

2018 YOUNG PEOPLE'S Creative Writing Contest

FOR AGES 10-18

“Parental Pressure” by Trace Burchart
2nd Place, Short Play 13-15

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Entries Accepted Feb. 1-March 3

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PARENTAL PRESSURE

(JOSH, a highschool student, sits center stage in a chair. He is in his living room. He faces the audience and pantomimes playing a video game. His mother, LISA, along with his father, TRENT, enter and stand on opposite sides of him. They are visually disappointed. They have come from a parent teacher conference with JOSH's teacher. They carry his report card and test scores.)

TRENT. *(Clearing his throat.)* Uh, hmm.

JOSH. Oh hey dude! I didn't hear you come in. *(JOSH is focused on his game and doesn't care about his parents.)*

LISA. Do you want to know how it went?

JOSH. How what went?

TRENT. The conference with your teacher.

JOSH. Oh sure, how'd it go?

LISA. How do you think it went?

JOSH. I don't -- *(Referring to the video game. He gets excited and leans in toward where the TV would be.)* Go! Go! Go!

(TRENT walks in front of JOSH and pantomimes pulling the TV cord out.)

JOSH. What the heck dude!? I was about to beat that level!

TRENT. Well I'm sorry but I think zombie hunting is going to have to wait. *(He pulls out the report card and shows it to him.)* What is this?

JOSH. I don't see anything wrong!

TRENT. That's a D Josh! Why do you have a D in history?

JOSH. D's get diplomas my dude!

TRENT. I am not "your dude," I am your father.

LISA. D's do not get you into college Josh.

JOSH. I'm not going to college.

(Beat. LISA and TRENT stare at each other.)

LISA. What was that?

JOSH. I said, I'm not going to college.

LISA. Why not?

JOSH. Because I don't need to. I'm going to be an astronaut. It's not like astronaut's need a degree or anything. Imagine how cool it'll be to go to space! I'll get to eat freeze dried food and hang out with monkeys!

TRENT. I don't think that you'll be going to space without a college education.

JOSH. Losers go to college!

LISA. Losers! *(Crossing to TRENT.)* Josh, your father and I are both "losers" who have won lots of awards and gotten lots of money!

TRENT. How do you suppose that you are going learn how to be an astronaut without college?

JOSH. Well duhh!! I'll just use YouTube. I'm sure there's a How To Drive a Spaceship Video on there.

TRENT. Son, how do you think your mother and I got where we are today? We didn't sit around playing video games or make up crazy ideas about being an astronaut. We worked and studied hard! We took all AP classes in high school and

graduated with a 4.5 GPA. Then we went to the college with the best medical program in all of the United States and graduated at the top of our class. We turned in every assignment on time and poured our heart and soul into every project. If you want to make money and be able to support a family, you need to start taking your school work seriously.

JOSH. Blah! Blah! Blah! Enough about college! Can I get back to my game? There are zombies that need to be killed.

LISA. There will be no more video gaming in this household! Trent, throw the TV away.

(TRENT pantomimes picking up a TV and throwing it out.)

JOSH. What the --?! *(Standing and backing up.)* Mom, Dad, you guys have gone insane.

TRENT. You are the insane one that is talking about NOT going to college.

LISA. We expect our children to follow in our footsteps with straight A's and strong careers! We talked with your teacher Mrs. Givings and she is one-hundred percent with us. She has agreed to tutor you. Where the TV used to be is going to be a super studying station!

TRENT. We will be cutting your sleeping and lounging time from 14 hours to just two. The other 12 hours will be used for solving rational equations, graphing parabolas, and learning about the Shays' Rebellion.

JOSH. This is crazy! I don't wanna learn about paradiddle whatever's or Shoe's Revolution! If this is what living with you all is going to be like, I might as well just run away.

LISA. Exactly! When something is hard for you, you just give up!

JOSH. Well that's not true.

TRENT. Son you know it is. The only thing you actually put effort into is that Zombie game!

JOSH. It's called Gruesome Galaxy Four dad.

TRENT. Do I look like I care what it's called?

JOSH. I'm going to prove you all wrong! I'm going to succeed! I'm going to be bigger than Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson! That's right! The Rock will ask for my autograph. He'll grovel at my knees and then we'll go to space together with a monkey named Oskar. I'll be living the dream. Then when I win my Noble Prize, and a movie is made about my life that stars Ben Affleck, you'll finally realize how badly you messed up. You're lucky to be my parents.

LISA. You look nothing like Ben Affleck!

JOSH. Yes I do! We have the same cheekbones.

TRENT. Son, your mother's right -- you look nothing like Ben Affleck. *(Beat.)* We are always right. Just like how we're right about you going to college and how we're right about you not looking like Ben Affleck. *(Beat.)* It's time you start thinking realistically. You aren't nine anymore! You can't just mess around and hope everything will end up okay and stable. Because it won't. You're seventeen and soon you're going to have think about taxes, and insurance, and buying a car, and getting married, and having kids, and all the adult problems that come with being an adult. You will never be successful in life if you just sit around all day.

You have to get up, off of your butt, and work! Take a stand for what's right and make change happen! Open your eyes and see the world for what it is!

LISA. Now, I've arranged for you to intern this summer at the hospital so you can understand what it's like to be a surgeon. Then if we work on those grades we can start thinking about medical school.

TRENT. You're going to be an amazing surgeon Josh!

JOSH. You're wrong! I don't want to be a surgeon.

LISA. Surgeon's make a lot of money.

JOSH. I don't care about the money. I care about being happy.

LISA. Being a surgeon will make you happy.

JOSH. You guys are missing the point here. It has nothing to do with Ben Affleck. It has nothing to do with being right or wrong, and it has nothing to do with studying. It's about you guys letting me do what I want to do and about you letting me follow my own dreams. So what if I don't want to be a surgeon -- the world has plenty of them. That astronaut thing is way out of my reach, I know, and it's impossible for anyone to be bigger than The Rock. I've thought hard, I really have, and what I'm passionate about is video games.

LISA. Son --

JOSH. Listen to me! I've been doing research ---

TRENT. You? Research! (*TRENT laughs hysterically.*) Oh, you were serious?

JOSH. I know it may sound odd but give it a shot. I want to be a video game tester. There's a growing market and not many people are doing it so the chances of me

being successful is high. The pay is good and I will definitely be able to support a family. Guys, I know it's risky and weird, but that's just who I am.

(Brief silence as TRENT and LISA absorb what JOSH had to say.)

TRENT. Well then, we appreciate your honesty. *(Beat.)* When I was younger, I knew I wanted to be a surgeon. I knew I wanted to give back and help save people's lives. In high school though, my mother died and my grades dropped. I couldn't pay attention in class, and I would get into trouble with the police. When my dad found out, he was disappointed. He knew I was better than that. I didn't think I would ever be able to get into college or be a surgeon. But my father told me, 'Everything you hope to be is inside of you already.' He said, 'If you want to work in the medical field, you can.' I stepped my game up, and took grasp of that hope inside of me. Look where I am now!

JOSH. So you guys are really okay with me being a videogame tester?

LISA. Josh, a video game tester? There's no future in that. It's not a real dream!

JOSH. Then what was that whole speech about? Following my dream?

TRENT. The dream is being a surgeon! What could ever be better than that?

JOSH. Oh my gosh! You haven't changed! Being a surgeon is not my dream. Going to college is not my dream. How long will it take for you to realize that? I'm going to my room. *(JOSH starts to exit.)*

LISA. Josh if you walk out of here there will be serious consequences! *(JOSH is gone.)*

That's it, you're grounded for a month!

TRENT. You better get comfy up there.

LISA. There will be no video games, phones, or tv -- just studying!

TRENT. You're going to be a surgeon whether you like it or not!

LISA. One day you'll thank us for it!

(Lights out. End of play.)