

Executive Producer: David Janollari
Executive Producer: Steven Cragg
Executive Producer: Brian D. Bradley

HOW WE LIVE

"Mating Rituals"

Written by

Steven Cragg & Brian D. Bradley

Network Draft

January 6, 2015



© 2014 Universal Television LLC

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. NOT TO BE DUPLICATED WITHOUT PERMISSION.

This material is the property of Universal Television LLC and is intended solely for use by its personnel. The sale, copying, reproduction or exploitation of this material, in any form is prohibited. Distribution or disclosure of this material to unauthorized persons is also prohibited.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN**Russell & Holly**

Russell Bailey (37) Russell is a trained anthropologist, a science blogger and the author of several books. Smart, funny and kind of cool for a scientist, he and his wife, Holly, have moved to a new home to start a family and be close to their friends, Matt and Natalie. Russell finds his new home as fascinating as any culture he's ever studied. Russell is endlessly curious about the rites and rituals of his friends and neighbors and writes about them in his book.

Holly Bailey (35) Russell's wife, Holly, is bubbly, positive and full of energy. And she pours that energy into everything in her life. Most recently, she's been channeling that drive into trying to get pregnant, a challenge that is pushing her endless optimism to its limits.

The Kaplans

Matt Kaplan (37) Matt is Russell's best friend. A former frat guy, Matt is a "Bro-Dad" who loves sports and red meat. Matt helps Russell negotiate the pitfalls of his new environment while dealing with the pitfalls in his own life. And by pitfalls, we mean his four children. Matt's a little loud, a little impulsive and a little bit longing for a more free-spirited time before diapers and play dates.

Natalie Kaplan (37) Dry, funny and "tell it like it is," Natalie is Holly's best friend and a stay-at-home mom. But she's no perfect alpha-mom. And though she isn't exactly up to the standards of Parenting Magazine, she gets things done and she's fine with it. She has honed an amazing sense of humor that she uses to handle her complicated world.

Riley Kaplan (10) Though her mother might not strive for perfection, Riley certainly does. Unlike her mom, Riley is a girly girl who loves dresses and being popular. She often ends up at odds with her bulldozer of a little brother.

Jake Kaplan (8) A bull in a china shop, Jake is his father's son. Big for his age, he's a sports nut and a breaker of anything expensive, antique or cherished. He and his dad have a special bond, being the only males in a house full of women. It's hard to dislike him for it. Unless you're his older sister; then it's open season.

Leila Kaplan (3) & Abby Kaplan (3) Leila and Abby are three-year-old twins. They eat, they poop, they fall down a bunch and make for some pretty cute iPhone videos. They're three years old. What more do you want, full characters? They're not even full people yet!

The Parks

Dennis Park (38; Asian-American) Dennis is a sweet, chubby, emotional guy who likes cooking, sewing and all things geeky. He's not had a lot of male friends in his life, so having an alpha male friend like Matt is fascinating to him. It's like he's stumbled on a bro-wizard. Even though he's a bit of a mismatch with his wife, Claudia, they connect at the intersection of organic food, social justice and the superiority of pre-JJ Abrams Star Trek.

Claudia Park (35; Caucasian) Claudia is sweet, quirky and a little scattered. She's also incredibly beautiful, though with her cat eye glasses and peasant blouses, she doesn't seem to know it. She's basically a "Hot Geek," which, like the Unicorn, is rare. She's generally sweet, but she does like things to be "just so." When she's pushed, she can get a little prickly. So don't get between her and her "Dr. Who."

Ethan Park (12) The only child of two cultured, progressive, very hands on parents, Ethan is a tad unusual. A dyed in the wool "indoor kid," he's no fan of the sun, instead preferring video games and YouTube videos about video games. He's smart, clever and there's a little bit of the devil in him, so it's easy for him to push his parents' buttons. And it doesn't hurt that their buttons are so huge. In the end, though, he's the third wheel on the perfect little tricycle that is his family.

COLD OPEN

EXT. GRASSY AREA - DAY (DAY 1)

RUSSELL BAILEY (37, smart, funny, cool for a scientist), wearing a soft safari hat, films with a GoPro.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

My name's Russell Bailey and I'm an anthropologist. I've written five books on human culture. Annnd, you're asleep. Here, check this out.

POP TO:

EXT. VARIOUS NATIVE SETTINGS - FLASHBACK

QUICK MONTAGE of Russell doing intense native stuff: hallucinating with an AMAZONIAN MEDICINE MAN, eating seal guts with ESKIMOS and dancing with topless NATIVE WOMEN.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

You awake now? Good. So, yeah, I've seen some crazy shit in my time.

BACK TO:

EXT. GRASSY AREA - BACK TO SCENE

Russell continues to film.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

But I've recently stumbled on a culture that's as fascinating as any I've ever studied. My own.

REVEAL: A suburban barbecue in full swing.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

My wife Holly and I just moved out to suburban New Jersey to start a family. I thought it would be boring here. It is not. This place is like a petri dish for 21st Century culture. I mean, you've got people treating their dogs like children...

ANGLE ON: A MAN casually talks to friends while holding his tiny dog in a baby bjorn.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

...and their children like reality stars.

ANGLE ON: A bunch of ADULTS film a little girl with their iPhones while she sings "Anaconda" by Nicki Minaj.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
And we haven't even touched on the
trash situation.

ANGLE ON: A CONFUSED MAN with a soda can in front of trash bins marked "Paper," "Plastic," "Trash," "Compost" and "Other." He finally just sets the can down on a table and skulks off.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Poor bastard.

HOLLY BAILEY (35, upbeat, effervescent) pops into frame.

HOLLY
(BUBBLY) Hello!

Russell puts his camera down.

HOLLY
Amazing, don't you think? Our first
barbecue and we are (SING SONGY)
crushing it.

RUSSELL
You're amazing. It's really great.

HOLLY
You're not sorry we moved out here?

RUSSELL
How could I be? It's fascinating. I
mean, look at our beautiful neighbors.

ANGLE ON: A WITCHY OLD LADY and a DUMPY YOUNG GUY holding hands.

HOLLY
Yeah, what's the deal there?
Husband? Adult son? Caretaker?
Hostage? (THEN) Anyway, I'm glad
you're having fun. But don't just
observe. Mingle.

Holly moves off. Russell starts filming again.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
So many interesting types out here.
I could spend weeks categorizing
them. Like this guy...

MATT KAPLAN (37, Bro-ish) walks up carrying his crying twin daughters, LEILA and ABBY (3). He's wearing an "I Love Harry Styles" t-shirt.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
That's my best friend, Matt. Note the ironic t-shirt with kid snot on it. Classic "Bro-dad."

MATT
Hey dude. You guys aren't pregnant yet, are you?

RUSSELL
Still trying.

MATT
Good. Stop right now.

Matt's other kids, RILEY (10, girly girl) and JAKE (8, a bruiser), run up. Riley's fancy dress has a stain on it.

RILEY
Dad, Jake spilled soda on my dress.

JAKE
I made it cooler. The stain looks like a wolf head.

MAT
(SMILING) It totally does. (FROWNS)
And that's wrong. Apologize to Riley.

JAKE
I'm sorry... that you're lame.

Riley and Jake start pushing each other. Matt, still holding the twins, gets between them and gets punched in the balls.

MATT
Natalie. A little help here?!

NATALIE (O.C.)
Not my problem today.

ANGLE ON: NATALIE KAPLAN (37, dry, witty) pouring herself a keg cup of wine. Holly eyeballs her.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Natalie's a "Beta Mom." Loves her kids, but she won't make the cover of Parent Magazine anytime soon.

HOLLY

(RE: WINE) Kind of a heavy pour
there, Nat.

NATALIE

We have four kids. Only one of us
can have fun at a time. He gets to
drink at the twins' birthday party.
(BRIGHTENING) Which is Monday, btw.
I forgot to send out invitations.

MATT

(TO RUSSELL) Dude, check it out.

ANGLE ON: DENNIS PARK (38, Asian, short, chubby, sweet) and
his extremely tall and beautiful though nerdy wife, CLAUDIA
PARK (35, Caucasian), entering the party.

MATT

You're a scientist. Explain that.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

I can't. Those are our other
neighbors, Claudia and Dennis Park.
Working title for them: "Hot Geek"
and "The Luckiest Man In The World."

Dennis and Claudia walk up carrying a dish.

CLAUDIA

Who's up for some orzo with wilted
spinach and pine nuts?

HOLLY

Wow, that's pretty fancy for a
barbecue.

MATT

That's how it is now. Good luck
finding a hot dog. Thanks, "Top Chef."

HOLLY

It looks great. Thanks, Claudia.

CLAUDIA

No, that's Dennis. He's an *amazing*
cook. And he sews. And he cleans. I
lucked out.

DENNIS

I have my passions. I think I've got
a pic of the "Catwoman" costume I
made for her.

He holds up his phone and Matt rips it from his hand.

DENNIS
Wouch! Big Batman fan, huh?

Natalie tears the phone from Matt's hand.

NATALIE
No. He isn't. (RE: PHOTO) Wow,
Claudia. Meow.

RUSSELL
Hey, did you bring Ethan?

DENNIS
He's right there.

Russell realizes that their son, ETHAN (12, Asian, quirky, "Indoor Kid"), is standing right next to him.

RUSSELL
Soft-footed, aren't ya? What's up?

ETHAN
(LOOKING DOWN) Nothing.

CLAUDIA
Eye contact, honey.

Ethan makes very awkward eye contact. Russell is put off.

RUSSELL
Good enough. Enjoy the party.

They all go off, leaving Russell to observe the scene.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
My publisher wants a new book and
I've got one for him. It's not about
the blood rites of the Maasai. This
one's about us. How we live right
now. The good, the bad...

The DUMPY YOUNG GUY from before taps Russell on the shoulder.

DUMPY YOUNG GUY
You got any absinthe, or is it just
wine and beer?

RUSSELL (V.O.)
...and the fugly.

END COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

EXT. RUSSELL AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY (DAY 1)

CLOSE ON: An excited Holly.

HOLLY

(SEXY) You ready to do it?

CHYRON OVER BLACK: "Mating Rituals."

REVEAL: Holly is talking to Russell at the barbecue.

RUSSELL

Right now? At our barbecue?

HOLLY

No, baby. Tonight. (RE: her womb)
I've got ovulation pressures all up
in this piece.

RUSSELL

Well when you put it that way.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

Sex. It's the most basic human
drive. And the thing that drives us
the most insane.

Holly aggressively opens chip bags and pours them in bowls.

RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Take Holly and me, for instance.
We'd been trying to get pregnant.
But ten months and ten whiffs had
turned my wife's bubbly nature into
a terrifying intensity.

HOLLY

So once everyone's gone, let's clean
up, have sex, watch last week's
"Walking Dead," get some sleep and
then knock one out in the morning
for safety. You feel up to that?

RUSSELL

Yeah. I'm money, baby!

RUSSELL (V.O.)

And me into Guy Fieri.

He goes for a high five. She awkwardly taps it and leaves.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

The pressure was getting to us. We probably should have been talking about it. But instead...

EXT. RUSSELL AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - A LITTLE LATER

The husbands and wives are split into two separate groups.

ANGLE ON: Dennis, Matt and Russell.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

...we engaged in the time-honored tradition where men and women split into groups to complain about each other and seek sympathy.

MATT

I have no sympathy for you, dude. You're having a lot of sex. A lot.

RUSSELL

It's not porno sex. More like a series of light eye contact bank deposits.

DENNIS

Should we be talking about this stuff around your kid, Matt?

REVEAL: Abby sitting nearby, playing on an iPad.

MATT

She can't hear a thing when she's on the iPad. (HE CLAPS) See? Nothing. (THEN) All I'm sayin' is, you're still free, dude. Do it loud. Do it weird. Cause once the kid comes, everything changes.

RUSSELL

So you and Natalie stopped having sex?

MATT

No, it's worse than that. We are having sex, just not cool sex. You gotta be super quiet like the Amish or math teachers. Right, Dennis?

DENNIS

Not really. Claudia and I are naturally quiet lovers and we--

JAKE (O.C.)
Dad! Come smell my fart!

MATT
(TO RUSSELL) See, my kid even
interrupts his sex life.

RUSSELL
I just want us to get pregnant and
be done with it. It shouldn't be
this hard. I mean, I met a woman in
China who popped out ten kids while
working in a peanut field.

DENNIS
I hear you. Claudia and I had our
own issues getting pregnant.

ANGLE ON: Claudia, Natalie and Holly, who holds Leila.

CLAUDIA
Dennis' sperm was just filled with
debris.

NATALIE
Like gum and sticks and stuff?

CLAUDIA
Didn't ask. Didn't want to know.

HOLLY
We've both been checked. We're fine.
But it's been almost a year. I hope
it happens this month, cause I want
one of these so bad. (SQUEEZES LEILA)

LEILA
Ow.

NATALIE
You know what? Keep that one. We
don't need doubles.

HOLLY
That's very sweet. But what I really
need right now is some wine.

NATALIE
You're still not drinking? Hasn't it
been like three months?

HOLLY
Yeah. It sucks. But it supposedly
increases your chances.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

So Russell and I decided to cut out
the booze while we're trying. Gotta
stay strong.

ANGLE ON: The guys shotgunning beers.

MATT

Now that's what our forefathers
fought and died for!

RUSSELL

Well, that and religious freedom.
(BURP) God, I needed that.

DENNIS

(BEAMING) I was kind of afraid my
throat would close up because of my
hops allergy, but I'm still alive.

MATT

You know, you're alright, Dennis.
When Russell introduced us, I
thought, who's this Asian guy in a
kilt? But you're a beast.

DENNIS

Funny you should say that. My "World
of Warcraft" handle is Beast899.

MATT

No idea what you're talking about.
(THEN) Okay, Russell and I opened up
about our sex lives. Now it's your
turn. First question, and don't take
this the wrong way, but how the hell
did you lock down that wife of
yours? Hypnotism? Big wiener?

RUSSELL

Maybe he's Beast899 in the bedroom too.

DENNIS

Well I'm no Johnny Depp, but I hold my
own. (THEN) At least, I thought I did.

RUSSELL

Something going on? You can talk to
me. I have a doctorate. (BURP)

DENNIS

Well, this morning there was an incident.

POP TO:

INT. DENNIS AND CLAUDIA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

Claudia and Dennis are having sex. He comes in for a kiss which is shockingly bad, open-mouthed and complicated.

CLAUDIA
No. No more. Stop!

DENNIS
Is there a problem, M'lady?

BACK TO:

EXT. RUSSELL AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - BACK TO SCENE

ANGLE ON: The ladies.

HOLLY
He said "M'lady"?

NATALIE
That would seal my vault right up.

CLAUDIA
No, I love that. We met at a "Lord of The Rings" convention. It's the kiss. It's too much tongue, too much lips, too much suction. It's like being attacked by a giant carp. I finally just had to say something.

NATALIE
How long's he been fish kissing you?

ANGLE ON: The guys.

DENNIS
15 years! She never said a thing. I mean, who is this woman? What other secrets is she keeping from me? Does she have a second family? It's like an episode of "The Americans."

RUSSELL
That's rough, pal.

MATT
What are you talking about? You should congratulate him. He's got "The Hurt Stick."

DENNIS
What's "The Hurt Stick"?

RUSSELL

A stupid theory Matt has.

MATT

She hurt your feelings. Now you can milk her guilt to get stuff. It's a simple system. First, keep reminding her of what happened. Then, keep apologizing for it. It's a guilt refresher. Get you anything you want.

DENNIS

I don't know. Claudia and I try to live in a truthful space.

MATT

Just a tool, Frodo. Use it or don't.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

Okay, so obviously no one I know is an expert on human sexuality. But I do have a theory. I think it comes down to the three P's.

INT. RUSSELL AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING (DAY 1)

A stressed-out looking Russell lays in bed.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

The first is Procreation. Which we'd already tried six times in two days. I was not pumped for number seven.

Holly jumps into bed and slides under the covers.

HOLLY

You ready to make a deposit?

RUSSELL

(FAKE ENTHUSIASTIC) Yes. Totally. Got my deposit right here. Unless *The Bank* is too tired from throwing such an awesome barbecue. Because I could always visit *The Bank* in the morning.

HOLLY

First, that's the end of the bank game. Second, I'm sorry, but we need to do it tonight. It's on the schedule.

REVEAL: A big dry erase board with a complicated sex schedule.

RUSSELL

Ah, the schedule. Okay, let's do this.

They start to make out, but Holly looks a little worried.

HOLLY

Is everything okay? It's kinda bendy.

RUSSELL

Yeah, yeah. Just need a minute.

INT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (DAY 1)

Matt and Natalie are in bed, making out furiously.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

While I was struggling with my P,
Matt and Natalie were making a run
for the second P: Pleasure.

MATT

Lots of sex talk at the barbecue.

NATALIE

I know. And I had the perfect amount
of wine. I'm sort of tipsy, but not
too tired. I almost had a third
glass too, but it disappeared.

MATT

That was me. I was clockin' you. I
dumped it over the fence. (THEY KISS
HARD) Did you lock the door?

NATALIE

Checked and double checked. Plus, I
Benadryled the twins. They'll sleep
like heroin addicts until morning.

MATT

Smart. (TURNS ON TV) Now, let's get
the TV turned up so Mommy and Daddy
can make some noise.

NATALIE

Oh, it's a new "Blacklist."

They watch for a second. Then Matt catches himself.

MATT

What are we doing? (TURNS OFF TV)
We'll just whisper. (WHISPERING)
You're so sexy, baby.

NATALIE

Nope. You sound like Kiefer Sutherland
drunk dialing an ex-girlfriend.

MATT
This sucks.

NATALIE
You old romantic.

MATT
No. I mean, look at us. We're not cool anymore.

NATALIE
Speak for yourself.

MATT
You know what I'm sayin'? We used to be badasses. Remember when we did it during the intermission of "Wicked"? Now look at us. Hunched down, in a locked room, whispering like we're hiding from the Nazis.

NATALIE
It's not that bad.

Someone rattles the doorknob like a Nazi.

JAKE (O.C.)
Open up! Why's the door locked?

NATALIE
Okay, maybe it's that bad.

INT. DENNIS AND CLAUDIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER (DAY 1)

Dennis, Claudia and Ethan watch TV. He flips channels.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Which brings us to the final P: Power. Dennis had "The Hurt Stick." And just like Frodo and the ring, he was deciding whether to use it or not.

DENNIS
(RE: TV) Oh, "The Bourne Identity!"

CLAUDIA
Come on. We've seen it a thousand times. And it's halfway over.

DENNIS
(HURT STICKING) You're right. Just like this morning, I'm being selfish again. I'm so, so sorry. Let's turn to a show you like.

ETHAN
What happened this morning?

CLAUDIA
Nothing. (THEN) You know what. It's fine. Watch your movie. I'll go read.

She kisses him and exits. Dennis smiles a shit-eating grin.

ETHAN
What are you smiling about?

DENNIS
What? Was I?

INT. RUSSELL AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING (DAY 2)

Russell and Holly are still trying.

RUSSELL
Stop. It's not taffy!

HOLLY
It kinda is right now.

RUSSELL
It's like my penis had a stroke.

HOLLY
You're thinking too much. We have plenty of time. I'll be ovulating for thirty-six more hours. (PICKS UP IPHONE) Here, I'll set an alarm so we know how much time we have left.

RUSSELL
Perfect. Like a ticking time bomb.

HOLLY
Sweetie. Just relax. Breathe.

A beat. Holly slides her hand towards Russell's butt.

RUSSELL
No! Not there! Never there!

HOLLY
Sorry. Just thinking out of the box.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. RUSSELL AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - RUSSELL'S STUDY - DAY (DAY 2)

Russell sits at his computer.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

For primitive man, fear came in many forms: wars, disease, famine. For the most part, we've vanquished those threats... and replaced them with Web M.D.

ANGLE ON: Russell's screen. He's terrifying himself about erectile dysfunction. He picks up his cell and dials.

RUSSELL (ON PHONE)

Hey Matt, what are you up to?

INT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Matt is sitting with the twins, who put make-up on him.

WE INTERCUT BETWEEN HIM AND RUSSELL.

MATT

Gettin' some me time. Why?

RUSSELL

Didn't you say you knew a sketchy doctor who can get people pills without a lot of questions?

MATT

Listen dude, if you're the one who stole those Vicodin from my medicine cabinet, tell me. Because I'll need to apologize to my cleaning lady.

RUSSELL

No. I just need some... Cialis.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY (DAY 2)

Holly and Natalie power walk. Natalie struggles to keep up.

NATALIE

Relax. It happened once.

HOLLY

Twice! Happened this morning, too. I could fold it like a wallet. Now we're gonna have do it like four times to catch up. (LOOKING AROUND) Natalie?

REVEAL: Holly has left Natalie in the dust. She stops and Natalie catches up, huffing and puffing.

NATALIE

You need to relax or you're gonna kill us both.

HOLLY

I can't. If it doesn't happen this month, we might have to consider fertility treatments. The doctor gave us a pamphlet. So scary. Lots of shots and probing. It's like what they did to E.T. And that might not even work.

NATALIE

If you could see your face right now, you'd know why your husband can't get a hard-on. (THEN) Look, you're not there yet. Just breathe, and maybe make the sex a little more sexy.

HOLLY

You mean, like them?

ANGLE ON: A parked car where a teenage couple is making out.

HOLLY

That's just nasty.

NATALIE

No it isn't. I mean, it is, but in an awesome way. They're just feelin' it, man.

HOLLY

Feeelin' it, man? What's going on with you?

NATALIE

Matt says we're not cool anymore. And I think he's right. We used to be just like those two. Doin' it anywhere, anytime. One time we did it in a Burger King drive-thru between order and pick up.

HOLLY

Sounds like we both need a date night.

NATALIE

Exactly. A super dirty date night.
(TO COUPLE) GOOD FOR YOU GUYS!

The couple stops and stares. Natalie gives them a thumbs up.

NATALIE
How creepy is this thumbs up?

HOLLY
I think you know.

INT. PHARMACY - LATER - DAY (DAY 2)

Russell and Matt wait for the PHARMACIST to fill an order.

RUSSELL
Thanks for getting the prescription.
How do you know this doctor again?

MATT
He's a client. I did some investing
for him. Might be a war criminal.
He's Czech or from Oregon. Anyway, I
still don't think you need this
stuff. I mean, didn't you pick up
any fertility tips in your travels?

RUSSELL
(MANIC) Well there's an Amazonian
tribe that enhances male fertility
by chewing dog penises. Think CVS
has any dog penis? No? Cialis it is.

MATT
That came out kinda hot. You're
losin' it, brother.

RUSSELL
I just wanna fix the problem.

The pharmacist returns.

PHARMACIST
Just wanted to let you know your
insurance doesn't cover Cialis. So
for ten pills it'll be \$400.

RUSSELL
Yikes!

PHARMACIST
Do you still want it?

RUSSELL

I do, I do. It's just, I'm not normally authorized to make a purchase of that size without approval from management.

MATT

40 bucks a boner. Skip it.

PHARMACIST

There are foods that can help.
Oysters, garlic, walnuts.

RUSSELL

You guys are absolutely right. I'll do the food and Cialis. (TO PHARMACIST) Do you take Apple Pay?

RUSSELL (V.O.)

While I hunted and gathered erectile dysfunction solutions...

INT. GROCERY STORE - A LITTLE LATER (DAY 2)

Ethan and Claudia shop.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

...Dennis was still clubbing his prey with "The Hurt Stick."

ETHAN

I don't get it. I can't have Cinnamon Toast Crunch, but Dad gets a "Game of Thrones" viewing party? And you hate viewing parties.

CLAUDIA

That's not true.

ETHAN

Remember the "Dr. Who" thing?

POP TO:

INT. DENNIS AND CLAUDIA'S HOUSE - FLASHBACK

A room full of people, including our cast, crowd around a TV.

HOLLY

So is the Tardis a phone booth or a spaceship?

CLAUDIA

IT'S A TIME MACHINE! I'VE SAID IT A HUNDRED TIMES! (BEAT) So sorry. I'm going to finish this in my room.

BACK TO:

INT. GROCERY STORE - BACK TO SCENE

Claudia tries to look upbeat.

CLAUDIA

I had a blood sugar event. But I'm super excited about this one.

An excited Dennis runs up with a jar of salsa.

DENNIS

Salsa! We could call it Daenerys' Dragon Sauce. Maybe do a bunch of themed snacks!

CLAUDIA

I don't know, honey. This party's getting a little out of hand.

DENNIS

(HURT STICKING) And I did it again. Just like the other morning. So selfish. I'm sorry. I'll put it back.

CLAUDIA

Wait. Themed snacks could be fun.

She walks on and Dennis smiles his shit-eating grin. He turns to find Ethan staring at him.

ETHAN

Oh, I get it now.

DENNIS

What?

ETHAN

Mom did something to you and you're using her guilt to get stuff. I want in. Get me stuff too or I'll tell Mom what you're doing.

Dennis stares at his son in shock.

CLAUDIA (O.C.)

Dennis!

DENNIS
(STARTLED) Nothing!

Dennis turns to find Claudia standing with Matt and Russell.

RUSSELL
Hey, I got your text about "Game of Thrones." I was a surprised, (TO CLAUDIA) I thought you hated--

CLAUDIA
(SHARPLY) I like them now.

RUSSELL
Well, Holly and I can't. We're busy.

MATT
We're in. Natalie loves that show. Though I've never seen it myself. I'll probably have a lot of questions. Like, isn't there a dwarf in it?

CLAUDIA
(PAINED) Uh huh.

ETHAN
Dad said I could have Cinnamon Toast Crunch. Right, Dad?

CLAUDIA
Dennis, we don't eat sugary cereals.

DENNIS
Yeah, I promised it to him without checking with you. God, it's just like the other morning. I'm so sorry. (TO ETHAN) No cereal, buddy.

CLAUDIA
Hang on. Maybe just this once.

She exits with Ethan, who gives his dad a shit-eating grin.

MATT
Are you using "The Hurt Stick" to get stuff for your son, too? That's kind of an advanced move, dude.

DENNIS
It's okay. I know what I'm doing.

RUSSELL
People who say that usually do not.

DENNIS

(RE: CART) What's all this? Beets,
dark chocolate, a whole salmon.

MATT

Boner food.

INT. RUSSELL AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT (DAY 2)

Holly has prepped the house for a sexy evening: candles, music, etc. Russell enters carrying groceries.

RUSSELL

Why does it look like a Prince video
in here?

HOLLY

Because tonight we're going to relax.

RUSSELL

I thought we were having sex.

HOLLY

We are. But first, some wine. (HANDS
HIM A GLASS) It's non-alcoholic.

(SIPS) And tastes almost exactly like
rubber.

Russell takes a bottle from his pocket and downs a pill.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

What was that?

RUSSELL

Cialis.

HOLLY

Really?

RUSSELL

We're gonna be solid tonight. Right
after I down all this stuff.

Russell starts unloading his weird groceries.

HOLLY

Are those raw oysters?

RUSSELL

Yep. Got 'em from that sports bar
where the girls dress like hookers.

HOLLY

But I made dinner.

RUSSELL

Put it in the fridge, hon. Between this and the Cialis I'm gonna make such a baby in you. Do we have hot sauce?

He starts to eat. A defeated Holly blows out the candles.

INT. DENNIS AND CLAUDIA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - LATER (DAY 2)

It's the "Game of Thrones" party. Dennis, Claudia, Matt, Natalie and FRIENDS watch the show. We can't see the TV, but it sounds like a racy scene. Matt and Natalie whisper.

MATT

This show is super dirty. I thought it was just dragons, but there's a lot of boobs in it.

NATALIE

I told you a million times. "Game of Thrones" is classy porn for ladies.

CLAUDIA

Shhhh!

NATALIE

Hey, I have a fun idea. Let's do something crazy. We could drive somewhere and just park the van.

MATT

And do what?

NATALIE

Have sex, you dope.

Claudia stands and pauses the show.

CLAUDIA

Okay. A lot of talking going on. Why don't we take a break? Then people can finish their whispered conversations. Five minutes. No Facebook. No Twitter. No spoilers.

INT. DENNIS AND CLAUDIA'S HOUSE - ETHAN'S ROOM - LATER

Ethan plays video games. Dennis comes in with snacks.

DENNIS

Okay, I got you two extra brownies. Do NOT let your mother see these. She's already in a mood.

ETHAN
And the beer?

DENNIS
That's not happening.

Dennis starts to leave.

ETHAN
Dad. There's one more thing.

DENNIS
Oh come on.

ETHAN
You know that stained glass exhibit
that Mom's dragging us to?

DENNIS
Yes. She's been looking forward to
it for weeks.

ETHAN
I want you to make it go away.

A stunned Dennis stares at his son.

CLAUDIA (O.C.)
(YELLING) Dennis!

DENNIS
(STARTLED) Nothing!

He turns around to find Claudia with Matt and Natalie.

CLAUDIA
(SMILING) Sadly, Matt and Natalie
have to go. So they'll miss the rest
of the show. Bummer.

DENNIS
What happened?

MATT
Um... the sitter drank some bleach.

NATALIE
(QUICKLY) Nope. Didn't happen. We
just have to go. Goodbye.

INT. RUSSELL AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (DAY 2)

Holly and Russell kiss in bed.

HOLLY

Oh God, your breath! The salmon and chocolate are still so present.

RUSSELL

I double mouthwashed too. (THEN) I'm sorry. You had a whole romantic evening planned and I stepped all over it.

HOLLY

It's okay. Whatever works. (LOOKING UNDER SHEETS) And it is working. It actually looks like it hurts.

RUSSELL

It doesn't. It feels like victory.
Wanna take it for a spin?

She smiles. He leans in. Suddenly, his stomach gurgles.

RUSSELL

(WORRIED) Uh oh.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

The mating ritual can make us do some pretty weird things.

INT./EXT. VAN - NIGHT (DAY 2)

Matt and Natalie are parked on a pretty overlook. They make out on one of the back seats of the mini-van.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

And take us to some pretty strange places.

MATT

No creepy Kiefer whispering here, baby. We can be loud and proud.

NATALIE

(LOUDLY) I LOVE YOU!!!

Then she spots a soccer ball, a sippy cup, etc.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Sorry, it's too weird. I can't do it on the same seats our kids sit on.

MATT

Wait, don't these seats fold down?!

NATALIE

(EXCITED) They fold down!

MATT

And now we can have sex on the floor. It's why we got this model!

NATALIE

That and the cup holders!

They get out. Matt struggles with the seat mechanism.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Want me to give it a try?

MATT

Really, Nat? I've been doing this for six seconds.

NATALIE

But you're not doing it right. It's lever, then handle.

MATT

I've got this. Fold, you bastard!

The seat folds suddenly, causing Matt to stumble back into Natalie, knocking her out of frame.

MATT (CONT'D)

That did it! (LOOKING AROUND) Honey?

Matt turns and sees Natalie tumbling down a hill.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

But at the end of the day, the hardest part of mating is not the sex itself...

INT. RUSSELL AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (DAY 2)

A dejected Holly waits. Russell wretches in the bathroom.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

...it's maintaining your dignity.

RUSSELL (O.C.)

(WRETCHES) You know what the worst part of this is? I still have a full erection. I'll be right out. (WRETCHES) Nope.

The iPhone ovulation timer beeps. Holly turns it off.

HOLLY

(BUMMED) Take your time. No rush.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY (DAY 3)

A downcast Russell and Holly walk up to the door in silence.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

Here's a pro tip. When your pregnancy window has shut down due to a torrent of vomit and you need to make a huge decision about whether to keep on trying or not, there's no better place to make that decision than at...

The door opens and screaming children run past them.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

...a kids birthday party.

CLAUDIA

Hello!

MATT (O.C.)

(ANGRY) Well, I'm sorry!

NATALIE (O.C.)

(ANGRY) You should be!

CLAUDIA

Welcome to Abby and Leila's fourth birthday party. The theme seems to be a combo of "Frozen" and "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"

INT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME (DAY 3)

Matt and Natalie stand over a cake, arguing. Natalie has a very bruised nose and her arm is in a sling.

NATALIE

I told you a thousand times to check the names on the cake.

ANGLE ON: Cake that reads, "Happy Birthday Abby and Leroy."

NATALIE

The lady at the bakery is Korean! You need to write things down for her!

MATT

I'm doing the best I can. I'm basically handling this party by myself. And this was supposed to be my day to have fun.

NATALIE

You think it was fun for me, tumbling down that hill? Nobody's havin' fun today. Nobody!

Claudia, Holly and Russell walk in.

CLAUDIA

Look who's here!

HOLLY

Oh my God, what happened to you?

NATALIE

I said "I do" to this dummy!

EXT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - SAME TIME (DAY 3)

Dennis and Ethan stand behind the bounce house.

DENNIS

Okay, we're done. I'm not manipulating your mother anymore. It's wrong and it's not how we treat people we care about. Okay?

ETHAN

Cool. (THEN) Hey, after you get rid of the stained glass thing, I want a new laptop.

DENNIS

I feel you didn't hear the lesson. I'm not doing that anymore.

ETHAN

Fine. (CALLING OUT) MOM!!

DENNIS

Alright, alright. But not the stained glass thing. She's crazy about colored glass. I don't fully understand it, but there it is. Pick something else. How about "Game of Thrones"? You want to see some boobs?

ETHAN

MOM!!

DENNIS

Okay, I'll do it. But this is the last time. (THEN) God, who are you?

EXT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - SAME TIME (DAY 3)

Matt sets a table for cake, while Russell sits in a chair. He notices that the party is split between parents and kids by a bounce house and singles drinking by an open bar.

RUSSELL

The modern birthday party isn't just for kids anymore, is it? You've also got to invite singles and the childless. I guess that's why you've got a bounce house and an open bar?

MATT

Right.

RUSSELL

Aside from what's probably a complicated insurance situation, it's also kind of a metaphor for what Holly and I are going through.

MATT

You bet.

RUSSELL

Do we keep trying? Are kids worth all this stress? Or do we give up? Are we bounce house people or open bar people?

MATT

So true.

RUSSELL

Dude, you're not listening to me.

MATT

You're monologuin', Hamlet! And I got a lot on my plate!

Leila and Abby both walk up crying.

MATT

No, no! Not on your birthday! (TO RUSSELL) A little help here.

He hands Leila to Russell and she instantly puts her arms around his neck and the world goes still. Russell smiles.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
And then he literally handed me my
answer. I'm a bounce house person! I
had made my decision.

Russell notices Holly with the singles at the open bar,
drinking a cocktail.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Unfortunately, so had Holly.

INT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME (DAY 3)

Natalie and Claudia have fixed the cake.

CLAUDIA
There. Leroy is now... Leeva.

NATALIE
Screw it. They can't read. (THEN)
Man, Matt frustrates me sometimes.

CLAUDIA
Seems to be going around. Dennis
can't seem to get over what happened
the other morning. He keeps bringing
it up.

NATALIE
Wait a minute. Are you giving him a
lot of stuff? Babying him?

CLAUDIA
Totally. We did the "Game of
Thrones" party. I gave him a 90
minute deep tissue massage. I let
him drink real Coke! Everything's
topsy turvy.

NATALIE
He's "Hurt Sticking" you. (OFF HER
BLANK STARE) Milking your guilt to
get stuff. He's clearly been talking
to my husband.

Matt enters.

MATT
What's our ETA to E-A-T? (OFF THEIR
LOOK) What?

EXT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - LATER (DAY 3)

Holly is being cornered by a girl, KIM, at the open bar.

KIM

A few of us are going to this club later called Fantasmo. The theme is "Fifty Shades of Grey" meets "Toy Story." You should come.

HOLLY

Cool, that sounds awesome and terrible.

RUSSELL (O.C.)

Holly! Over here!

ANGLE ON: Russell in the bounce house with a bunch of kids.

KIM

Who's that idiot?

HOLLY

That's my husband.

RUSSELL

This is super fun! Put down your wine and come on over!

HOLLY

I'm good.

Holly goes back to talking. Russell looks disappointed.

LITTLE BOY

You're too big to be in here.

INT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME TIME (DAY 3)

Matt is in a standoff with Natalie and Claudia.

MATT

He misused it. All I did was give him a tool.

CLAUDIA

He's not good with tools! He cut himself on a tape dispenser. Badly!

MATT

I don't think a tape dispenser is a tool. (OFF HER LOOK) But I see your point. And I'm very sorry.

NATALIE

We don't have time for this now. We've got to light these candles.

Natalie struggles to pick up a lighter.

MATT
Let me do it.

NATALIE
You've done enough today. Besides,
if you light candles the way you
fold down car seats, somebody's
gonna get hurt. Give it to me.

They struggle over the lighter, until Matt lets go and Natalie hits herself in the nose, which starts bleeding.

CLAUDIA
Blood on the cake!

Natalie runs off. Matt just stands there, dumbfounded.

CLAUDIA (CONT'D)
Well go after her before I beat you
with your hurt stick.

INT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Natalie holds a washcloth to her nose. Matt enters.

MATT
I'm sorry I punched you twice.

NATALIE
It's okay. I kinda punched myself
the second time. Can we call a
truce?

MATT
Yes please.

NATALIE
(BEAT) Are we still cool people?

MATT
I think so. There's blood on our
kids' birthday cake. That's pretty
metal.

NATALIE
Then why can't we still do cool
things?

MATT
We can if we want. We just have to
give away the kids.

NATALIE

Tempting. But here's the problem
with that. I love 'em a lot.

MATT

Me too. (THEN) Okay. Plan B. We keep
the kids. Try and stay in shape.
Don't die. That's huge. Then in 18
years when the kids are gone, we
become badasses again and go on a
sex-fueled nationwide crime spree.

NATALIE

I like it.

MATT

But until then, know that I love
doin' it with you. Even really,
really quietly.

NATALIE

That's gross. And sweet. (THEY KISS)
You realize we're alone right now?

MATT

We are. (THEN) Check the lock.

INT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN (DAY 3)

Claudia gets the cake ready. Dennis enters.

DENNIS

There you are. Whatcha doin'?

CLAUDIA

Just trimming off the gore. Do you
need something?

DENNIS

Um. (CHANGING MIND) No, I'm good.

He turns around to leave but finds Ethan standing in the doorway with his arms folded. Dennis is stuck.

DENNIS

You know, there is one thing. And I
feel terrible. I stupidly bought
Ethan and I tickets for a video game
convention and it's on the same day
as your stained glass exhibit. Super
selfish. Just like the other
morning. I'm sorry. I'll just go
ahead and cancel it.

CLAUDIA

Don't. It sounds fun. I'll come too.

Dennis is frozen. Ethan jumps in.

ETHAN

But... you love stained glass.

CLAUDIA

(NOTICES ETHAN) Oh, hello honey.
Yes, I do. But I love my family
more. (TAKES OUT PHONE) Here, I'll
get a ticket right now. 1-800-HURT
STICK.

Claudia smiles a shit-eating grin. Dennis and Ethan are busted. Suddenly, Ethan begins to fake cry.

ETHAN

He made me do it!

DENNIS

I did not! (TO ETHAN) Honestly, who are you?

CLAUDIA

First of all, worst fake cry ever.
(TO DENNIS) Second of all, why would you do this?

DENNIS

I don't know. I got drunk with power.

CLAUDIA

Well give it to me. Give me "The Hurt Stick."

Dennis awkwardly mimes handing her a stick.

CLAUDIA

(WEIGHING IT) Oh, this feels good.
I'm gonna enjoy using this.

Matt and Natalie enter. They are disheveled, but happy.

NATALIE

Sorry we've been gone so long.

CLAUDIA

It was only five minutes. If that.

EXT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - BACKYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Everyone stands around a table with the twins' cake on it. It's been trimmed way down and now reads "Hap Birt Ab."

MATT
On three! One, two, three!

The twins blow out the candles. Russell spots Holly drinking wine and hurries over to her.

RUSSELL
Hey, can I talk to you for a minute?

He attempts to take her wine but she won't let go.

RUSSELL
Okay, I can see you're not going to let go of that. Listen, I know things have been stressful and disappointing lately. But I'm a bounce house person and so are you.

HOLLY
Did you smoke weed with Matt?

RUSSELL
I really, really want a family. I don't want to give up trying.

HOLLY
Neither do I.

RUSSELL
But you're drinking.

HOLLY
Because I'm not pregnant. And also because I've been a stressed out maniac. But mainly because I really miss red wine so bad.

RUSSELL
So, we continue?

HOLLY
Yes, we continue. Whatever it takes. But maybe we add back in kissing.

RUSSELL
And eye contact. And conversation.

HOLLY
Let's not get crazy.

Holly pulls him in for a hug and a kiss. A romantic one.

MATT
Who wants what's left of the cake?

Natalie doles out tiny pieces of cake with her good hand. Everyone is enjoying themselves.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
Mating is easy. I mean, aardvarks do it and they're dumb as dirt. But humans are cursed with gigantic brains that make it unbelievably complicated. That's just the way we're wired. But here's the good news, the same big brain that produces all that angst and regret and fear and confusion...

INT. STAINED GLASS EXHIBIT - DAY (DAY 4)

Claudia leads a miserable Ethan and Dennis through the stained glass exhibit. She pauses to admire a piece.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
...also produces forgiveness...

A nervous Dennis touches her hand and, to his relief, she accepts it. He leans in for a fish kiss, but checks himself.

EXT. MATT AND NATALIE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (DAY 4)

Matt and Natalie lay in their bed, staring at each other over a pile of sleeping kids.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
...and acceptance...

They smile.

INT. RUSSELL AND HOLLY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM (DAY 4)

Russell lays in bed.

RUSSELL (V.O.)
...and hope...

Holly enters holding a pregnancy test. Russell gives a hopeful thumbs up. Holly gives a thumbs up and jumps in his arms.

RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...and pure, unadulterated joy.

END OF SHOW