

BORN TO BE BLUE

by Mark Bellusci

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CHARACTERS

SAL -- A middle-aged man who wears a tank-top T-shirt at the dinner table, and wears a shirt over it when visiting the library.

GLORIA -- A middle-aged woman who wears a floral house dress and perhaps has her hair in a bun with a hairnet.

RON -- The eighteen-year-old son of SAL and GLORIA. He wears a long, untucked, loose-fitting shirt.

ASHLEY -- The eighteen-year-old girlfriend of RON's. Normal looking in dress and appearance.

VITO -- The nineteen-year-old son of SAL and GLORIA. His hair is "bouffed" in a pompadour style, similar to his idol, Tony Manero from *Saturday Night Fever*. He is wearing a maintenance man shirt or some other kind of blue collar shirt top. Even though he intersperses made-up Italian words in his dialog, he does not have an Italian accent -- although he may be played with an affected Brooklyn Italian accent. His made-up Italian words should be pronounced phonetically. He eats ravenously throughout the dinner scene, almost oblivious to everyone else when not involved in the dialog.

SCENE LIST

- Scene 1** - SAL and GLORIA's kitchen.
- Scene 2** - Library room (see staging note below)
- Scene 3** - Back to SAL and GLORIA'S kitchen.

SCENE 1

Time: Late night in the present.

Setting: A cramped kitchen with a table and chairs at center stage. The kitchen has an exaggerated Italian feel to it, with cheeses and sausages hanging from the ceiling, a red checkered table cloth and Chianti bottles on the table. Upstage left is a door leading offstage, which is ostensibly to the outside of the house. Centerstage left is a door leading to the rest of the house, which is offstage.

AT RISE

GLORIA and SAL are dozing at the table. RON enters quietly from the back door. He is wearing a black leather jacket with studs. He is carrying a beer bottle and a rolled up magazine. Despite his efforts to enter quietly, both his parents wake up.

SAL

Hey.

RON

Uh.

SAL

How you doing?

RON

Told you not to wait up for me.

SAL

We weren't. We were -- we just fell asleep, uh, you know, reading.

GLORIA

What-- what time--

RON

It's twelve-thirty.

GLORIA

Twelve-thirty? That's kind of ... early for you.

RON

Nothing going on

GLORIA

Never stopped you before.

(Pause)

SAL

So ... where were you?

RON

We're not gonna start the third-degree treatment, are we?

SAL
No no no. Just, uh, you know, making conversation.

GLORIA
We hardly see you anymore.

RON
Yeah, yeah.

(Beat.)

SAL
So ... you were at ...

RON
Geez!
(Sighs.)
The bar.

GLORIA
Nice.

SAL
And you were ... with?

RON
Oh, you know, usual crowd: bikers, high school dropouts,
construction guys.

SAL
Okay. Okay.

GLORIA
And what'd you do?

RON
Come on!

SAL
We're just talking here.

GLORIA
So you ...

RON

(Resigned sigh.)

Did what me and the boys always do: lust after women, argue sports, make fun of our parents.

SAL

Any bar fights?

RON

Nah.

GLORIA

Hasn't been in a while, huh?

RON

(Slight pause as he thinks about it.)
Guess not.

SAL

Well, be careful. You'll get out of practice that way.

GLORIA

You know, a bar fight is a great way to --

RON

Get suspended from school. I know, ma, I know.

GLORIA

Just trying to help, dear.

SAL

Hey, what are you reading there?

RON

Oh, nothing. You know.

SAL

Come on.

(RON holds up a Playboy magazine. Unbeknownst to RON, a slip of paper falls out of the magazine.)

SAL

Atta boy.

GLORIA

I hope you're not reading the articles.

SAL

(To GLORIA.)

What are you taking about?

(To RON.)

He's just looking at pictures, right?

RON

Yeah, sure.

SAL
Of course.

RON
(Listlessly.)
Well, I'm gonna crash.

GLORIA
So early?

SAL
(A warning.)
I hope you're not doing anything constructive tomorrow.

RON
Don't worry, just going to the monster truck show matinee.

GLORIA
And you're not going to read the program, right?

RON
Nope. Just gonna watch the trucks crush everything.

SAL
Would you leave him alone? He's already brought his average down to a D.

GLORIA
I just don't want--

RON
Look, I'm going to my room to watch "B" movies till dawn, okay?

GLORIA
All right. But if I don't hear senseless movie dialog, I'm coming in.

RON
Yeah yeah yeah.

SAL & GLORIA
(Together.)
Night.

(RON exits to his room offstage.)

SAL

What are you bugging him for?

(GLORIA gets up and retrieves the slip of paper that fell out of the Playboy magazine.)

SAL (CONTINUED)

He's doing everything we tell him.

GLORIA

Oh yeah? Then what's this?

(Shows SAL the note.)

SAL

Oh my God.

GLORIA

That's right, he's going to ... the library.

SAL

It's got to be a mistake. No way he--

GLORIA

There's no mistake.

(She reads from note, ominously.)

"Meet Ashley at Periodicals room, noon."

SAL

So that's why he's home early, so he can ... Monster truck show, huh? I'll show him. I'll--

(He starts to get up)

GLORIA

Sal, don't.

SAL

What are you, going to let him--

GLORIA

If you talk to him now, he'll just make something up.

SAL

So you're gonna let him get away--

GLORIA

We'll have to catch him in the act.

SAL

You mean, actually go *into* ... the library?

GLORIA

Mmm hmm.

SAL

Oh God. Can't we just wait in the parking lot?--

GLORIA

No.

SAL

But you know what I think of those places.
(He shudders in revulsion.)

GLORIA

You want to save your son or not?

SAL

Of course, but ... well Geez, if that's the only way....
(Pause.)

GLORIA

It's not too late, Sal. We can still save him.

SAL

I know, I know. But I'll tell you: it's gonna be hard sleeping under the same roof with a ... a library loitering louse.

GLORIA

He's still our son.

SAL

I'll try to remember that -- and pray I can control myself.

SCENE 2

Time: Afternoon of the next day.

Setting: A library room (see note for staging suggestions). Centerstage is a table covered with books.

At rise: RON and ASHLEY are at the table, engrossed in the books, taking notes and discussing philosophy. GLORIA and SAL enter the library slowly, glancing around until they spot their son. They

are visibly disgusted by everything they see and touch. They then sneak up on RON, who does not notice their approach.

SAL

Ah ha!

(ASHLEY and RON are startled by the sudden noise. They give the next two lines simultaneously.)

ASHLEY

Who--

RON

What--

(Guiltily trying to hide his books and notes.)

Hey, where's my monster truck magazine? How'd all these books get here--

GLORIA

(To SAL.)

I told you!

RON

I just, uh, I just--

SAL

Monster truck show, huh?

RON

Well, see, I was--

SAL

And who's this?

RON

This is Ashley. She's the --

SAL

This is the lazy girl you've been seeing?

ASHLEY

What? Ronnie!--

RON

Pop!

SAL

This is the one who just wants to hang out, make babies and watch TV trash?

(ASHLEY gasps.)

RON

(To SAL, sotto voce.)

Can't we talk about this later?--

ASHLEY

(To RON)

Lazy? Make babies? I knew you were seeing someone else!

RON

No I'm not! I--

GLORIA

What are you doing here?

RON

Well, uh, the monster truck show was ... see, I got lost and ... and I uh, came to get a map and, uh --

ASHLEY

If you're not seeing anyone else, then what are you telling them about me?

RON

You don't understand. They-- They--

GLORIA

How could you lie to us?

ASHLEY

And to me--

GLORIA

She seems very intelligent--

ASHLEY

(Defiant.)

I have an A average--

GLORIA

And very ambitious.

ASHLEY

I'm already taking college courses -- even though I am a lazy, trash-TV-watching slob.

(ASHLEY sulks.)

RON

(To ASHLEY.)

Aww, Geez. Look, I--

GLORIA

I told you something was screwy.

RON

I can explain--

SAL

Not now. Not in this disgusting place.

GLORIA

Let's discuss this at home.

RON

I'm not--

SAL

Come on, your mother made gravy.

RON

I don't -- with meatballs?

SAL

Yep.

RON

Hmmm. Well ... Is Vito going to be there?

GLORIA

You think he'd miss a good meal?

RON

He's going to start in with me.

SAL

Not when there's gravy. Come on.

RON

I want Ashley to come, too.

ASHLEY

(Sarcastically.)

Why would you want to bring a lazy, trash-TV-watching slob?

SAL

(To GLORIA.)

If only it were true.

RON

I'm sorry! I didn't mean it. It's just that--

ASHLEY

How could you?

RON

I can explain everything!

GLORIA

This I'd like to hear.

ASHLEY

Me too!

RON

(To ASHLEY.)

Then come! And I'll tell you -- and them -- everything.

SAL

You think he got her pregnant?

GLORIA

From your mouth to God's ears.

ASHLEY

Well ... but no more lies.

RON

No more lies

SAL

Good. Now let's get the hell out of here before I get sick.

SCENE 3

Time: Later that evening.

Setting: The same kitchen from the first scene.

At rise: GLORIA, ASHLEY, RON and VITO are sitting at the table. SAL is pacing upstage behind the table, with his attention focused on RON. GLORIA is listlessly picking at her food. RON sits staring at the floor, disgusted and shaking his head. His older brother, VITO is eating everything in sight, oblivious to the tension at the table. ASHLEY is nervously fiddling with her food, taking very small bites.

VITO

Momma, you get the good *bread-oso*?

GLORIA

Don't start, Vito.

VITO

I'm not starting, I'm just --

GLORIA

There's bread on the counter.

VITO

But is it the *good-ino bread-oso*?

GLORIA

Why do you have to drive me crazy every time we eat?

SAL

Leave your mother alone.

VITO

All I asked was--

SAL

Just get the bread.

VITO

Sure, Ronnie screws up and I get the heat. What's new?

SAL, GLORIA & RON

(In unison.)

Shut up, Vito.

VITO

That's it, I'm not saying another word. *Finished-ito*.

(VITO gets the bread and carefully examines it. Momentary silence at the table. SAL paces and stares at RON'S back.)

SAL

(Alluding to RON.)

Ahhh, what's the point, Gloria. Talk talk talk till you're blue in the face.

VITO

Semolina! I love semolina bread!

(To ASHLEY.)

From where we come from, this is a *cotton-a candini*.

RON

(Sarcastic and biting.)

"Where you come from?" You come from the third room on the left.

VITO

(Ignoring RON, then to ASHLEY.)

You want a *piece-a*?

ASHLEY

Uhhh, sure.

(He hands her a middle piece. She tastes it.)

VITO

Eh? Not like that Wonder Bread *cardboard-ia* they *tro* at you.

RON

"Throw."

VITO

Hmm?

RON

They "throw" at you. You used to know how to pronounce an "h," remember?

VITO

Ahhh sure, whatever.

(To ASHLEY.)

VITO (CONTINUED)

They bake that bread *tree* times as long, you know.

RON

Hopeless. Absolutely hopeless.

SAL

(To GLORIA, alluding to RON.)

I mean, why are we wasting our time on him.

RON

(To SAL and GLORIA.)

I didn't ask--

(VITO breaks off the end piece of bread and offers it to ASHLEY.)

VITO

Here, you our *guest-ino*. Take the end piece.

ASHLEY

Oh, that's okay. I'd rather have a middle piece.

VITO

The middle? Phhh. Try this.

(He hands ASHLEY the end piece.)

SAL

He's already made up his mind--doesn't care what we say.

RON

Of course I do. It's just that--

(ASHLEY is about to take a bite of the bread end, but VITO stops her.)

VITO

Whoa whoa whoa, that's not for nibbling. It's a tool.

ASHLEY

A tool?

VITO

How else you gonna sop up the gravy?

ASHLEY

I wasn't planning on--

VITO

Gotta be *smart-ivo* with your corner piece. Scoff it down too fast, you miss out on the best dipping in the business.

(VITO shows ASHLEY by dipping the other bread end into the sauce, and eating it.)

SAL

(To GLORIA, about RON.)

Just to spite us, he's doing it.

RON

(Tensely.)

Look, would you two just --

VITO

(Taps RON in the back of his head.)

Don't talk back to your *pop-ola*.

SAL

(Whacking VITO in the head.)

No hitting at the table.

RON

And stay out of it.

VITO

Don't tell me what to-- Hey, you eating that meatball?

RON

Take it.

(VITO stabs the meatball from RON's plate.)

RON

Look, I'm not trying to spite anyone. I just --

SAL

No? What do you call it when you crush your parents' dreams?

VITO

Back-a-stab-ia

RON

I call it the truth.

SAL

Truth?

RON

Because it's what I want to do.

GLORIA

But why? I don't understand--

SAL

What's to understand? The kid's giving us the business because we made him eat vegetables or something.

RON

Oh don't start the guilt trip --

VITO

That mouth, with the *backa-talka*. The old days, kids --

RON

What are you, Father Time? You're a year older than me.

VITO

In the old neighborhood, we'd--

RON

You were born and raised here!

SAL

Never mind him. You should be thinking about what *you're* doing.

RON

It's my life.

SAL

So you're going to piss it away--

RON

Piss it away? You call going to --

GLORIA

Your father gets upset because--

SAL

(To GLORIA.)

Because he doesn't listen--

RON

I know what I'm--

SAL

No--

RON

Doing.

SAL

You can't know. Don't you understand? You're too young to see--

RON

Look, this isn't permanent or anything. It's a four-year stint

SAL

Take it, and you're stuck for life.

RON

But I can do anything I want--

SAL

(Overlapping RON's previous line, with sarcastic laughter.)
Anything you want. That's a laugh.

ASHLEY

Excuse me, I'm sorry for jumping in, but ... what are we talking about here?

RON

It's okay--

ASHLEY

No, it's not okay. I mean, Ronnie has done something you should be proud of, and you're treating him like he killed someone.

SAL

Himself, if he takes this stint.

ASHLEY

"Stint?" It's four years at--

RON

Shhhh.

ASHLEY

Why can't I--

RON

They don't like to use its name in the house.

ASHLEY

They don't want to hear the word, "Harvard?"

GLORIA

Ohhhh!

(SAL makes a disgusted face.)

ASHLEY

What could you possibly have against Harvard?

RON

Harvard, Yale, Princeton, they hate them all.

ASHLEY

Is ... is this one of those undercover video shows? Sure, you're a couple of out-of-work actors, right?

RON

Ashley--

ASHLEY

(Looking around.)

Come on, where's the camera? Where's the hack comedian host?

RON

It's just the way they think--

ASHLEY

I mean, Harvard! The best college in the world!

GLORIA

That's what they *want* you to believe.

ASHLEY

Do you know how many people would die for that scholarship?

GLORIA

How could a kid with a D-plus average get into Harvard on a full scholarship?

RON

I, uh, I doctored my report cards to make A's look like D's.

ASHLEY

(Proudly.)

Ronnie scored the highest on the state aptitude test.

SAL

Did you at least cheat?

RON

I tried, but everyone else was putting in wrong answers.

GLORIA

That's because everyone else was listening to their parents, not sneaking around libraries.

ASHLEY

This is crazy. Absolutely--

GLORIA

What do you think happens when you go to Harvard?

ASHLEY

(Sarcastic and rhetorical.)

You get a ... great education?

GLORIA

And then what?

ASHLEY

Then, youuuu ... start your career.

SAL

Ugggh.

(GLORIA winces.)

ASHLEY

(To RON.)

That's another word I can't say?

(RON shakes his head no.)

Okay, like, so what are you supposed to do after college?

GLORIA

Get a job.

ASHLEY

Job, career. What's the difference?

SAL

The difference is, a job, you do your eight hours and go home.

GLORIA

A career, you sacrifice your family, your leisure, your life, to "achieve" something.

SAL

A job you bitch about, a career you see a therapist about.

ASHLEY

All right, so Ronnie will choose a job instead of a career. Fine.
It's still--

GLORIA

This job he'll choose--you think it'll be high paying?

ASHLEY

It will if he comes out of Harvard.

GLORIA

And what color you think his collar will be?

ASHLEY

I don't know, shirts come in a lot of colors--

SAL

You think he's going to push paper or a broom?

ASHLEY

Paper!

SAL

Ah ha!

ASHLEY

Ah ha?

SAL

A white collar waste.

GLORIA

Headaches, ulcers, and a downsize away from a pink slip.

RON

Yeah, but the pay--

GLORIA

Less than minimum wage when you consider unpaid overtime.

SAL

Never mind the costs for a therapist, an Ashram, stress management sessions--

ASHLEY

Soooooo you want Ronnie toooooo not work?

GLORIA

Of course he'll work.

SAL

This country was built on work.

GLORIA

Real work.

SAL

Blue collar work.

ASHLEY

O ... kay.

(Sarcastically.)

So Ronnie should just forget about college.

GLORIA

Absolutely not.

SAL

We've got a good school picked out for him.

(Clearing his throat, then intimidating a bad TV actor.)

"How did I get this wonderful job?"

ASHLEY

What job?

RON

No no. That's the line from his favorite commercial.

SAL

(Continuing the TV actor imitation.)

"It all started the day I enrolled at Technical Career Institute."

GLORIA

Where Ronnie can learn to drive a dump truck.

(VITO starts making the sounds of a dump truck and playing dump truck games with table items. After a moment, SAL taps him on the back of the head and VITO stops.)

SAL

Walk on to any construction site, and you'll be driving a dump truck in minutes.

GLORIA

Now that's a skill nobody can take away from you.

VITO

Bastard-o computer hasn't replaced drivers yet.

(He again imitates a dump truck with table items again; SAL taps him on his head, and he stops.)

ASHLEY

What kind of life is that?

SAL

Are you kidding me? Best life there is.

GLORIA

Start at nine, home by five.

SAL

Talking sports with the guys.

GLORIA

Plenty of coffee breaks.

ASHLEY

But where's the challenge?

SAL

"Challenge?"

GLORIA

(To SAL.)

It's the high school counselors. They brainwash them.

ASHLEY

All I'm saying is, it's not brain surgery.

SAL

And what, you think brain surgery is brain surgery?

ASHLEY

Uhhhh--

GLORIA

That it's a "challenging" career?

ASHLEY

Of course.

SAL

So tell me: what do brain surgeons do?

ASHLEY

What do you mean, what do they do? They do complex operations--

GLORIA

They open heads.

SAL

People been doing that to each other since they were drawing pictures in caves.

ASHLEY

But these are surgeons. They--

GLORIA

You know what they do when they open a head?

ASHLEY

They--

GLORIA

They look.

SAL

That's all.

GLORIA

Just browsing.

VITO

Wind-oso shop-oso.

ASHLEY

So instead of having a comfortable career in a nice office, you want him struggling to make money--

SAL

(Addressing GLORIA.)
Struggling?

SAL

You know what a good dump truck driver gets?

RON

Peanuts. I looked up their salary range.

GLORIA

You look at their overtime?

RON

What's the diff--

GLORIA

Doubles the salary,

SAL

Now when was the last time some Harvard guy got overtime?

RON

Hey, with their salaries, they don't need it.

SAL

Oh yeah? And you think that Harvard guy gets to see any of that money?

GLORIA

(Delivered fast and in monotone.)

Harvard guy pays for Harvard cars, parked in four-car Harvard garages, attached to thirty-two-room Harvard mansions, housing Harvard-to-be kids and a Harvard-kept wife.

SAL

So at the end of the week, this rich Harvard guy's got just enough money left to buy a hot dog for lunch, and save the bun for dinner.

RON

And what, the blue collar guy doesn't have money problems?

GLORIA

Absolutely not.

SAL

He goes home, has dinner, goes to the kid's ball game, goes to Dairy Queen, goes to bed.

GLORIA

Clean, simple, affordable.

SAL

It's not too late, son. Classes that start Thursday could have you driving by Friday.

RON

You think it's that easy, huh?

GLORIA

Did we miss something?

RON

What about the boredom? The same old thing, day in and day out?

SAL

No no no. See, you only get bored if you overdevelop your brain and start expecting more.

ASHLEY

Look, you're fantasizing about a life in the past. No one lives that way now.

SAL

Oh no? Hey Vito.

VITO

(He stops eating for a moment.)

What's-a uppa?

SAL

Tell her what you do.

VITO

Man-o maintenance-a

(SAL proudly slaps VITO on the back.)

VITO

In at nine, out at five. Like *clocka worka!*

SAL

A beer with the boys at five-thirty, dinner at seven, TV till eleven.

VITO

The *dream-a Americana*.

GLORIA

(She dabs a tear from her eye.)

He makes us so proud.

SAL

Look at him. I mean, *look* at him. Won't find any worry lines on that face.

RON

(Sotto voce to ASHLEY)
Won't find any brain cells, either.

VITO

What?

RON

Nothing. Just wondering if you're ever going to use that gray thing between your eyes.

(VITO, confused, feels around his forehead.)

SAL

What did I tell you about making your brother think at the table?

GLORIA

Please, let's not start that again.

ASHLEY

Start what?

RON

Vito wasn't always this ... auto piloted.

SAL

He was going down the wrong path fast.

ASHLEY

What did he--

VITO

Ah, I ... I started doing ... smart things.

GLORIA

We ... almost lost him.

VITO

(Whacks himself in the forehead.)
Stupid-oso!

GLORIA

The way you used to come home.

SAL

With those bright eyes

GLORIA

And that mocha cappuccino breath from the bookstore.

SAL

Telling us you were on the football team.

GLORIA

When it was actually the debate team.

SAL

Coming to the table with a Playboy magazine

GLORIA

And hiding a New Yorker in the middle.

SAL

And those friends of yours?

GLORIA

School presidents, honor students, corporate interneees.

SAL

No good punks!

GLORIA

Hardened group like that, they end up being lawyers, doctors, stock brokers.

SAL

Got no one to blame but themselves.

GLORIA

So many lost. What does it say for our country?

(Pause.)

ASHLEY

Tell them.

RON

Not yet.

GLORIA

Tell us what?

RON

Nothing.

ASHLEY

You tell them, or I will

RON
(Sighing.)
This summer--

SAL
Oh no.

RON
I'm going to--

GLORIA
Please--

(The next two lines are said simultaneously.)

RON
I took a job.

SAL
You took a job.

GLORIA
I knew it

SAL
(He picks up the knife and holds it out to RON.)
Here. Just insert it between the third and fourth vertebrae.

RON
Pop--

GLORIA
I don't understand. We had your summer all planned.

RON
Yeah, well--

GLORIA
Get up at noon, hang on a street corner, go to the video arcade,
see cheap horror movies, then shoot pool all night.

RON
I know, ma, but--

SAL
It's too good for him.

RON

It's just that, I want to *do* something with my life.

(GLORIA gasps)

SAL

What did you say in this house?

VITO

(He hits RON in the back of the head.)

Disrespect-ivo bastard-o!

(RON hits him back. SAL then hits VITO.)

SAL

What did I say about hitting your brother?

(HE then hits RON.)

And you watch your mouth in this house, boy.

ASHLEY

What? What did he say?--

RON

My family doesn't like to hear "do something with life" statements.

SAL

You want to "do" something? Breathe in, breathe out, eat, sleep, make babies. Just let it happen.

ASHLEY

But you can't just let a career "happen." You've got to prepare for it, go to school for it.

GLORIA

(To SAL.)

Told you we should've done home education.

SAL

All right, all right.

(Beat. He sighs.)

So what's this wonder job you got? Bartending, cutting lawns, what?

RON

Uhhh, something like that.

ASHLEY

(Proud and defiant.)

Ron has been awarded one of only two internships at the city's largest law firm, Huff, Puff and Blowdon.

SAL

It's all over.

VITO

Finished-ino.

GLORIA

Don't you understand? They get their claws into you, they'll never let go.

RON

It's a great paying job, and I get credits towards college.

SAL

(Offering his plate to RON.)

Here, hit me in the temple. Make it fast and hard, and I'll be out of my misery in seconds.

RON

Pop, try to understand--

ASHLEY

(Angry.)

How could two parents hold their son back from a chance of a lifetime?

RON

But they--

ASHLEY

I mean, like, aren't you supposed to want more for your son?

GLORIA

Of course.

ASHLEY

So why should he settle for a blue collar job like yours?

RON

See, that's the thing. They're not blue collar people. My father's a college professor, and my mom's a senior vice president at IBM.

(Beat.)

ASHLEY

What--? I don't-- Then why won't you let Ronnie have what you had?

SAL

Have what we?-- you know what we had?

GLORIA

Anxiety.

SAL

Thirty-five years of it.

GLORIA

Between his trying to get tenure.

SAL

And her never-ending trip up the corporate ladder

GLORIA

We had to relocate a million times.

SAL

Barely saw each other the first ten years of marriage--and when we did, we didn't know what to do with ourselves.

GLORIA

Probably would've gotten divorced.

SAL

If we had the time.

GLORIA

Driven by our "careers"

SAL

Wanted to "do something" with our lives.

GLORIA

By the time we looked up, we weren't kids anymore. Then, out of the blue, the baby clock kicked in.

SAL

We figured, have a few, hire a nanny, see the kids on weekends.

GLORIA

Be a good career move -- kids make a great impression at corporate outings.

GLORIA

We scheduled a procreation appointment once a month.

VITO

What's "pro-cre-a--"

(RON whispers in VITO's ear.)

VITO

Uggh. My parents? *Nauseato.*

GLORIA

Just eat your meatballs, dear.

SAL

That's when we learned, some things you can't plan for.

GLORIA

Like trying to create a kid on a deadline.

SAL

Our estimate for baby making was off.

GLORIA

Eight years off.

SAL

Well, eight years of trying does things to a couple.

GLORIA

Sometimes bad, sometimes good.

SAL

In our case --

GLORIA

Good.

SAL

Because it-- it made us stop.

SAL

And look at the way we were living.

SAL

Constantly maneuvering to see what the next career move would be.

GLORIA

And constantly looking over our shoulders to see who was gaining on us.

(Pause.)

So, we decided.

SAL

Screw the career crap.

GLORIA

And screw the baby making crap.

SAL

We were going to start living.

GLORIA

Had it all planned.

SAL

Quit the jobs, sell the condo --

GLORIA

Buy a Winnebago.

SAL

See the country.

GLORIA

We had enough saved. At least for awhile. Then, after a few years, if the money got tight--

SAL

We'd take jobs.

GLORIA

But not career jobs.

SAL

Job jobs.

GLORIA

Pay-the-bills jobs.

SAL

Store clerk.

GLORIA

Secretary.

SAL

(Dreamily.)
Night watchman.

GLORIA

That's what your father really wanted to do.

SAL

Look at a few closed circuit cameras, sip some coffee, read my books -- and get paid for it? Man.

GLORIA

So that was our plan. And suddenly, everything was fun.

SAL

And she means, everything.

(He gives a lecherous laugh as he looks at GLORIA, who playfully taps him.)

VITO

Whoa. Momma, poppa, *filthy-oso*.

GLORIA

Well anyway, we figured, if we wanted kids, we'd adopt.

VITO

Wait a *minute-a*. Are you saying we're--

GLORIA

We were finally in control.

SAL

(Chuckling.)
Yeah, for about a month.

RON

What, you got tired of the easy life so soon?

GLORIA

Hell no.

SAL

See, acting like horny teenagers--

VITO

Poppa!--

SAL

Did for us what eight years of planning couldn't do.

GLORIA

And all those fun, new plans, out the door. So, I stayed at IBM.

SAL

And I kept on at the college.

GLORIA

I was going to quit my job as soon as I had Vito.

SAL

And she would have, if I'd been able to hold up my end of the bargain.

GLORIA

Stop saying that.

SAL

No, Gloria, it's true.

GLORIA

(To everyone else.)

Your father got screwed in a politics game and wasn't granted tenure. A month later, they told him to look for another college. That's why we kept relocating.

SAL

Now, if I was in a union, I'd file a grievance, bing, bang, boom, I'd have tenure.

(Beat.)

SAL

But we were still planning to have fun. Figured, when Vito got a little older, we'd bag the career crap for the Winnebago.

GLORIA

(To RON.)

Then you came along.

SAL

Another un-planned example of delayed horny teenagerdom.

VITO

Poppa!--

GLORIA

And that sealed it, we were playing house for keeps.

SAL

So we put up with the long hours, the political backstabbing, the mind-numbing nonsense of white collardom--

GLORIA

Because we had to.

SAL

But our children don't.

GLORIA

Because a simpler life starts with a simpler job.

SAL

That's your roots.

VITO

Your *root-ivos*.

RON

(To VITO.)

Would you stop that?

VITO

Stop what?

RON

The Italian speak. You're about as Italian as Amy Vanderbilt, you WASP.

VITO

No no no. I *used* to be a WASP-a.

SAL

Till we converted.

ASHLEY

Wait a minute. You converted your *nationality*?

RON

We are now officially Italian Americans.

VITO

Exactly-amente!

RON

Welcome to the warped family.

VITO

Hey, you show *respect-ivo* at the table.

ASHLEY

Respect-ivo, what is? --

VITO

It means, "respect."

RON

(To ASHLEY.)

Phhh. He makes it up as he goes along.

VITO

He's just *jealous-o* he doesn't know street Italian.

ASHLEY

Street Italian?

VITO

Yeah. It's all the fun of speaking Italian, without the pain of learning it.

(To ASHLEY)

I made it up myself. I'll teach you.

ASHLEY

Well ...

VITO

Come on, it's *easy-oso*.

ASHLEY

But I'm not good with--

RON

Neither is he.

VITO

Start with any English word, then just *tro* some vowels at the end. Any vowels will do. So chair becomes *chair-a*. Plate becomes *plate-ino*.

(Beat.)

ASHLEY

That's it?

VITO

Nooooo. That's only the English words. You have different rules for Italian words already in the language. Go ahead, say some Italian words.

ASHLEY

(She uses Anglicized pronunciations.)

Uhhh, "Peets-a, cap-i-col-a, man-i-cott-ee."

VITO

For street Italian, pronounce each "c" like "g." Then take the vowel at the end and put it in front.

(With plenty of animation on the street Italian words.)
So "Pizza" becomes "a-pitz." "Man-i-cott-eee" becomes "a-man-i-gaut." "Capicola" becomes "a-gob-a-gool."

RON

You're sick, man.

VITO

And you're just jealous you got no identity.

RON

I'm jealous I don't have a normal brother.

SAL

All right, enough! We're Italian-American, and that's that.

RON

No we're not.

SAL

Do I have to pull out the papers from the Italian Institute of America?

RON

I don't care what--

ASHLEY

But, like, why would you convert to Italian?

GLORIA

To Italian American.

ASHLEY

Okay, to Italian American.

SAL

Because I've studied nationalities with strong family bonds--

RON

(To ASHLEY.)

He teaches sociology.

SAL

And the Italian, Chinese and Japanese Americans come out on top. I then considered our physical characteristics, and determined that we were best suited to pass as Italians.

GLORIA

Plus, we love Italian food.

SAL

So we contacted the Institute about converting to Italian American.

GLORIA

Of course, they were a little thrown by the request.

RON

(To ASHLEY.)

Actually, we were the only ones who ever made the request.

GLORIA

But they were very nice.

VITO

Treated us like *blood-oso*.

SAL

They came up with a ... a

GLORIA

A course.

SAL

I guess you'd call it that ... on how to be an Italian American.

ASHLEY

A course.

SAL

It covered everything: history--

GLORIA

We had to watch *The Godfather*, *Saturday Night Fever* and the *Pope of Greenwich Village*.

SAL

Fashion:

GLORIA

I never knew house dresses came in so many colors.

SAL

Food:

GLORIA

You'd be amazed how many things you can make with garlic and olive oil.

SAL

Architecture

GLORIA

We reduced the size of the kitchen, and made it as crowded as possible.

SAL

And we hung Chianti bottles and provolone.

GLORIA

Not to mention plastic slip covers on the couches.

SAL

Music:

GLORIA

Vic Damone all day. Dino Martin all night.

SAL

And, of course, the Chairman anytime.

(VITO leaves his chair and genuflects as SAL sings.)

SAL

I've got you under my skin--

RON

All right, that's it!

GLORIA

Ronnie!

RON

I've had it with the Italianisms, the blue collarisms and the simpler lifeisms.

VITO

Traitor-e.

(VITO smacks RON in the back of the head. RON hits him back.)

SAL

Hey, hey, hey!

(They stop. Pause.)

GLORIA

(To RON.)

All right, you're an adult. You don't want to be Italian American, that's your business.

SAL

But this "Harvard" thing, that's different.

GLORIA

We don't want--

RON

It's -- It's too late, mom. I've already accepted the scholarship.

ASHLEY

And we're going to get married.

(Beat.)

GLORIA

What?

SAL

But you're not even pregnant!

ASHLEY

And we're both going to have successful careers!

VITO

Nut-ivos!

SAL

You raise them, you try to teach them--

ASHLEY

(To RON.)

I think we should go.

RON

(To his family.)

Geez, I don't know ... Well, I guess so -- yeah, maybe we better.

(RON and ASHLEY reluctantly get up to leave. GLORIA breaks down crying, SAL consoles her. VITO reaches for more food. RON reaches the door with ASHLEY, hesitates, then turns back to his family.)

RON

Mom--

SAL

Just-- just ... go.

RON

Pop, I -- I have to try this. But if it doesn't work --

SAL

Yeah, yeah, whatever. Just--

RON

If it doesn't work, I'm -- I'm still wearing ... the belt.
 (SAL and GLORIA look hopeful. VITO stops eating for the first time.)

ASHLEY

What belt?

RON

I'll never forget who I am -- uh, well, who you are -- or, who you want to be -- or have become, or -- well, you know--

ASHLEY

WHAT BELT?

(RON lifts his shirt to reveal a carpenter belt filled with tools. SAL, GLORIA burst into smiles. VITO wipes a tear from his eye. ASHLEY shakes her head, sighs, and gives a resigned smile.)

RON

(Reluctant acceptance.)
 Long live the ... *famil-iano*.

SAL

He's still our boy, Gloria.

RON

I'll always be your boy, Pop.

VITO

Brother-ino.

(RON and VITO hug.)

SAL

Go ahead, see what the "career life" is all about. And when you're sick of it, we'll be here for you.

(RON and ASHLEY say their good-byes and exit. SAL and GLORIA sigh contentedly.)

GLORIA

It's just a phase, dear.

SAL

Sure.

GLORIA

He'll be back.

SAL

I know.

GLORIA

And when he does, he'll be that much farther up the union
apprentice list.

SAL

Exactly-amente. Hey, you eating that meatball?

END