

# HOW AND WHY

by

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OPENING CREDITS FOR SITCOM "FAMILY FRIENDLY."

Montage of a father, mother, and 8 year old Bobby enjoying life together to the following sluggish and slightly off-key song:

SONG

We've had bad times and we've had  
good/But our family sticks together just  
like a family should/We'll always take a  
frown and turn it to a smile/So welcome  
to our humble home/Come laugh with us a  
while.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room is cheerful in salmon and sky blue. Bobby, 10, sits on the couch watching TV. On the television is Goodman, a 50 year old lab-coated man, on a homey living room set with plaid wallpaper, addressing the camera. He seems bored.

GOODMAN

Welcome back to "How and Why." This week has been all about human sexuality. Before the break we learned the How and Why of fallopian tubes and their homologous structure in males, the appendix of testis. Now we're going to switch gears a little and discuss the act of sexual intercourse. Typically, before penetration, there is something called foreplay. David, can you tell me what foreplay is?

DAVID

It's when two people, either a man and a woman, a man and a man, or a woman and a woman interact, with the intent of encouraging sexual readiness.

GOODMAN

Good. Diane, can you think of an example of foreplay?

DIANE

Kissing?

GOODMAN

Sure. Kissing can be part of foreplay. David, what is kissing?

DAVID

It's when two people, either a man and a woman, a man and a man, or a woman and a woman touch lips.

GOODMAN

Yes. Lips on lips, as well as lips on other parts of the body. But let's start with lips to lips. How is kissing done? Here's a wonderful, award-winning animated short feature which illustrates various kissing techniques.

ANIMATION

Cell animation of man and woman kissing. It is very technical: different parts of the faces and mouths are lettered and numbered, and there are lots of animated arrows and scrolling scientific text.

PULL BACK TO SEE:

Bobby, one eye on the TV, practising kissing a throw pillow. An unseen audience laughs. Dave, his dad, enters with a briefcase. Bobby immediately throws the pillow to the floor and switches off the show. The audience laughs again. Dave stops and looks at him.

BOBBY

What??

DAVE

What *what*?

BOBBY

Nothing! I wasn't doing anything!

Dave nods and smiles, satisfied.

DAVE

Cool.

Dave continues walking through the room. Audience titter.

BOBBY

Wait. Dad?

DAVE

(turning)

Yup?

BOBBY  
 (long pause)  
 Have you ever kissed a girl?

Audience laugh.

DAVE  
 Well, sure. I've kissed your mom.

BOBBY  
 No. I don't mean that. I've kissed Mom.  
 I mean a *girl*.

Laugh.

DAVE  
 (joining Bobby on couch)  
 Your mom's a girl -- Well, a woman. They prefer to be called women now. Woman-American, I think. By the way, she's not *my* mom, y'know. So, yeah, I've kissed her -- and I've kissed her the way someone might kiss a girl.

BOBBY  
 Ew.

Laugh. The mom walks by with a laundry basket.

BOBBY (CONT'D)  
 No, offense, Mom.

Laugh.

MOM  
 None taken.  
 (to Dave)  
 What'd he say about me?

DAVE  
 He said me kissing you is gross.

MOM  
 (considering, then to Bobby)  
 Gross because of the *your-dad* part or gross because of the *me* part?

Laugh.

BOBBY  
 I don't know! Do you really want to pursue this line of questioning?

The parents look at each other for a moment, then both look back at Bobby.

MOM AND DAD

Yes.

Laugh.

BOBBY

I gotta go!

Bobby runs off. The mom and dad look at each other, shrug, and kiss.

MOM

Kids.

Laugh.

MOM (CONT'D)

Well. Laundry waits for no Woman-American.

Laugh. She exits. Dave sighs a terrible, broken sigh. He sits quite still, staring at the floor for a long while. The audience titters nervously.

DAVE

(muttering)

None of this is funny. Nor is it interesting. Or real in any way. I've traveled the fucking world to get away from you. I lived in a cave with a swami outside of Bombay, for Christ's sake. And, guess what? He had an over-the-top Indian accent. And you laughed. So --

(beat)

-- I don't want to play anymore.

He pulls a gun from his jacket pocket and quickly shoots himself in the head, as if before he can change his mind. Laughter. Blood has splattered the wall behind him. Dave falls to the ground in a heap. Applause.

FADE OUT AND IN.

The living room is filled with police taking measurements and photographs, interviewing Bobby and the mom, who are wrapped in blankets and red-eyed from weeping. Titters.

Later: Moving men carry boxes and furniture from the living room. A sympathetic "awwwww" from the audience.

Later: the room is empty of all furnishings. The splattered blood still stains the wall. We stay on the empty, silent room for a long while. Applause.

INT. HOW AND WHY LIVING ROOM SET - DAY

Goodman looks bored and talks to David and Diane, who look bored. The set now feature a blown up shot of a Buddhist monk meditating and a shot of space from the Hubble telescope.

GOODMAN

What is emptiness? A fascinating question in both the world of philosophy and in the world of science. Did you know that "vacuum" derives from the Latin word for empty? We'll talk about scientific vacuums later, but first let's look at emptiness as understood in both Eastern and Western cultures.

INT. EMPTY LIVING ROOM - DAY

Day to night to day in a time lapse cycle, faster and faster until the room is viewed in a blur of flickering daylight, like an old-time movie.

INT. HOW AND WHY LIVING ROOM SET - DAY

Goodman addresses two new children. There's a grandfather clock behind him.

GOODMAN

What is time? We say it "passes", but what exactly is passing? Is time simply a construct of the human brain designed to measure relentless and terrifying change?

The children looks confused.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

In time lapse, vines grow untended outside the living room window, until they completely obscure the outside world and the room has been thrust into green twilight.

INT. HOW AND WHY LIVING ROOM SET - DAY

The room is very dimly lit. Goodman, distracted and picking at his fingernails, talks to two new children.

GOODMAN

What is darkness? It's the absence of visible light, which is electromagnetic radiation with a wavelength of about 380 to 740 nanometres. But, of course, darkness can also be metaphorical, as in a dark night of the soul. And we will peer into this darkness. As Lovecraft says, "We shall see that at which dogs howl in the dark, and that at which cats prick up their ears after midnight.

The children look terrified.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

It's dark for a long moment. The front door opens and glaring sunlight pours in. House painters enter. They lay tarps on the floor. Outside, gardeners cut away at the overgrown vines.

INT. HOW AND WHY LIVING ROOM SET - DAY

The show is not on. The set is lit with glaring work lights. Technicians putter. Goodman ponders a script. Mellencamp, a middle-aged executive, enters. Goodman looks up.

GOODMAN

You got some new kids for me?

MELLENCAMP

(beat)

So, there's a bit of a sea change going on around here, Goodman.

GOODMAN

What exactly does that mean, Mr. Mellencamp?

MELLENCAMP

Your ratings have been slipping precipitously for three years now.

GOODMAN

It's the kids. We need better kids. How often must we have this conversation? Did you get the new ones?

MELLENCAMP

We keep changing them out. It's not the kids. The kids all test through the roof. It's you. Your heart is not in this anymore.

GOODMAN

Yes, my heart is.

MELLENCAMP

We want to support you in finding your passion, Goodman. You're such a smart, talented man.

GOODMAN

Then keep me. I've got three children to take care of. My heart is in this.

MELLENCAMP

We have to go fresher, Goodman. Younger. We know you'll land on your feet and we're all so excited to see what you do next.

Mellencamp pats him on the shoulder and leaves. Goodman sits there for a bit, then yells after him:

GOODMAN

I want to keep doing this next!

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

The room is now empty, white, and pristine. After a pause, the front door opens and a real estate agent enters, followed by Goodman, his wife Yvonne, and their identical triplet sons Acton, Ellis, and Currer. Yvonne looks around.

YVONNE

Oh, yeah! This one! I love this one!

The triplet ad-lib excitement.

ACTON

This is home! I recognize it!

GOODMAN

It's very nice.



YVONNE

Enough acreage for the horses. And maybe goats?! And the price is crazy good for this area, Goodman.

AGENT

It really is. It's a little insane, actually, the price.

GOODMAN

Right.

(beat)

Is there a reason? For the price... *insanity?*

AGENT

(shrugging)

Motivated seller?

ACTON

Can we go look upstairs? At our rooms?

YVONNE

Of course.

The boys say "yay" and run upstairs.

YVONNE (CONT'D)

(to Goodman)

They feel safe here, Goodman. New town. New job for you. New school for them. You see their hopefulness, right? They haven't felt safe in so long.

GOODMAN

I just don't want to jump into anything.

YVONNE

Can't you feel it? This house has our name on it. It's calling to us.

(through non-moving lips)

Die nee. Die nee, Goodnan. Die Nee.

GOODMAN

That's just you. I can see your lips moving.

YVONNE

Yes. I wasn't actually trying to trick you into thinking there was a disembodied voice in the house. I assumed you knew I was joking.

GOODMAN  
I was joking, too.

YVONNE  
Okay.

GOODMAN  
Okay.

INT. HOW AND WHY LIVING ROOM SET - DAY

It's been revamped. Bright colors and cartoony furniture. An energetic young man in a brightly colored sweater talks to David and Diane, the two kids from the earlier version of the show.

YOUNG HOST  
So, guys, what can you tell me about water?

David throws a bucket of water into the host's face, drenching him.

DAVID  
(to camera)  
It's wet!

A sad trombone plays "wah-wah-wah-wahhhh" as the host looks with mock sadness into the camera. An off screen audience of kids laughs and cheers wildly.

PULL BACK TO SEE:

INT. LIVING ROOM MORNING

The living room is piled with boxes and wrapped furniture and paintings. Goodman, in a suit, is watching *How and Why*. Yvonne enters in her robe, with a cup of coffee.

YVONNE  
You can see the horses from the kitchen window. It's so wonderful.

Goodman clicks off the TV.

GOODMAN  
(measured)  
Ah. That's great.

YVONNE  
Coffee's made.

GOODMAN

I'll grab some on the way to work.

YVONNE

Could you take the boys? I really want to get going on this mess.

She indicates the packed boxes.

GOODMAN

Are they ready? I've got to leave right now.

YVONNE

They do take forever, don't they?

(calling)

Boys?! Are you ready? Daddy's leaving!

ELLIS (O.S.)

Soonish!

GOODMAN

I have to go, guys!

ACTON (O.S.)

We're not completely ready! Mom, can you take us?

YVONNE

Daddy's going right past the school, hon! I need to start unpacking!

ACTON (O.S.)

Ok, ok, ok! We're coming!

The boys hurry downstairs. They are dressed in identical school uniforms: blazers, ties, dress pants. Perfectly tailored. They present themselves as models would.

ELLIS

So? Be brutal.

YVONNE

Oh, my goodness! You all look wonderful. So smart! Like wonderful, smart young students!

They smile and bow.

ACTON

Daddy?

GOODMAN

The blazers fit well. Very good.

ACTON

Ellis took them in last night. They were not -- They just did not fall at all well. I don't know what torso they were cut for, but it certainly wasn't human.

ELLIS

Shall we? It won't do to be late on our first day. We're terribly nervous.

YVONNE

You'll be fine. Bathus Academy is the best kind of progressive. I know you're all going to thrive there.

ACTON

(big gulp of air)

From your mouth to God's ear. Bye, Mother.

Acton gives Yvonne a peck.

ELLIS

Bye, Mother. Fingers crossed.

Ellis give Yvonne a peck.

CURRER

Bye, Mom.

Currer gives Yvonne a peck.

YVONNE

Have a wonderful day, my wonderful boys!  
You deserve only wonderful things!

The boys smile with anticipation and head out the door.

GOODMAN

(to Yvonne)

Well, see ya.

YVONNE

(blandly)

Yeah. Have a good one.

Goodman exits. Yvonne sits on a box and starts to weep.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING LOBBY - MORNING

Goodman waits stiffly at the security desk. Mendelson. 30's, approaches, hand extended.

He wears a photo ID in which his face seems almost smashed against the camera lens.

MENDELSON

Goodman!

They shake.

GOODMAN

Mr. Mendelson. Hi.

MENDELSON

Shane, please.

GOODMAN

Shane.

MENDELSON

Listen, let's get you your photo ID right away, so you won't have to stand here with Billy again tomorrow. Kidding, Billy.

Billy the security guard stares straight ahead.

INT. HALLWAY - A BIT LATER

Mendelson leads Goodman down the hall. It looks like an apartment building hallway. They turn a corner and the hall suddenly looks like an office building hall.

MENDELSON

Almost there.

GOODMAN

So many halls.

MENDELSON

Used to be the National Hallway building.

GOODMAN

The what?

MENDELSON

National Hallway? Just the most prestigious hallway design firm in the United States. "We do hallways -- all ways"?

GOODMAN

That's a ludicrous idea for a business.

MENDELSON

Ludicrous all the way to the bank.  
 "Every building needs a hallway." That  
 was their motto.

GOODMAN

I thought their motto was Hallways -- all  
 ways.

MENDELSON

They had two mottoes.

They turn a corner and it looks like a hospital hallway.

MENDELSON (CONT'D)

This building was primarily their  
 showroom. We got it for a song when the  
 CEO and CFO killed themselves. It's not  
 without its challenges though. The  
 offices are tiny. Mostly dummy rooms  
 behind door samples.

Mendelson opens a door marked Photo ID's.

GOODMAN

Why'd they kill themselves?

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

The Great Murfreesboro Hallway Collapse  
 of '03. They went belly-up after that.

INT. PHOTO ID OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Goodman enters followed by Mendelson. The office is  
 tiny. Barely room for a camera on a tripod. Cynthia,  
 the photographer, is behind the tripod, smashed against a  
 wall. Her ID badge also features an incredibly close  
 photo

MENDELSON

Cynthia, this is Goodman Hesselman. He  
 needs an ID. New Talent.

CYNTHIA

Hello. Such a big fan since I was a kid.  
 My sister and I watched you all the time.

GOODMAN

Oh, thank you.

CYNTHIA

Please, have a seat.

Goodman sits on the stool, which is about five inches from the camera lens.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

Smile. Or you don't have to. Some people do. Others don't. It's really a matter of personal taste.

Goodman attempts a smile. Cynthia looks through the camera.

CYNTHIA (CONT'D)

This doesn't get any easier, Shane.

MENDELSON

I know, sweetie.

CYNTHIA

I've been doing some research? There's something called a "macro lens"? For shooting insects and dew drops? Maybe I can put in for one of those?

MENDELSON

Let's try to make this work for a while, Cynthia. Our friend Goodman here doesn't come cheap.

Cynthia sighs and takes Goodman's photo.

INT. HALLWAYS - A BIT LATER

Goodman, now wearing his smush-faced ID, walks with Mendelson down a hospital corridor. They arrive at a door marked Shane Mendelson/VP Programming. They enter.

INT. MENDELSON'S OUTER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

It's a cramped, tiny room, a desk taking up most of it. Mendelson's secretary Magda sits at the desk.

MENDELSON

Magda, this is Goodman.

MAGDA

Hi! I'm such a fan. My sister and I watched you growing up.

GOODMAN

Oh! Thank you. Hi.

MENDELSON

Magda and Cynthia are sisters.

(to Magda)

Any calls?

MAGDA

Rick needs to talk to you soonest, re:

(reading off paper)

*papier-mâché* Alice in Wonderland heads, specifically the pigeon. Specifically, it fell and the beak broke off and can it be made into a martian? Which it looks like now, which would be an easier fix.

MENDELSON

Ok, ok.

(to Goodman)

Never a dull moment. Shall we?

There's a door behind Magda's desk. They squeeze past her to get through the door.

INT. MENDELSON'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tiny here as well. There are tiny windows on two walls.

MENDELSON

Corner office, eh? Not bad, eh?

(gesturing to chair)

Sit, sit! Be comfortable!

Goodman sits across from Mendelson. Their knees touch.

MENDELSON (CONT'D)

So, brass tacks time. I'm sorry about how things went down at "How and Why", but their loss is our gain, right? Have you seen any of their new episodes?

GOODMAN

No. I've intentionally avoided it.

MENDELSON

Well, let's just say it's very good. Peppy and fun. That's why they're the big boys. We have our work cut out for us.

(off Goodman's reaction)

But we're not doing that type of show, I realize.

GOODMAN

That's not my show.



MENDELSON

Exactly, which brings me to -- Legal says we can't use any title with the words "how" or "why" in it.

GOODMAN

What?

MENDELSON

(shrugging)

Crazy, right? Fortunately, they've come up with some great alternatives. Let's see...

(off paper on desk)

Where and when?

GOODMAN

No.

MENDELSON

Which and what?

(looking up)

That's not bad.

GOODMAN

No.

MENDELSON

Up and Down?

GOODMAN

No.

MENDELSON

You and me?

Mendelson looks up at the now silent Goodman

MENDELSON (CONT'D)

(back down at paper)

High and low. Through and through.

Hither and thither. Um...

(looking up)

Tic Tac Dough is apparently available.

GOODMAN

My show tries to make rational sense of the world around us. "How and Why" is the only title that works.

MENDELSON

Legal says no, Goodman.

GOODMAN

Fine. Then give me another word for  
'why.'

Mendelson ponders.

MENDELSON

Well... Why is like... *why*. *Why*  
something happens... is what *why* is, for  
instance. Like... *why*. Like... what  
reason did that thing happen? That's  
what *why* is. What reason did it happen.  
Right? ... That's what *why* is.

GOODMAN

'Wherefore' works.

MENDELSON

Well, not exactly, because wherefore  
means where. "Wherefore art thou,  
Romeo." So I don't think --

GOODMAN

Wherefore means *why*, not where.

MENDELSON

Why would wherefore mean *why*?

GOODMAN

Why would wherefore mean where, when  
*where* means where? Why would you add a  
suffix to where to mean where?

MENDELSON

Because it's *old-timey*, Goodman! Jesus.  
Just... c'mon! Don't fight me on every  
little thing.

GOODMAN

The show is now called "Wherefore and...  
(thinking)  
... By What Means."

MENDELSON

Ok.

(beat)

See, that's kind of longish to me. To  
*me*.

GOODMAN

We'll let *How and Why* be for the  
simpletons who crave slapstick.

(MORE)

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

*Wherefore and By What Means* will be for the genuinely intelligent person, the one who can confidently co-exist with a "kind of longish" title.

Long pause.

MENDELSON

Ok. Sure. Moving on.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Mendelson and Goodman enter the studio. It's tiny. The living room set that's squeezed into it has just enough room for Goodman and the kids to stand almost touching.

MENDELSON

I know it's a little tight, but check out the craftsmanship. You won't find that in New York or L.A.

Kip and Kitty, around 10, enter with their mothers.

MENDELSON

Ah. Here they are! The kids of the hour! Kip and Kitty, meet the great former celebrity science host of nationally syndicated *How and Why*, Goodman Hesselman, who needs no introduction.

They all ad lib greetings.

MENDELSON

Kip and Kitty are *the* star child actors of our local community theater scene. Kitty recently played Annie in *Annie* and Kip recently played Oliver in *Oliver!*

KIP

Plus Peter Pan in *Peter Pan*.

KITTY

Plus The Bad Seed in *The Bad Seed*.

GOODMAN

So are you kids interested in how the world works, that sort of thing?

KIP

I am. I often think, how do things work, Mr. Hesselman.

KITTY

I do, too. Mostly as it pertains to playing a scientist, so I can look convincing while playing her.

(to Kip)

And don't say there are no female scientists, because... Madame Curious.

GOODMAN

Curie.

KITTY

What?

GOODMAN

In any event. My goal is to foster a sense of wonder in young people.

KITTY

I can do wonder.

She looks up, crazy-eyed, at an imaginary cosmos.

KITTY (CONT'D)

(to Goodman)

That look got me "Maria" in the Fleischmann Planetarium commercial.

MENDELSON

That's our state-of-the-art Planetarium.

GOODMAN

Ah.

Pause. Mendelson claps his hands together.

MENDELSON

Exciting! What a great first meeting! Really good acting, Kitty! So first taping tomorrow at three. Be there or be square!

GOODMAN

I think a little more --

MENDELSON

And what fantastic topic will we be exploring, Goodman?

GOODMAN

Gravity.

MENDELSON

Oh.

(beat)

Great.

(beat)

It's just that, didn't you do gravity on  
*How and Why*.

GOODMAN

So? It's a big subject.

MENDELSON

Unfortunately, legal says --

GOODMAN

Are you fucking kidding me?

MENDELSON

It's legal, Goodman, not me. Personally,  
I love gravity. It's interesting.

GOODMAN

I did twenty-five years of *How and Whys*!  
There's no subject I didn't already talk  
about!

MENDELSON

I understand, but if you just dig a  
little deeper --

GOODMAN

They don't own gravity!

MENDELSON

In a real sense, they do. We can't take  
on the network. They're Goliath and  
we're like some kind of -- very small  
boy, in comparison. Not that there  
aren't benefits to be being a small boy.  
We have a lot more freedom here.

INT. CAR - DAY

Goodman pulls up to the school. The triplets are waiting  
sadly on the front steps. They stand and make their way  
dejectedly to the car and get in the back seat.

GOODMAN

Hey. Sorry I'm late.

ELLIS

Late. Early. Never. It doesn't matter.

He pulls away from the curb and drives off. Silence. He studies them in the rearview mirror.

GOODMAN

So... how was the first day?

ACTON

They eye us with disdain.

GOODMAN

Who does?

ACTON

Everyone.

GOODMAN

Everyone? Every single person eyes you with disdain?

ACTON

Yes.

CURRER

Except the janitor Bill Senior. He eyes us with gentle, sad eyes.

ACTON

True. He does do that.

GOODMAN

(concerned)

The janitor, you say?

CURRER

He looks at us like he wants to protect us.

ELLIS

Like he loves us, really.

GOODMAN

What do you mean by "loves", exactly?

ELLIS

Don't be provincial, Daddy. Like he knows we need his compassion and protection. A sort of guardian angel.

GOODMAN

Huh.

(uncertain)

Well, that's good, right?

ELLIS

It really is. His supply closet was the one place we felt safe today.

GOODMAN

You were in his supply closet? With Bill Senior the janitor?

ELLIS

He was showing us various industrial cleaning supplies. He was very patient with our questions. It was nice.

GOODMAN

(beat)

Good, then.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Yvonne, red-eyed from crying, is finishing unpacking living room items. Goodman enters, followed by the boys.

YVONNE

Perfect timing. Just through getting everything ready for finishing touches from the interior design team of Acton, Ellis, and Curren.

ELLIS

(dejectedly)

You can finish, Mom. We're going to go to our room to watch TV.

The triplets head upstairs.

YVONNE

Bad first day?

GOODMAN

Me or them?

YVONNE

Them.

GOODMAN

Yeah. And me, too.

YVONNE

Me too. But I put on a good face.

GOODMAN

You do?

YVONNE  
(defensive)  
I think so, yes.

GOODMAN  
Ok.  
(beat)  
Do you want to know about my day?

YVONNE  
(sighs)  
Not at the moment, okay? I've got to  
finish the room now. Later, okay?  
(beat)  
No, I mean, yeah, of course, tell me now.  
I'll -- Is it okay if I straighten while  
you talk, because -- or no, I'll just --  
we'll just sit and you can tell me.

Yvonne sits on the couch and looks expectantly at  
Goodman.

GOODMAN  
No, that's ok. I'll --

YVONNE  
Oh, don't be like that! I said I want to  
know, for Christ's sake.

GOODMAN  
No. You didn't, actually. You didn't  
say you wanted to know. You --

YVONNE  
Okay, Now you're being -- What? I have to  
say those exact words?? Look, obviously  
I'm not a properly interested wife.  
Pardon me! So, tell me how to speak. I  
have say I'm interested in the exact way  
you want?

GOODMAN  
You sighed. It doesn't make me feel like  
... you're interested.

YVONNE  
(yelling)  
Really?? That's what you come away with?  
I didn't exhale in a properly interested  
way? Of course I'm interested! Why  
wouldn't I be interested??



GOODMAN

It doesn't matter, Yvonne. Nothing really happened. I just have a headache.

YVONNE

Don't turn this around, Goodman!

GOODMAN

Don't turn what around? I mean... fuck you, Yvonne.

YVONNE

Wow. Where'd that come from?

GOODMAN

(screaming)

Yeah, Wow! Yeah, Jesus! Whoa! Holy moly! Holy --

YVONNE

Look at you! You're, like, bright red!

Goodman emits a frustrated stifled scream and exits.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Goodman walks. The sky above is swirly with black clouds.

SONG

Where am I going?/Why am I here?/What am I doing?/What do I hold dear?/One second forward equals three steps ahead/How many footsteps before I am dead/Young man walked somewhere else, somewhere free/Old man walks here/Young man felt summer rain, summer breeze/ Old man feels fear.

A man in an ill-fitting black jacket turns the corner and heads toward Goodman. There is something off about him. The man is close now. Goodman nods at him. The man stops.

MAN IN BLACK PARKA

Excuse me, what is the way out?

GOODMAN

The what?

MAN IN BLACK PARKA

The exit.

GOODMAN

From where?

MAN IN BLACK PARKA

From here.

Goodman looks perplexed and after a moment says:

GOODMAN

I'm sorry. I don't understand what you're asking me.

MAN IN BLACK PARKA

I'm a Crazy Man, right? I wear a heavy black jacket even when it's warm. My eyes are glazed. Sometimes I smile for no reason. You've seen me before. You saw me where you used to live. And where you lived before that. I'm interchangeable. I'm a Crazy Man. That's all anyone has to know. I'm just an idea. And when I'm not in front of you, I no longer exist. Except I do. I exist for every single moment of my life, from my infancy to my death. And I'm looking for the exit.

GOODMAN

(beat)

Um, I don't know. I guess --

(pointing off)

Like, maybe that way?

The man ignores Goodman's directions and continues the way he'd been walking. Goodman watches after him, then sits on the curb and stares at his feet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Yvonne is putting finishing touches on the room. It's looking neat and stylish. Goodman enters.

YVONNE

Hey, I was beginning to worry. Where'd you go.

GOODMAN

Just for a walk. Stopped and thought.

YVONNE

Are you ok now? I'm sorry  
If I wasn't present before. I think I'm  
just tired. I'm sorry.

GOODMAN

It's ok.

YVONNE

Good. So do you like the room?

GOODMAN

Yeah. It looks great. Good job.

YVONNE

Thanks. You hungry?

GOODMAN

Not really. Have the boys been down?

YVONNE

They ate. But they went back up and closed their door.

GOODMAN

I'll check. I'm worried about them

INT. BOY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The boys are flopped on the bed, watching a sitcom on TV. In it, a dreamy teen bad boy is talking to his mother.

DREAMY BOY

I'm 16 years old, Mom. And my dad killed himself. And now we're poor and struggling to keep one step ahead of the bill collectors. That's who I am. That's all I am.

The audience "ohhhhs" sadly.

MOTHER

No, Bobby. You're so much more than that. You're a good friend. A great son. A guitar wiz. A boy who loves nature and sports cars and football and a million other things that make you unique. And I'm proud to be your mom.

The audience "awwwws" and applauds as Bobby and his mother hug. There's a knock on the triplets' door.

ELLIS

Yes?

GOODMAN (O.C.)

It's Dad.

ELLIS

Enter, Pater!

The door opens and Goodman enters.

GOODMAN

Just wanted to say hi.  
What you watching?

ACTON

"On Our Own."

GOODMAN

Ah. You've grown up with that kid.  
Bobby, is it?

ACTON

Yeah. Bobby. Although he's going by Bob  
now, mostly. Except to his mom.

GOODMAN

We parents just refuse to let you kids  
grow up, right?

CURRER

Oh, Daddy.

GOODMAN

Listen, I just wanted to tell you guys  
that I love you and that I know things  
haven't been easy for you lately. But  
you need to know, you're special,  
creative, smart, loving boys. Anyone who  
can't see that is a fool. And I'm so  
proud to be your dad.

The boys are tearing up. They hug Goodman.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

You want me to talk to someone at school  
tomorrow? The principal?

ELLIS

No. You can't help us anymore, Daddy.  
We're too old. Parents intervening at  
our age only makes things worse.

GOODMAN

I don't really think --

CURRER

It's true. We're on our own now. But  
it's okay, Daddy. We'll be okay.

GOODMAN

If you change your mind --

ACTON

We have a plan to fit in by being invisible for several years, until everyone's hormones settle down.

INT. GOODMAN AND YVONNE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Goodman and Yvonne lie in bed, eyes open and on their backs. There is a silence.

YVONNE

I'd like to hear your day. If you want to tell me.

GOODMAN

I'm just too old to be starting again, this far down the toilet.

YVONNE

It's going to work out.

GOODMAN

I should've done something else with my life. I should've done *something*.

YVONNE

You did great. You are a national celebrity. How many people could say that?

GOODMAN

That's not anything. Now even that's gone.

YVONNE

This is a nice town, nicer than New York or L.A. could ever hope to be. The boys are going to blossom here.

GOODMAN

Yeah. I hope so. I *think* I hope they blossom. I'm a little worried about that, too.

YVONNE

Everybody worries about everything.

GOODMAN

That's a lot of worry in the world. What does it look like? What does that massive trash heap of worry look like?

YVONNE

(thinks, then dreamily:)

It's green, like an electric green -- too bright to look at directly. And windy, a swirling dustdevil of electric green. It worries, too. The worry worries about worrying. And we're its children. Each of us born of it, getting held upside down and smacked in the butt by it to make us cry. And it permeates us, this genetic inheritance, attaches itself to our faces like old-man stage make up,, writes expiration dates on our foreheads, coats our eyes with anxiety.

GOODMAN

(beat)

Yeah.

(beat)

Night.

YVONNE

Night.

Goodman stares up at the ceiling. A time lapse begins of the two tossing and turning, Yvonne throwing off her sheets, both of them lifting their heads and checking the digital clock periodically. Finally, it's early morning and they've been quiet for a long while. Yvonne gets out of bed. She walks drowsily to the bedroom door and exits. We stay on the still sleeping Goodman. After a few moments:

YVONNE (CONT'D)

(screaming)

Goodman! Goodman!

Goodman jerks awake.

GOODMAN

(sleepy panic)

What?! Huh?!

He lumbers out of bed and exits.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Goodman descends the stairs to find Yvonne standing there. Hands over her mouth, staring at the room, all the elements of which have been repacked in taped-together, greasy-looking boxes. It's a messy job, but complete. Yvonne turns and looks at Goodman, terrified. The boys appear behind Goodman on the stairs.

GOODMAN  
Did you guys do this?

ELLIS  
No!

YVONNE  
Goodman? What happened here?

GOODMAN  
Are you guys telling the truth??

All three ad-lib "Yes!" There's a long silence. Then:

YVONNE  
(tentatively)  
It's a message, I think. Someone doesn't want us here. That's what I think.

GOODMAN  
That's absurd. Who?

YVONNE  
Or maybe *something*?

GOODMAN  
What does that even mean, Yvonne?

YVONNE  
I don't know! I don't know!  
(beat)  
I think we have to bring someone in. A ghost expert.

GOODMAN  
Someone did this, Yvonne. Not *something*.

YVONNE  
Okay, who then??

GOODMAN  
I don't know. But I *know*.

There's a silence. Finally:

ELLIS

We think it's ghosts. Poltergeists can be brought on by pubescence, which we are on the cusp of, in case anyone cares.

YVONNE

(nodding head)

The boys are right. I've read that, too. Although I think it's pubescent girls that bring it on. I'm going to call someone. I am freaked out. This has freaked me out.

She exits. Goodman looks at the boys.

GOODMAN

Well, I guess we'd better all start our days.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

There are large photos of apparitions hung on the set. Goodman addresses Kip and Kitty.

GOODMAN

So what exactly is a ghost? Kip?

KIP

A ghost is a spook.

GOODMAN

Okay. Kitty, can you elaborate?

KITTY

A ghost is a dead person which is stuck between our world and the next.

GOODMAN

The next world?

KITTY

Yes. Like heaven, for our example of the next world. Or in different religions, other places. Like Buddha.

INT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Yvonne watches Dagmar, a frail, shaky, hollow-eyed ethereal woman, as she glides around the room.



DAGMAR  
(definitively)  
Yes. Yes.

YVONNE  
Yes?

DAGMAR  
Yes. There is something.

YVONNE  
What, exactly?

DAGMAR  
It's hard.  
(ponders)  
Imagine an echo with a will, a wound with  
desires.

YVONNE  
I don't know how to imagine those.

DAGMAR  
If you insist on remaining a foot soldier  
for the rational, Yvonne, you will never  
become porous enough to experience the  
true world behind the veil.

YVONNE  
Is it beautiful? behind the veil?

DAGMAR  
Not all of it. Some of it's a  
disgusting, vermin infested mess. But it  
is true.

YVONNE  
I'll try.

DAGMAR  
Then sit.

Yvonne does.

DAGMAR (CONT'D)  
Allow your heart to beat to the  
vibrations of this house which vibrates  
to the earth which vibrates to the air  
which vibrates to the universe.

Yvonne, slack-jawed, eyes closed, begins to sway.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

A green breeze creeps into town, wraps itself around buildings, people, cars, around the high school, where it finds Acton, Ellis, and Curren in the schoolyard being savagely beaten by a group of boys in identical blazers.

DAGMAR (O.S.)

A ghost is what's left after a traumatic incident, eternally, futilely trying to heal.

YVONNE (O.S.)

So ghosts aren't dead people?

DAGMAR (O.S.)

Not only. Living people create ghosts, as well, with their mindless violence and deceit.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Goodman chats with Kip and Kitty.

GOODMAN

Are there really such things as ghosts?

KIP

Half the people say yes and half the people say no. That means that there are fifty percent of ghosts. According to math.

GOODMAN

Is it possible that the people who say there are ghosts might be mistaken or confused or even lying?

KIP

Why would they lie?

INT LIVING ROOM - DAY

Yvonne and Dagmar, eyes closed, feel the spirit of the room, sway and moan to it.

GOODMAN (O.S.)

For attention? For monetary gain? It's possible some people believe in ghosts because it alleviates their crushing fear of death. Of the nothingness that follows.

Green seeps in through the studio walls.

INT. SUPPLY CLOSET - DAY

Ellis, Acton, and Currer sit on drums in the crowded closet, their clothes ripped and dirty, their faces swollen and bloody. Bill Senior, a kind-looking bear of a man, gently dabs at the boy's faces with a wet cloth.

BILL SENIOR

I'm sorry there's such meanness out there.

CURRER

It follows us, Bill Senior. Wherever we go.

BILL SENIOR

I know it does.

CURRER

We thought it might be different here. Different school. Different state. But it's the same. It's like the same boys in masks or like the new boys got a phone call from the old boys call telling them we were coming.

BILL SENIOR

(thought)

I ought to teach you three to box. I'm not allowed to go out there and beat those assholes to death, but with the proper instruction, you could.

ELLIS

I don't think we could study boxing. We're not comfortable with the hitting part or the part of getting hit.

ACTON

We could study boxercise. I've had my eye on boxercise.

ELLIS

Yes. Or even kick-boxercise.

ACTON

I hear they both get you into fantastic shape.

BILL SENIOR

Well, y'know, I do teach boxercising class at the Y on Tuesday nights. It's a ladies class, but I could borrow some equipment and teach you boxercise right here in this closet -- our closet.

ELLIS AND ACTON

Oh, Bill Senior.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Green seeps along the floor of the studio.

KIP

You make like people are crazy. Like they just make up stories and believe them. Well, that's what crazy people do, not actual people.

GOODMAN

Maybe people need to tell themselves stories. Maybe people are a little more vulnerable to fear and sadness than you would allow for.

KIP

I allow for *ghosts*! That's what I allow for! Why not, right? It's a free country! And ghosts are only logical. I mean, people have to go somewhere when they die.

GOODMAN

No. No, it's not logical, Kip. When people die, they decay and go back to the earth. There's no substantiated evidence of ghosts.

KIP

Next you're going to tell me there's no Draculas!

An unseen, far away audience erupts in laughter. Goodman looks off. The studio audience consists of about twenty seats, only one of them occupied -- by a bored-looking sailor, smoking a cigarette.

GOODMAN

(to the kids)

Did you hear that?

KITTY

Hear what?

GOODMAN

Sort of like lots of people far away...  
laughing.

KIP

(sly smile)

Could it be... *Ghosts*, Mr. H.?

Goodman gives him a sideways glance. The distant audience laughs again. Goodman looks off for the source.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dagmar and Yvonne sit silently for a long moment, Then, conclusively:

DAGMAR

But this one is dead.

YVONNE

Why did it pack our stuff?

DAGMAR

I believe it retains only a vague understanding of the material world. It remembers that packing is what you do before you leave. It's looking for the way out.

INT. STUDIO - DAY

Goodman, Kip, and Kitty hold hands around a small table with three candles on it. The lights are low.

GOODMAN

Departed spirit of Kip's Grandmother --  
What is her name?

KIP

Grandma. Betty, I think. Or Beppy.

GOODMAN

Ok, close your eyes and concentrate.

The kids close their eyes.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

(closes eyes)

Departed spirit of Kip's grandmother, we beseech you to join us here today on our Earthly plane.

Nothing happens.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

Betty. Or Beppy. Please join us here today.

Nothing. Goodman opens his eyes.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

Nothing.

The kids open their eyes.

GOODMAN (CONT'D)

(to camera)

Well, it's not possible to prove a negative, but this is --

KITTY

Hello.

GOODMAN

Kitty, let me finish this --

KITTY

I'm not Kitty. I'm Beppy.

GOODMAN

Oh, for God's sake, Kitty --

KIP

(competing)

No, It is Beppy. I can tell.

(weeping)

Grandma! I love you!

KITTY

Kip, my little corn cob!

GOODMAN

(calling off)

Shane! Stop tape!

Shane runs on to set.

SHANE

I think it's going amazingly!

Kip and Kitty are both writhing on the floor now, seemingly in trances.

GOODMAN

I'm trying to talk about real things here. I'm too old. I'll be back tomorrow. I want them replaced.

MENDELSON

Goodman, be reasonable --

Goodman exits.

INT. HALLWAYS - CONTINUOUS

Goodman stomps down a high school hall. At the end, he looks uncertain and turns left onto an apartment building hallway. He turns right onto a hospital hall. A middle aged woman dressed as Alice in Wonderland walks with a man in a bird suit and a *papier-mâché* martian head.

GOODMAN

Excuse me, I'm looking for the exit.

ALICE

Sure. Take a left at Haunted House, right at Capitol Building, then left at Upper Westside Apartment Book-lined Hall.

GOODMAN

Thanks.

Alice smiles and nods and Goodman continues on. He's soon lost. The halls have become very narrow. He panics and walks faster. Far away titters turn to far away laughter. He's running now, crazy-eyed. Up ahead he sees a green glow. He arrives at the intersection. The glow is coming from an exit sign down the hall.

EXT. BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Goodman leans against the building, heaving. He cocks his head as he hears far away applause.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Yvonne and Dagmar sit and chant with eyes closed. Suddenly a jolt throws Yvonne hard against the couch. A spray of blood flies from the back of her head and onto the wall behind her. She opens her eyes with a start and looks back, but the wall is clean.

DAGMAR

What happened?

YVONNE

Something exploded through my head.  
Words. Fast. Painful.

DAGMAR

Can you remember them?

YVONNE

(as if recalling a dream)  
"Bobby wants to learn how to kiss.  
Sarah's fed up with the guys' messiness.  
Dave shoots himself in the head."

Yvonne looks anxiously at Dagmar.

DAGMAR

Something else?

YVONNE

(beat)  
"Rerun."

END