a question? If we take the meeting tomorrow – how would Emanuel even know we made a deal? Even if he did, by the time he found out, wouldn't it be too late?

DAVID

Too late for what?

TOMMY

To claim it for his own. If he doesn't have a patent anybody can use it.

DAVID

Does he have a patent?

TOMMY

Probably not.

DAVID

You don't know for sure?

TOMMY

It was an idea he thought of on the spot. He may not have done anything with it since.

DAVID

What happens if we take the meeting and he finds out? Would he sue us? Could he sue us?

JERRY

Of course he could.

TOMMY

What if he doesn't have a patent?

DAVID

Then we may not be doing anything wrong.

JERRY

It would be wrong to steal his idea.

DAVID

Before I cancel the meeting I'll check with the patent office.

JERRY

Tommy has other ideas. Tomorrow afternoon we'll start working through those.

DAVID

He's doesn't have better ideas. This is the one.

TOMMY

Peanut butter for people who are allergic to peanuts.

DAVID

It's not an idea if you don't know how it works.

TOMMY

We could go back to the Kitty Bomb.

DAVID

Dad, *you* invented the Beeker Pen. For the other guy it was just an idea. Maybe we don't have to walk away from this.

JERRY

I think we should.

DAVID

(To Tommy)

Who is this guy? What's he like?

TOMMY

He seemed nice. I only met him once.

DAVID

At the seminar?

TOMMY

He's a fireman.

JERRY

Good. You want to steal from a fireman.

TOMMY

He wasn't serious about inventing. He was attending the seminar for fun.

DAVID

How'd the idea come out? Was any of it in writing?

TOMMY

The drawings but that's it. It was a brainstorming exercise.

DAVID

Was anyone else there?

TOMMY

There were hundreds of people in the auditorium but everyone was doing the exercise. They weren't listening to us.

DAVID

How'd you get paired together?

TOMMY

He was sitting next to me.

DAVID

Randomly? So other than the two of you no one has any record of this?

TOMMY

I guess.

DAVID

All he did was pitch his idea?

TOMMY

We were supposed to take our favorite idea from our brainstorming and pitch to each other. I was pitching the Kitty Bomb. Do you think we should patent that before he tries to steal it from us?

DAVID

Tommy, nobody's stealing anything. We figured out how the Beeker Pen works. It's ours. All he did was dream up an idea. An idea he probably thought of seconds before the exercise.

JERRY

Unless he's been working on it his whole life.

DAVID

Then he doesn't deserve the Beeker Pen. You figured it out in one day.

JERRY

David this isn't the correct way to go about this.

DAVID

Did you switch partners and do the pitch for someone else?

TOMMY

No. It was a one-time thing.

DAVID

Over the whole seminar would he have pitched the idea to anyone else?

TOMMY

I don't think so.

DAVID

And the pitch he gave you—tell me everything you can remember.

TOMMY

It was the idea and the sketches. Basically everything I showed you.

DAVID

How long?

TOMMY

Thirty seconds. Maybe a little less?

DAVID

(Pleased, turning to his dad)

Thirty seconds.

JERRY
It's stealing, David.

DAVID
(To Tommy)
Let me see those sketches again.

JERRY
Tommy, leave them where they are. I'm not going to be a part of this.

DAVID
Why not? Because some guy had an idea? Tommy's got a thousand ideas. An alternative source of fuel!

TOMMY
That would make us a lot of money.

DAVID
(Ignoring Tommy)
We didn't even follow the diagram. *You* invented the Beeker Pen.

JERRY
He's a fireman. He risks his life for other people. You want to be the man who steals from the fireman? No thank you.

DAVID
Was it stealing when Mr. Marigold took all my existing accounts and gave them to his son? Was it stealing when Professor Corbin slept with my wife? I feel like I've had a lot stolen from me recently so even if it is stealing, it's only a little bit, and I don't feel bad about it at all.

JERRY
David, I understand how you're feeling.

DAVID
No, you don't. You have no clue how I'm feeling because I'm not like you.

JERRY
You're exactly like me. I remember being in your exact position.

DAVID
Only I'm choosing to stay with my family.

Jerry *is visibly hurt by the comment.*

JERRY

(Pause)

There are consequences for stealing someone's idea.

DAVID

We're not stealing his idea. The Beeker Pen is ours.

(To Tommy)

Can I meet him? Do you have contact information for him?

JERRY

What's that going to solve?

DAVID

I'm going to prove to you that the Beeker Pen is ours. For him it was an idea when he was under the pressure of coming up with something for the seminar. We can prove that we built the Beeker Pen. We made it something tangible.

JERRY

Tommy doesn't know how to reach him. Why don't we turn our attention to something positive? Like our next idea.

TOMMY

(Chiming in)

I have his email address. I agree with David.

End scene.

Interlude B

Jerry *speaks to his eleventh grade physics class.*

JERRY

Maybe they're all on their phones. That's a legitimate hypothesis. There might be intelligent life out there far more advanced than our own but before they developed advanced technology to communicate with the universe they developed a source of media or entertainment so engrossing that it has rendered them disinterested in the outside world. Perhaps they never leave their homes. They never lift their eyes to the stars. They are constantly fixated to their screens. Maybe they've found a way to plug themselves in permanently. They exist within some kind of simulated reality from the moment they're born to the moment they're dead.

Scene Three

A few days later. Jerry's living room.

Jerry and **Tommy** *are getting ready for their weekly trivia date.*

David *is locked into his phone, reading an email.*

Tommy *wears loud bell bottom pants, an equally loud dress shirt opened at the chest, a curly wig and a fake mustache. It's disco night at the trivia bar.*

Jerry *is in his underwear. He's sifting through disco attire: pants, shirts, coats, hats, sunglasses, etc., all spread out on the coach.*

JERRY

(Comparing pants)

The red or the black?

TOMMY

Red.

Jerry *picks the red leather pants. He has difficulty getting into them.*

DAVID

(Frustrated with his phone)

There it is: we have now officially lost the Beeker Pen.

JERRY

(Struggling with the pants)

You did the right thing.

DAVID

He didn't have a patent.

JERRY

Tommy get your hand in here. Help me stretch them out.

DAVID

Until now that is. He says thank you by the way.

JERRY

(Really fighting the pants)

Pull Tommy. Pull with everything you've got.

DAVID

He's now applying for a patent. That doesn't bother you at all?

JERRY

David, I didn't want to take somebody else's idea in the first place.

TOMMY

I have other ideas.

Jerry finally gets into his pants and moves on to shirts. He tries a few. Never quite satisfied.

JERRY

Good. Let's hear some.

TOMMY

I'll get my notebook.

DAVID

Dad, give up. They don't fit.

JERRY

I'll get 'em on. You should come with us tonight. We won last week.

DAVID

I'm not going anywhere with the two of you dressed like that.

TOMMY

It's disco night.

JERRY

Everybody dresses up.

TOMMY

It would be good for you to have a night out.

DAVID

Why am I the only one bothered by this? He doesn't know how to make it, even if he thinks he does, he doesn't know how to make the Beeker Pen. He'd be making something else. We made the Beeker Pen.

JERRY

(Putting on sun glasses)

There'll be other ideas.

TOMMY

Peanut butter that isn't made from peanuts.

DAVID

Then it wouldn't be peanut butter.

TOMMY

It would be peanut butter for people with peanut allergies.

DAVID

If they're allergic to peanuts, and it's not peanut butter, why would you call it peanut butter?

TOMMY

So they can feel included.

DAVID

This guy didn't even know how to make it, dad. If we didn't contact him he would've forgotten about it.

JERRY

You have no way of knowing that.

DAVID

(For confirmation)

Tommy?

TOMMY

He did say he had forgotten the idea.

DAVID

And if we hadn't approached him it would still be ours.

JERRY

Either way, you both did the right thing.

DAVID

I couldn't even argue with him. The guy's a state hero.

TOMMY

(Explaining to Jerry)

He ran into a burning school.

DAVID

There were no kids inside. They call him the Hartford Hero.

TOMMY

It's an incredible story.

DAVID

He's a fireman. He's supposed to run into burning buildings.

Jerry *stops getting dressed.*

JERRY

I saw this on the news. He saved the mascot.

DAVID

It was a ferret.

JERRY

And you wanted to steal his idea.

TOMMY

Actually, David offered to help him.

JERRY

You did?

TOMMY

(To Jerry)

He gave him the contact for the investors. He also said you would show him how to make it.

JERRY

I would be glad to.

DAVID

You're going to show him how to make it. Get it? You're going to teach him how to make it!

JERRY

You did the right thing David.

DAVID

He wasn't going to do anything with it. He still might not. He might be too busy on his book tour.

Projection cue – a projection of **Manny** with his book: “Manny and the Ferret.”

DAVID

I'm glad you both feel good about this because I don't. We gave away something that we made, that could've been worth millions of dollars, and to be honest, I don't think he's going to do anything with it.

JERRY

So what? We'll think of something else that's worth a million dollars.

DAVID

How? How are we going to think of something else that good? Never! Never in our lives are we ever going to think of something that good again. You know why? Because we didn't think of it in the first place. And that's OK. We don't have to be original. We don't have to be exciting. There's nothing wrong with being normal. And practical. There's nothing wrong with being boring, Dad! Boring pays the bills!

(Collecting himself)

I'm sorry. I don't know why I'm yelling. I should be happy. The ferret lived. It's not like you understand anything I'm saying anyway. I don't speak your language.

(Beat)

I don't think either of you have any clue what we gave away today.

TOMMY

Dave, I've got over fifty ideas for us to start from. We'll think of something else.

JERRY

We will. And if we don't that's OK. At least we'll be together. Let's all meet tomorrow after school. Sodas and a brainstorming session. How does that sound?

TOMMY

We always have the kitty bomb.

JERRY

David, does that sound like a plan?

DAVID

I have an interview tomorrow. With an insurance company.

No. JERRY

What? You've got a problem with that? DAVID

Don't settle for insurance. You have a degree in music. JERRY

Which is worth nothing. DAVID

It's worth something because you love music. JERRY

I love being employed. DAVID

Should I tell him? JERRY
(To Tommy)

Tell me what? DAVID

I think this is a good time. It'll be good for him. JERRY
(Pleased with himself)

I thought you wanted to wait until it was done. TOMMY

Until what was done? DAVID

I'm going to tell him. JERRY

If you want. TOMMY

Tell me what? DAVID

JERRY

(To David)

Wait here. Don't go anywhere until I get back. Your brother and I are doing something nice for you.

TOMMY

We haven't done it yet.

DAVID

What is it?

JERRY

Wait here.

DAVID

Just tell me what it is.

JERRY

Don't forget the lesson I've been trying to teach you since you were a child. Tommy knows it. Tell him Tommy, tell him the lesson.

TOMMY

I don't. I'm sorry.

JERRY

(pause)

It's better if I show you. Please don't leave.

Jerry *runs out of the room and returns as quickly as he can.*

DAVID

(To Tommy)

What is this?

TOMMY

You'll like it.

DAVID

Tell me what it is.

TOMMY

I don't want to ruin the surprise.

Tommy. DAVID

It's your violin. He's going to have it tuned up. TOMMY

Where did he find it? DAVID

Remember when he had that whole thing with Maureen? TOMMY

Yeah. DAVID

He was looking for it at your house. TOMMY

Jerry returns. *He carries a violin case. He's infinitely pleased with himself.*

JERRY
Look what I found buried in your attic. Can you believe it? How long has it been? Seven years? More? Have the boys ever heard you play?
(Opening it)
I'm going to have it refurbished. Tommy and I want to do this for you.

David has made an uncomfortable realization. *The life has drained out of him.*

DAVID
My god. That's why she doesn't want you at the house. It all makes sense now.

JERRY
What? What makes sense?

DAVID
She wasn't getting out of the shower. She was with her professor. They were in my bed. I can't believe you saw that. I can't even imagine what you think of me.

JERRY
No, David, I didn't see anything. Why would I think anything of you?

DAVID
I should go.

David *makes to exit. He stops. He makes to say something. Anything other than what he's feeling. He's too embarrassed. He can only say,*

DAVID

I should go.

JERRY

David, wait. You don't have to be embarrassed.

DAVID

I do have to be embarrassed. I still sleep in that bed. You have no clue what the past week of my life has been like. Look at you. Look at the two of you right now. I leave the house before my family wakes and I stay away until late at night because I'm too embarrassed to go home. I was fired from my job. My wife slept with another man. Apparently my dad watched.

JERRY

I didn't watch.

DAVID

Why didn't you say anything?

JERRY

What should I say?

DAVID

You didn't have to treat it like a joke.

JERRY

I never treated it like a joke.

DAVID

(pause)

I need some time away from you.

JERRY

Why? Why should I be punished?

DAVID

Because you're my dad. These types of things aren't supposed to happen with your dad.

He exits. End scene.

Interlude C.

Jerry speaks to his eleventh grade physics class.

JERRY

In the depths of the Amazon there are tribes of people who live without any contact from the outside world. We know about them. We know that we have advancements in medicine and technology that could make their lives easier. We know they have land and resources that could be useful to the global community. But we don't make contact. Activists argue that we should never impose our influence on these un-contacted tribes. They say contact would be harmful to these people. Would it be a stretch to imagine intelligent life observing us the way we observe those tribes? Perhaps we appear just as primitive? I wonder what they think of our laws, our culture, our social constructs. What do they think of our rituals, our wars, our political structures? And if they were to make contact who should they speak with? Who represents planet earth?

Scene Four

Jerry's living room. Weeks later

Tommy *is preparing the room for a presentation.*

He wears a shirt and tie. His hair has been combed. He looks professional.

There is a pitcher of lemon water.

A tray of assorted pastries.

A series of folding chairs.

A white board that reads:

Welcome!

Today's Agenda: Beeker World!

Your presenter: Thomas Beeker.

*The doorbell rings. **Tommy** calls out as he places informational packets on the folding chairs.*

TOMMY

It's open.

David *enters. He too wears professional attire. He's come from work.*

Tommy *hurries to greet him.*

TOMMY

You made it!

DAVID

(Observing the room)

Where's dad?

TOMMY

Can I get you a lemon water? A pastry?

DAVID

What's all this?

TOMMY

The first thing I want to tell you is dad's doing just fine.

DAVID

Tommy, your text said he was having trouble breathing.

TOMMY

I've put together a presentation I'd like you to hear.

DAVID

(Realizing he's been fooled)

Where is he?

TOMMY

In his room.

DAVID

(Calling)

Dad, dad, will you come out here please?

(To Tommy)

Is he OK?

TOMMY

He's fine.

DAVID

Is he having trouble breathing?

TOMMY

No.

DAVID

I left a meeting, Tommy. Why isn't he coming out?

(Calling out)

Dad, the game's over. Come out here please.

(To Tommy)

What's wrong with you two? I won't participate in your stupid games so you fake an emergency?

TOMMY

I think you'll understand once you hear my presentation.

DAVID

Why isn't he coming out?

TOMMY

He probably has headphones on.

DAVID

What's he doing in there?

TOMMY

Watching episodes of NOVA. That's all he does now that school's over.

DAVID

(Momentarily moved)

Really?

(remembering his frustration)

Don't ever send me an emergency text unless it's a real emergency. I have to get back to work.

TOMMY

Can I ask you a question?

DAVID

What?

TOMMY

Since you're already here...

DAVID

No. Absolutely not.

TOMMY

I have a great idea...

DAVID

I don't care. You want me to hear your idea? Speak to me like an adult when I'm not at work. Don't send me emergency text messages.

TOMMY

But you don't answer my phone calls.

DAVID

Because of this. Because you do stupid things like this. Why didn't you pick up your phone when I called you back?

TOMMY

I wanted you to come here.

DAVID

Don't do it again.

TOMMY

(Trying to hand him an informational packet)

But since you're here...

DAVID

I'm not here. I'm leaving. And next time even if there is an emergency I won't come.

Tommy *moves in front of the exit.*

TOMMY

Can I say one thing first?

DAVID

Please get out of my way.

TOMMY

It's good to see you.

DAVID

Tommy, it's good to see you too but not like this.

TOMMY

I'm sorry I ruined your meeting. I thought about doing it after work but then you would've been picking up the boys or doing something with Maureen. Can I ask you a question?

DAVID

What?

TOMMY

Do you like your new job?

DAVID

I like having a job.

TOMMY

What if I told you I had an idea the three of us could work on together? You wouldn't have to sell insurance anymore.

DAVID

I would pass. Please move.

TOMMY

Can I ask you to consider it for him? He hasn't been himself lately. Especially since you didn't show up at his retirement party.

DAVID

It was bad timing. Did they do a nice job?

TOMMY

I've got pictures on my phone if you want to see.

Tommy *hands over the phone.* **David** *looks at a few photos.*

TOMMY (CONT.)

I bet if you brought the boys over that would cheer him up.

DAVID

He just stays in his room all day?

TOMMY

He stays in his room and stares at his ipad.

DAVID

(Looks at his own phone)

I'll talk to Maureen. But right now I have to get back to work. Please don't do this again.

TOMMY

I won't.

Tommy moves out of the way. **David** makes to exit. A thought occurs to him.

DAVID

You've got two sentences to sell me on Beeker World.

TOMMY

The presentation only takes five minutes.

DAVID

One sentence left.

TOMMY

It's something we can all do together.

DAVID

There's no presentation is there?

TOMMY

No, there is.

DAVID

He doesn't have headphones on does he? This is all just one big game to you guys.

(Knocking on the bedroom door)

You can come out now, dad. I'm not mad at you. I'm not trying to cut you out of my life or keep you from the boys I just wish you both would take me seriously. *This*. Setting up the room for a presentation—that's crazy. I have a new job. I'm getting paid better than before, things are... I'm working on things with Maureen. I just want my life to be normal again. I need things to be normal again. If you can accept that, if you can just give me some space, eventually it will all get back to the way it was.

(To Tommy)

Why isn't he coming out?

TOMMY

He's not in there.

DAVID

What the hell, Tommy.

TOMMY

He takes a windsurfing class on Wednesdays.

DAVID

This is why I don't answer your calls.

TOMMY

Can I ask you a question?

DAVID

(heading for the door)

Absolutely not.

TOMMY

If I was honest with you. If I told you I had a great idea, one that I had researched, one that I had prepared and laid the groundwork for, if I told you it was perfect for us, for the three of us, and it wasn't a get-rich quick scheme, it was a legitimate, doable, idea, entirely my own—if I had said that would you have come?

DAVID

No. And that's not what you said. You said dad was having trouble breathing. What if I called 911? You don't think about those things.

TOMMY

Can I make you an offer?

DAVID

This is me leaving.

TOMMY

If you give me five minutes to do my presentation and you still don't like the idea I'll give up on entrepreneurship and let you help me apply for real jobs. Insurance jobs. Resume, interviews, I'll do whatever you think is best.

DAVID

All I have to do is listen for five minutes?

TOMMY

That's it.

DAVID

OK, let's hear it.

TOMMY

Great! Can I have five minutes to finish setting up?

DAVID

You have five minutes from right now.

TOMMY

OK, on your seat I've prepared a packet of information that you might find helpful. Let me just open my...

(Messing around on his laptop)

Shoot. Dave, I have to step out for a minute.

DAVID

Then I'm leaving.

TOMMY

Two minutes. I just need my flash drive from the car.

DAVID

Why?

TOMMY

It has all my notes.

DAVID

Why don't you just tell me the idea? I don't need the full presentation.

TOMMY

It'll only take me two minutes. And then five minutes for the presentation. Seven minutes total. Please don't go anywhere.

DAVID

Two minutes, Tommy. That's really all I can wait.

Tommy exits. **David** looks through the photos of the retirement party on Tommy's phone.

*A slide show tells the story of the retirement party for the audience. Images of **Jerry** with his former students, colleagues, school officials, selfies of **Tommy**, food, speeches, dancing, and the awarding of a plaque. It's a joyous occasion.*

*These images play for the audience while **David** scrolls through the images on the phone.*

*The final image: **Jerry and Tommy** beaming together at the end of the night. **David** is noticeably missing from the photo.*

Jerry, in surf gear, enters unnoticed during the slideshow. He watches the slideshow with the audience.

David lingers on the final image longer than the others. He glances up, startled to see his father, and fumbles to put the phone down. The image disappears.

Hi. DAVID

Hi. JERRY

Tommy asked me to come. DAVID

Me too. I'll wait in the bedroom until you're done. JERRY

Dad, you don't have to go. We can be in the same room together. DAVID

Jerry exits into the bedroom. **David** calls after him.

I'm sorry I haven't returned your calls. I needed some time. I'm not cutting you out of my life I just need time to get things back to normal. DAVID (CONT.)

Did you get the job? (Returning) JERRY

I started last week. DAVID

Mazel Tov. I'm sure that was a relief for you. (sincere) JERRY

It was. DAVID

The boys are good? JERRY

Yeah. DAVID

They're healthy? They're happy? JERRY

Of course. DAVID

Maureen? JERRY

She's good. DAVID

You two are...? JERRY

Working on it. DAVID

It's good that you're well, David. JERRY

Jerry *makes to exit again.*

Just stay out here. DAVID

JERRY
(returning)
I'm upset with you. It's best if I stay in there so I don't say something I might regret.

Jerry *exits back into his room.*

DAVID
You're upset with me? You can't be upset with me. I'm upset with you!

JERRY

(Returning)

I sat by myself at my own retirement party.

DAVID

You weren't by yourself Tommy was there.

JERRY

It was a table for six. Everyone was staring at me.

DAVID

It was your retirement party.

JERRY

Yes, make jokes. I was the joke that night.

DAVID

We have evening sales meetings. That's why I wasn't there.

JERRY

I didn't know that because you don't return my calls.

DAVID

I should've let you know I wasn't coming.

JERRY

David I don't want to speak with you right now. I'm angry and I don't trust myself not to say something hurtful.

DAVID

Dad.

JERRY

I think you should leave. And take some tuna from the fridge. It's good I made it this morning.

Jerry exits into his bedroom and closes the door. Moments later we hear the opening music for NOVA.

DAVID

Are you watching NOVA? You can be mad at me all you want but this isn't my fault. You had no business inserting yourself into my personal life.

(Sigh)

Dad, would you come out here and talk to me. I know this isn't what you want. I know you're not even watching that.

(Pause, with some intentional melodrama)

You want to know why I'm here? Why I left work, left an important meeting? I thought you were having trouble breathing and all I could think about was I didn't want the last thing I...

(Stops himself)

Watch Nova. I'm going back to work. Now it's you who has to live with the last thing said between us.

David pretends to exit. He even opens and closes the door to the house but he remains on the inside waiting for his dad to come out of the bedroom.

DAVID

(After a moment)

Come on! Come out here and talk to me? I was wrong, dad. I'm admitting it. I was embarrassed. I'm still embarrassed. I don't know why you even want a relationship with me. Why would anybody want a relationship with me? I'm boring! And I don't want to sell insurance. I hate it! I hate that everyone in my office drives a car they can't afford. I hate that I'm evaluated by how many policies I sell and not how many people I've helped. I hate that we target people on fixed incomes. But there's nothing else for me. That's the thing you don't understand. You make it seem so simple but it's not. There's nothing simple about it. I have responsibilities. Responsibilities that Tommy doesn't have. And you know what else? The Fermi Paradox is a waste of time!

JERRY

(returning with passion)

A hundred billion galaxies each with a hundred billion stars...!

DAVID

That got you out.

JERRY

Not the tiniest hint of intelligent life and you think that's a waste of time? Hi Tommy.

Tommy returned earlier, unnoticed until now.

TOMMY

Hi dad. Thanks for coming.

My pleasure.

JERRY

It's his house.

DAVID

Thank you all for coming.

TOMMY

There's two of us.

DAVID

Please take your seats we'll get started in just a moment.

TOMMY

Is anybody sitting here?

JERRY

(Choosing a seat)

Are you kidding me?

DAVID

Welcome everybody. I'm grateful and honored to have the opportunity to speak to you this afternoon about a project I'm passionate about.

TOMMY

(As he loads his notes into the computer)

Who are you talking too?

DAVID

Shh.

JERRY

Tommy begins the presentation with a professionalism we haven't seen before. He's prepared, rehearsed, and confident.

About two months ago a person I respect greatly gave me a piece of advice. In a conversation about ideas, inventing, and entrepreneurship he said, "It's not about what people will pay for. It's about what people need. They don't need a bus full of stereo-typical Jewish services any more than they need a Scottish party guide, or a pipe bomb in their pantry."

TOMMY

JERRY

(To David)

That was you.

TOMMY

I took what this person said to heart and I asked myself, what do we really need? A person with a peanut allergy might need peanut butter that isn't made from peanuts.

DAVID

They don't.

TOMMY

A teacher might need a classroom. A cat whose owner died in a car accident might need to be fed. And sometimes adults need a reason to act like children. That's when I started thinking about Beeker World. An after-school program. Last week at my father's retirement party I spoke with the president of the board of education. The town no longer has the funds to support after-school programming and there's a real need for the private sector to pick up the slack. If you turn to page three of the informational packet I've provided you'll find my proposal for an after-school program centered on the arts and sciences. There's no way to get rich doing something like this, at least not in the traditional sense, but there's definitely a need and an opportunity for financial stability. On page eight I've provided comparables of similar programs in other parts of the state. I think you'll be impressed by their numbers. More so than the numbers-- what makes Beeker World special is the people I have working with me. The head of our science program, Jerry Beeker, taught physics at Enrico Fermi High School for the past thirty-five years. He specializes in astronomy, sustainability, and homemade sodas. He has a passion for working with young people and there's an enthusiasm and kindness in everything he does.

DAVID

(To Jerry)

You already agreed to this?

JERRY

It's the first I'm hearing of it.

TOMMY

The head of our arts program, David Beeker, holds an MA in Music from the Hartt School. He's a talented musician in his own right but he's also one of the hardest working people I've ever met. He's a great role model for young people and having him involved in Beeker World gives me confidence that this program is going to be a success. My immediate and long-term goals are outlined on the first three pages.

(Jerry and David flip through the packet)

(MORE.)

TOMMY (CONT.)

More important than anything I have written in that packet is that at thirty-five years old I can't imagine a better way to spend each day than to be working with my dad and brother, the two people I admire most.

JERRY

Let me get my checkbook.

DAVID

Dad, no. You can't fund an entire after-school program.

TOMMY

If you look at page five you'll see a copy of the grant proposal I submitted to the state. If they approve we'll have enough to start without having to take out personal loans.

DAVID

(Flipping to the page)

You wrote this yourself?

TOMMY

Mom helped.

DAVID

(Sifting through the materials)

You put a lot of work into it.

JERRY

(Shaking Tommy's hand, embracing him)

I'm in. Absolutely I'm in. Wonderful Idea. Perfect for us.

TOMMY

Dave?

David gives it some real thought before answering. *Flips through the packet.*

DAVID

I already have a job.

TOMMY

You're the arts director. It doesn't work without you.

DAVID

I don't play music. I haven't in over seven years. I don't teach music, I never have. I don't know anything about theater or dance how can I run an art program?

JERRY

You teach yourself. Thirty-five years ago I didn't know anything about teaching high school students. You learn as you go.

DAVID

But you knew a lot about physics.

TOMMY

This can work. I know it can.

DAVID

I'm not leaving my job. Things are finally starting to work with my family. I'm not throwing everything off balance.

JERRY

Do you want to sell insurance?

DAVID

It doesn't matter.

JERRY

It does matter.

DAVID

Why would you even want to work with me?

JERRY

Because you're my son. I want to spend as much time with you as I can.

TOMMY

Say yes.

DAVID

Just because you put a packet together and spoke to a couple people doesn't mean you have anything more than an idea. This isn't enough for me to leave my job.

TOMMY

If you turn to page seven I'll show you the...

DAVID

Tommy, stop. I heard your presentation. I'm here because you sent me an emergency text. If I'd known you were going to try and pressure me into another one of your stupid ideas I would've stayed at work.

TOMMY

We need you to be a part of it.

DAVID

A part of what? There's so much you still haven't thought of. You're going to need insurance. You'll need a location. How are the kids getting to this location? Are you providing transportation? Did you think about these things?

TOMMY

That's why we need you.

DAVID

School starts in two months. How can you possibly have everything in place by then?

TOMMY

By working together. The three of us.

David *considers it once more. Then,*

DAVID

I have to get back to work. It's not a stupid idea. It's a good idea. It's just not for me.

David *exits.*

Final Interlude

Jerry *speaks to his eleventh grade physics class one last time.*

In the background **Tommy** *breaks down the chairs and presentation materials.*

JERRY

I've spent the better part of forty years considering the Fermi Paradox. And though I've worked hard to resist the thought, I have to acknowledge that we might be alone in the universe. Over a billion planets in our own galaxy capable of life, so many billion years for that life to advance and colonize, and yet we see nothing.

(MORE.)

JERRY (CONT.)

If we are alone in the universe then our lives are as special as they are insignificant. And one day that life will, inevitably, come to an end. It will disappear. It's likely there is something either within us or out there, something we created or something we can't even imagine but something that will one day eliminate humanity. It's possible that when that happens the entire universe, 13.8 billion light years of expanding universe, will be empty of life.

They say our earliest memories begin when we're four. I've been telling my boys since they were three: It's possible their life isn't just their only life. It's possible their life is the only life.

End of play