

DEAR CHUCK

A one-act dramedy by
Jonathan Dorf

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Dear Chuck has a flexible cast. To perform it effectively requires at least 8 performers, but it could use 30 or more. Many roles are gender flexible—just update the pronouns as necessary.

LIST OF SCENES

Overture: The Search for Chuck

The Dance

Chuck Interlude #1

Supposed To

Chuck Interlude #2: Dear Chuck

The Social Network

Chuck Interlude #3

The Menu

Chuck Interlude #4

Helicopter

Chuck Interlude #5

Three Rows*

Zero Tolerance

Chuck Interlude #6

Adventures in Babysitting

Chuck Interlude #7

Babel, or A Cyber Symphony

Chuck Interlude #8: Dear Chuck Reprise

Finale: The Coming of Chuck

*Bran and Bananas, located at the end of the script, may be performed in place of Three Rows.

NOTES

It is possible to condense the number of actors in Overture: The Search for Chuck and Finale: The Coming of Chuck. The cast in the script is based on the size of the Choate cast, which was 31, and it is left to the director to reassign the lines as necessary and appropriate. The actors should use their own names, rather than the names in the script. It's possible that the Girl 22 monologue in Overture: The Search for Chuck could be broken up among several cast members after Girl 22 does the opening paragraph. The same is true of the letter in Chuck Interlude #8. It is possible to break up Chuck Interlude #2, but my inclination would be to give that to a single performer.

Occasionally, alternate text will appear in [brackets].

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The following statement should be included in any program: "*Dear Chuck* was originally commissioned and developed by the Choate Rosemary Hall Summer Arts Conservatory."

The play was later revised, going through developmental readings with the assistance of director Jonathan Muñoz-Proulx. Thanks to Nick Podany for helping me test out Bran and Bananas.

Chuck Interlude #2: Dear Chuck is adapted by permission from a journal entry by Daniel Sobol.

OVERTURE: THE SEARCH FOR CHUCK

(A dark stage. Enter GIRL 1.)

GIRL 1: Mom? *(Pause.)* Dad? *(Pause.)* Demon spawn? *(Pause.)* Chuck? *(Pause.)* If you come out, I won't tell Mom and Dad how you put paint chips in the salad! Chuck?!

(Enter GIRL 2.)

GIRL 2: Who's Chuck?

GIRL 1: Who are you?

(Enter GIRL 3.)

GIRL 3: I asked you first.

GIRL 1 & GIRL 2: No you didn't.

(Enter BOY 1.)

BOY 1: Will you chicks stop screaming?

GIRLS: Chicks?

BOY 1: Girls. Sorry.

(Enter GIRL 4.)

GIRL 1: I'm not a girl.

(Enter GIRL 5.)

GIRL 4: I'm a woman.

(Enter GIRL 6 carrying a sign that says "Feed the Hungry.")

GIRL 5: A young woman.

GIRL 6: Woman. Young woman. Girl. Chick. We ought to be out saving the rain forest.

(She sees that her sign is wrong and flips it. Enter BOY 2.)

Saving the rain forest.

(Girl 6's sign now reads, "Save the Whales.")

And the whales.

(Enter GIRL 7.)

BOY 2: Do you know how many trees you're killing?

(Enter BOY 3 and GIRL 8.)

GIRL 7: Does anybody know how to get out of here?

BOY 3: Where's here?

GIRL 8: Has anybody seen Chuck?

(Enter GIRL 9.)

GIRL 1: You know Chuck?

GIRL 8: He's my demon spawn little brother.

GIRL 1 & GIRL 9: No, he's *my* demon spawn little brother.

GIRL 10: Maybe he got out.

BOY 4: There's no doors.

BOY 5: *(Pointing at different groups of kids:)* You three look over there. And you – sign girl – you go look –

GIRL 11: Who said you were the boss?

BOY 5: I'm a man.

GIRL 12: You're short.

BOY 5: I'm sixteen. I've got my driver's license.

GIRL 13: Do you have a car?

GIRL 14: *(Beat.)* You're a boy.

(Pause. Actors should enter until the entire cast is onstage.)

I like boys.

(She kisses him on the lips.)

But you're not in charge. *(Pause.)* You three look over there. Sign girl – you go look over there. Boys, come with me.

(All on stage begin looking for exits to no avail.)

BOY 6: We should sound off.

GIRL 15: Sound off?

BOY 6: Say your name and if you found something.

GIRL 15: Chuck!

GIRL 16: Your name's not Chuck.

GIRL 17: Everyone should say their name.

GIRL 18: What are we looking for again?

GIRL 19: A door!

BOY 7: Or a window. We could climb out a window.

GIRL 20: I'm not climbing out a window.

GIRL 21: I thought we were saying our names. I'll start. My name is...

(Each member of the cast should sound off by saying his or her name. This should go as quickly as possible.)

BOY 8: Has anyone seen Chuck?

BOY 9: *(Points one way:)* I bet he's over there. *(Points in the opposite direction, like the Scarecrow in The Wizard of Oz:)* Or over there. Or—

GIRL 22: Nobody's seen Chuck. Not in a while. Most of you don't even remember what he looks like. Some of you think you do, but you don't. Chuck is a metaphor. He's that elusive moment of knowing who you are, and when you're a teenager, most of the time you're pretty Chuck-free. *(Beat.)* When you're a little kid, you've got your Chuck squared away. Your job is to make nice in the sandbox, to eat what they give you and try to get most of it in the toilet, to scream for your way every now and again, do your coloring homework and to hold your mom or dad's hand when you're crossing the street and at other strategic moments. *(Beat.)* When you get much older, you'll have had time to try out

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different Chucks and figure out which one is for you. Maybe it's the family Chuck or the career Chuck or a pet Lab named Chuck or all or none of the above. (*Beat.*) But in between kid Chuck and grown-up Chuck, there's a whole lot of out-of-focus Chuck and absent Chuck, followed by drive-by Chuckings and frantic Chuck chases and arriving at a Chuck stop only to find out he just left. And people will tell you that you didn't really see Chuck for that second you thought you did, and you'll start to ask yourself that and is this new Chuck worth the trouble and wouldn't it just be easier to sit back down in the sandbox? (*Beat.*) Like it or not, after a while we get too big for the sandbox, and like it or not, Chuck doesn't come out to play anymore. So we have to find him. Like it or not, it's just something we do. (*To the cast:*) I hear that Chuck is just on the other side of the door – if we can find one.

BOY 1: (*Finds the stage exit:*) Door!

(A mass exit begins. Girl 1 rushes past Boy 1.)

GIRL 1: Chuck?!

GIRL 8: Chuck's there?

BOY 8: Chuck!

THE DANCE

(The "back to school" dance, with signage to say so. A BOY and a GIRL dance a slow dance to whatever is the song of the moment. Around them, other BOYS and GIRLS may do likewise.)

BOY: Your hair smells really great.

(The rest of the scene plays like a typical scene at a school dance, with the couple getting closer and closer. They are not, however, actually saying these things out loud until the Girl's final line.)

GIRL: I have an eight-page paper due Monday on *Wuthering Heights* and I can't find the movie anywhere.

BOY: Frank Smith is away visiting his dad this weekend, so I told him I'd take his shifts at Burger King. Hate that job.

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GIRL: Shelley has a flask of Tequila. She wants me to go to the bathroom with her. I don't really want to, but I don't want her to think I'm a loser.

BOY: The rep from UCLA [feel free to substitute an appropriate school] is gonna' be at school on Tuesday. I always wanted to go there, but I don't even know anything about it.

GIRL: I'm so sick of playing soccer. I swear my mom cares more about it than I do.

BOY: My grandfather's in the hospital again. He's gonna' be fine, but I gotta' go over and pick up his mail.

GIRL: Was the cast list for the play posted yet?

BOY: I probably should talk to my parents more.

GIRL: My little brother actually likes soccer. I feel bad that I haven't gone to any of his games this year.

BOY: When are my feet gonna' stop growing?

GIRL: He keeps asking when am I gonna' come see him play, and I always make up some stupid excuse. Next time he asks...

BOY: I never read for fun anymore. I used to do it all the time.

GIRL: Are all my friends really hooking up?

BOY: I like you a lot, but I don't know how far I'm ready to go yet.

GIRL: *(Beat.)* Thanks. Your hair smells nice too.

*(The music crescendos as they dance offstage and the scene ends. Beat. A GIRL runs across the stage. She is **CHUCK INTERLUDE #1.**)*

GIRL: Chuck! Chuck! Stop!

(She stops.)

Did anybody see a guy, kinda' short, kinda' tall? Did anybody see which way he went? *(Pause.)* Chuck, come back!

(She exits on the run.)

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SUPPOSED TO

(Two GIRLS in a school corridor.)

GIRL 1: He is so in love with you.

GIRL 2: He doesn't even talk to me.

GIRL 1: He wants to. Look.

(BOY 1 walks by.)

GIRL 2: I don't see it.

GIRL 1: Look again.

(The Boy "rewinds" across the stage to the point of his entrance. He then repeats his walk past the girls in slow motion.)

There.

(The Boy freezes. Girl 1 approaches the Boy so that she can point directly at his slightly open mouth:)

See how his mouth is open a little right here.

GIRL 2: Isn't that just from breathing?

GIRL 1: No – that's talking. Definitely trying to talk. He just needs a little help.

GIRL 2: What kind of help?

(Enter GIRLS 3, 4, 5.)

GIRL 1: You should ask him out.

GIRL 3: He is totally your Mr. Right.

GIRL 4: Do you want to be the only girl in our grade that doesn't have a boyfriend?

GIRL 5: The only girl.

GIRL 4: We all have boyfriends.

GIRL 3: You're supposed to.

GIRL 5: It's a rule.

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GIRL 3: You're 16 – not 3.

(Girls 3, 4 and 5 take up positions to watch the rest of the scene as the Boy begins to walk toward the edge of the stage.)

GIRL 1: See that?

(The Boy freezes again.)

GIRL 2: What?

GIRL 1: That look. He's dying to ask you out.

GIRL 2: So why doesn't he?

GIRL 1: Maybe his lips are stuck. His lips are stuck, and they're keeping the rest of his mouth from moving.

GIRL 2: I don't know how to ask him out.

GIRLS 3, 4, 5: You what?

GIRL 1: You'd better think of something. He's not going to wait forever.

GIRL 2: I don't know what to say. What should I say?

GIRL 1: I don't know. Say what *he* said.

(Girl 2 approaches the Boy. Both sculpt their mouths into the exact same silent, half-open pose and freeze in it while Girls 1, 3, 4 and 5 watch their efforts.)

CHUCK INTERLUDE #2: DEAR CHUCK

(Enter an ACTOR of either gender holding pen and paper. The Actor sits and writes.)

ACTOR: *(Reading the letter:)* Dear Chuck,

Nothing's been the same since you left. I know you probably won't ever see this letter, and even if you do, I know it probably won't make you come home. But I wanted to tell you some thoughts I've been thinking, just in case.

(Pause.)

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I've been thinking about hair. I've been thinking how there's a moment when hair is neither wet nor dry. I get out of the shower and dry my hair with a towel, and it clings. It clings to my head and it lingers in this unconfident place where it wants to fill out and expand, but instead it remains indescribably moist, vulnerable. I think I am my hair right now.

(Pause.)

I am so ready to grow and take on this new part of my life, this next exploration—but something's holding me back. I want to move on, but what do I want to move on to? My mind is asking new, startling questions of me, and I don't know how to respond.

(Pause.)

I talk constantly of how well I know myself and what I believe, but then I wonder if I only say it so much because I'm trying to convince myself it's true. All the old words I used to describe me and what I'm thinking don't seem to have the same meanings anymore, and I want to use new ones...and I keep coming back to hair.

(Pause.)

Chuck, I need you to come back. I know you'd have the answers to all these questions in my head. Please come home.

Love,

(The Actor should say his or her name here, then seal the letter in an envelope and exit with it.)

THE SOCIAL NETWORK

(A CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN sits across from another TEEN clutching an application.)

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: So tell me about your experience.

APPLICANT TEEN: Well, I worked at Cream 'n Stuff for like a year.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: That's...

APPLICANT TEEN: Ice cream. And stuff.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: Stuff like...?

APPLICANT TEEN: We "stuff" your ice cream with anything you want. Chocolate chips, marshmallows, nuts...more ice cream...

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: Ah. I get it. (*Beat.*) But you left.

APPLICANT TEEN: My parents—and me—I—we believe that school comes first. After the summer, I left (*As if trying to remember something that's been memorized:*) to focus on my academics. But now that we're past Halloween and I've got school under control, I feel like I'm ready for a job. Baby needs a new pair of shoes, right?

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: Baby what?

APPLICANT TEEN: Sorry. Just makin' a joke.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: Don't make jokes.

APPLICANT TEEN: Sorry.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: (*Beat.*) So why Cup 'a Joe?

APPLICANT TEEN: 'Cause after you eat some ice cream, what's better than coffee?

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: Didn't I just say no jokes? Otherwise I'm just gonna leave.

APPLICANT TEEN: No—sorry. (*Beat.*) I feel like I can take the same skills I learned at Cream 'n Stuff and use them for this job. Customer service skills, I mean. Not the ice cream scooping.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: (*Making notes on the clipboard:*) Great.

APPLICANT TEEN: Are you really writing notes? (*Beat.*) Sorry.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: So tell me about Facebook [or the social media network of the moment].

APPLICANT TEEN: What?

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: The Facebook photo. Or was it Instagram? (*Checking something on the clipboard.*) I think it was both.

APPLICANT TEEN: What are you talking about?

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: Anytime somebody applies for a job, we check all their profiles.

APPLICANT TEEN: (*Beat.*) I got hacked.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: It's your photo.

APPLICANT TEEN: Yeah, but nobody was supposed to post it. (*Breaking "character":*) What are you doing?

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: That's not the kind of conduct we expect from an employee of Cup 'o Joe.

APPLICANT TEEN: Stop for a second.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: We can't hire someone who—

APPLICANT TEEN: Stop!

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: (*Beat.*) They're gonna check.

APPLICANT TEEN: I took it down.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: It might still be archived.

APPLICANT TEEN: You're supposed to be helping me, not...this.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: I *am* helping.

APPLICANT TEEN: (*Beat.*) What am I supposed to do?

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: Hope nobody finds it. And don't let anybody take any more pictures of you doin' dumb stuff.

APPLICANT TEEN: Or not do the dumb stuff in the first place.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: Now you're thinkin'!

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APPLICANT TEEN: Now I'm boring. Pretty soon I'll be my parents.

CLIPBOARD-CARRYING TEEN: Least they have jobs.

APPLICANT TEEN: Truth.

CHUCK INTERLUDE #3

(An ACTOR of either gender.)

ACTOR: I'm having lunch at school, and there's this new kid. I guess he transferred, 'cause I've never seen him before, it's halfway through the year, and there he is, standing in the middle of the cafeteria with a tray. He looks around—and it's weird, 'cause he's not moving. He's just checkin' it all out with his eyes, and then he starts walkin' toward my table. It's just me, 'cause the rest of my friends are still in the line, and he says, "Can I sit here?" And I'm like whatever, 'cause it's gotta' be tough to be somewhere new and not know where to go.

(Pause.)

He says, "Thanks—my name's Chuck." And he sits. No—not sits. He settles. You know like how there's all that stuff at the bottom of your drink if you don't shake it? It's like that. Only in a good way. Like a blanket. Comfortable. Like he's been there all along. I'm thinking maybe he's gonna' be my new best friend.

(Pause.)

I see the rest of my friends coming, and I turn and tell them to hurry up—"you gotta' meet Chuck." Only when I turn back, he's gone. No Chuck, no tray, even the little spill from the canned peaches is dry. And that feeling, that bottom of the drink feel good feeling, it's gone. Every once in a while if I try really hard, I can make myself remember what it was like to sit next to Chuck, but it's not the same. *(Beat.)* Chuck, if you're out there, if you can hear me, I'm saving you a seat at lunch.

THE MENU

(Four teens, one BOY and three GIRLS, sit at a restaurant. A teen WAITRESS takes their order.)

GIRL 1: And I'll have the grilled cheese.

WAITRESS: Grilled cheese?

GIRL 1: *(Shows her on the menu.)* Yeah. Here.

BOY: I want the grilled cheese too.

WAITRESS: Oh – that's the kids' menu.

GIRL 1: Yeah.

WAITRESS: You need to look at the first three pages.

GIRL 1: But those are all ribs and giant platters.

WAITRESS: We specialize in ribs. They're really good here. The baby backs are my favorite, but pretty much all of them are awesome.

GIRL 1: I don't like ribs.

GIRL 2: I don't eat meat.

WAITRESS: Would you like our snow pea and mushroom salad?

GIRL 2: Why can't we order off the kids' menu?

WAITRESS: It's for kids under 12.

GIRL 1: It's a small portion – right?

WAITRESS: That's why it's for kids under 12.

GIRL 1: So if I want a small portion, why can't I get the grilled cheese?

BOY: Yeah. Why can't we get the grilled cheese?

WAITRESS: Let me ask the kitchen. I'm sure they can make you a grilled cheese.

GIRL 1: The kid-sized one.

WAITRESS: I don't think we can do that—but I'm sure they can make you a regular one.

GIRL 1: But I don't want a regular one.

GIRL 3: Why don't we just split a regular one?

GIRL 1: No—I want the one off the kids' menu.

WAITRESS: I need to ask the manager.

BOY: Can't you just pretend we're under 12?

WAITRESS: You're not under 12.

BOY: I know—but can't you just pretend?

GIRL 3: Maybe just this once? Like a Christmas gift?

GIRL 1: We should be able to get it anytime.

WAITRESS: Let me get the manager.

GIRL 1: Whose side are you on?

WAITRESS: I should get—

BOY: (*To Girl 1:*) Yeah, tell her.

GIRL 1: How old are you?

WAITRESS: Can I get you something to drink first?

GIRL 1: You go to our school—right?

WAITRESS: And I have to pay my car insurance, so can I get you something to drink?

GIRL 1: Do you have a kids' drink menu?

WAITRESS: I'm getting the manager.

(Girl 1 climbs onto the table.)

GIRL 3: (*Trying not to attract attention:*) Katie, get down!

GIRL 1: I declare the Rib Eye officially occupied.

GIRL 3: Oh my God—my parents are going to kill me.

(The Boy jumps up with Girl 1.)

BOY: Yeah, this place is so occupied.

(The Waitress gives up and exits.)

GIRL 1: Brothers, sisters – we will take back the Rib Eye just like our brothers and sisters took back the kiddie pool at the swim club.

(Girl 3 moves to hide under the table.)

Join us.

BOY: Yeah! Stand on your tables!

GIRL 2: I'm afraid of heights.

GIRL 1: And we will eat no ribs until we have a choice to eat off the kids' menu.

(Girl 2 conquers her fear and slowly joins them on the table.)

BOY: Yeah! Pro-choice!

GIRL 1: Does anybody know "We Shall Overcome"?

*(Transition to **CHUCK INTERLUDE #4**: as the actors exit, enter an ACTOR of either gender whose attire perhaps suggests a chauffeur's uniform holding a sign that says "Chuck." The Actor should be dressed in heavy winter clothes, perhaps a hat, scarf, gloves and a heavy coat. Beat. The Actor removes the gloves and the heavy coat. Beat. The Actor should remove one more layer and the scarf, revealing a windbreaker or other light jacket, and perhaps a baseball cap instead of the heavy hat. The attire should now reflect spring. Beat. The Actor gives up and exits.)*

HELICOPTER

(A college tour. A STUDENT TOUR GUIDE leads a group of STUDENTS and PARENTS, including GIRL 1 and MOTHER 1 and GIRL 2 and MOTHER 2.)

TOUR GUIDE: The university of your choice has more than 200 clubs and athletic teams at the varsity through intramural levels.

GIRL 1: Can you tell us about the—

MOTHER 1: Yes, my daughter has a question.

GIRL 1: *(Dying:)* Mom...

MOTHER 1: Pretend I'm not even here. But I know my daughter is wondering how your admissions office weighs extracurricular activities.

GIRL 1: That is not my—

MOTHER 1: I'm just a fly on the wall.

GUIDE: Well, I just give the tours, but—

MOTHER 1: Not to put you on the spot, but where on a scale of one to ten would you place student council president?

MOTHER 2: Where indeed. My daughter was wondering the exact same thing.

GIRL 2: *(Dying:)* Mom...

MOTHER 2: She was also wondering, on a scale of one to ten, where you would rate president of the mathematics tutoring club.

MOTHER 1: What an incredible coincidence. My daughter was wondering where you'd rate—on a scale of one to ten—president of the combined mathematics and foreign language tutoring club.

MOTHER 2: Did I say the mathematics tutoring club? Of course I meant to say the mathematics tutoring club, but I left out vice-president of the conservation club—

MOTHER 1: And I left out senior vice-president treasurer of the young entrepreneurs club.

MOTHER 2: President of bakers against poverty.

(As the mother vs. mother battle continues in pantomime, the two Girls and the rest of the tour sneak away.)

GIRL 1: *(To the Guide:)* Is it true that they serve ice cream every day?

TOUR GUIDE: Yep. One of our alums gave a hundred mill on the condition that we have ice cream available for lunch and dinner.

GIRL 2: That's so awesome. I hope they have cookies 'n cream.

GIRL 1: I love cookies 'n cream.

GIRL 2: Isn't it just the best?

TOUR GUIDE: Every Wednesday. But do not overlook the banana fudge swirl. Just sayin'.

(They exit. The sound comes back up on the Mothers, who still duel.)

MOTHER 1: President for two years running of the high school fire and rescue auxiliary.

MOTHER 2: Invented the tapered blanket for toddlers.

MOTHER 1: Discovered a new word for the color blue.

MOTHER 2: State basket-weaving champion, junior division.

MOTHER 1: National 18 and under full contact origami champion!

(The Mothers realize they are alone.)

Hmm...

MOTHER 2: *(Pulling out a cell phone:)* Not a problem. I track her phone.

MOTHER 1: *(Waving her off:)* She'll be back. They think they're all independent, but they always come crawling back, crawling back

for their social security number or someone to proofread their essays or pay for another application, and of course for my signature, my all-important signature, because nothing happens in my daughter's life without my signature. Not one thing. So we'll just sit right here and wait.

MOTHER 2: You said it, sister mother. We'll just sit right here, for as long as it takes.

(Beat. Lights dim on them, waiting. As the lights fade to black, a RECORDED VOICEMAIL GREETING plays: CHUCK INTERLUDE #5.)

VOICEMAIL GREETING: You have reached Chuck's voicemail. Chuck isn't here right now. He's out there. This isn't his voice. That would be too easy. At the beep, you know what to do. Or maybe you're calling because you don't.

(The sound of a voicemail beep, or the actor who voices the greeting could simply say "beep.")

THREE ROWS

(After a funeral. An ACTOR of either gender. BRAN AND BANANAS, at the end of the script, may be substituted for this monologue depending on the needs of your production.)

ACTOR: They didn't have the funeral 'til a week after, so you'd think it wouldn't be that bad, 'cause people have time to get over it a little, and the casket was closed, so it's not like you see him lying there. He probably wouldn't look horrible—I don't know, maybe his neck would be a little funky-looking from the rope, but it's not like he stuck a gun in his mouth. Not like his face is missing.

(Pause.)

And almost our entire grade is there, and some of the kids that knew him from other grades, and all the teachers and some of the parents are there. My mom says she's not sure when to pick me

up, so she's just gonna' stay and sit in the back of the church until it's over. I look back, and she's three rows behind me. And she sees me looking, and she kinda' gives me this little smile. It only lasts a second, but—you ever just sit in front of the window in the morning when the sun is coming in, like in a really comfortable chair? It's like that.

(Pause.)

The school select choir starts singing "Amazing Grace," and one of the kids can't make it through. And the director stops conducting and sits her down, but the choir keeps going. They start to rush the song, and I look back at my mom again, only this time she's watching the girl from the choir and not looking at me.

(Pause.)

And when "Amazing Grace" finishes and the captain of the soccer team gets up to recite Evan's stats and ask why somebody that just set the league scoring record could hang himself in a garage, I look back again. And she's watching the captain of the soccer team cry and not watching me. And in that second I miss her again, I want to— *(Beat.)* When I was little I used to ride the bus. And I talked to everybody. The person next to me—that was always my best friend, Ellen—the kids in the seat across from us, and in the row behind us and the row in front of us, and in the row behind them and the row ahead of them. No seat on the bus is too far to talk to. Three rows is nothing. But when you need your mom to be a nice warm seat in the morning sun, three rows in a church is infinity.

ZERO TOLERANCE

(A GIRL sits in a chair. The PRINCIPAL and a TEACHER and a POLICE OFFICER stand over her.)

GIRL: I didn't mean I was gonna' kill him.

POLICE OFFICER 1: Search her locker for guns, knives, bombs—

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GIRL: It's an expression. I probably say it five times a day.

POLICE OFFICER 1: Molotov cocktails, Chinese throwing stars, grenades –

GIRL: I say it to my hamster when he doesn't want to get on the wheel.

PRINCIPAL: Young lady, saying "I'm gonna' kill you" is something we take very seriously at this school.

GIRL: It was a joke. (*To the Teacher:*) Couldn't you see I was kidding?

POLICE OFFICER 1: Blackjacks, needles, vials filled with biological weapons –

TEACHER: I heard the words "I'm gonna' kill you." I have to report that.

GIRL: Ask Todd – he knows I was kidding.

POLICE OFFICER 1: There is no Todd here. Todd is a thing of the past. Vials filled with chemical weapons, napalm, rocket launchers, tactical nuclear weapons –

GIRL: But if I said it to Todd and he knows I was kidding –

POLICE OFFICER 1: No Todd! No Todd!

PRINCIPAL: If a teacher hears the words "I'm gonna' kill you," "I'm going to kill you," "You're dead" or "You dead," the teacher must inform the principal. I in turn must inform the police.

POLICE OFFICER 1: ICBMs, F-16s, C-4 –

PRINCIPAL: We have a zero-tolerance policy for violence.

GIRL: I wasn't gonna' be violent.

POLICE OFFICER 1: Trenchcoats, dead animals, albums that play backward and conjure the devil –

GIRL: I didn't know. If I knew it was so bad, I wouldn't have said it.

(Enter POLICE OFFICER 2.)

POLICE OFFICER 2: We'll take her.

GIRL: But—

POLICE OFFICER 2: Come on, you homicidal missy.

PRINCIPAL: It's out of our hands.

(The Police Officers grab the Girl, who resists, and start dragging her off the stage.)

POLICE OFFICER 1: Dead letters, letter bombs, movies that bombed, bad haircuts—

POLICE OFFICER 2: You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say—

GIRL: I didn't know!

POLICE OFFICER 1: Bad hair days, big hair, hair loss treatments, hair extensions—

POLICE OFFICER 2: can be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney—

GIRL: I want my parents!

POLICE OFFICER 2: Miranda Miranda Miranda!

POLICE OFFICER 1: Static hair, electric hair—

PRINCIPAL: You're not in elementary school anymore.

POLICE OFFICER 1: Shock treatments. Shock therapy.

PRINCIPAL: Your parents can't save you anymore—

GIRL: I shouldn't even be here. I don't go here.

POLICE OFFICER 1: The electric chair!

GIRL: I'm in elementary school.

TEACHER: I hope you learn something from this experience.

GIRL: I'm six years old.

POLICE OFFICER 1: A firing squad.

GIRL: No – not six. Four. No – two.

(She begins to cry in an exaggerated baby "wah." The Police Officers and the Girl reach the exit.)

GIRL: I'm just a baby! I wanna' be a baby! Waaahhh!

(Exit the actors as it becomes a news broadcast, CHUCK INTERLUDE #6. Enter the ANCHOR.)

ANCHOR: Our top story once again is the search for Chuck. Still no sign, and authorities are rushing to get his face on a milk carton. Anyone with information on Chuck's whereabouts, you can dial this toll free hotline: 1-888-GO-CHUCK. *(Pause.)* Moms and dads, do you know where your Chuck is?

ADVENTURES IN BABYSITTING

(A TEEN BABYSITTER, either gender, babysits another member of the ensemble, who transforms into a crying BABY, perhaps with a simple costume piece.)

BABYSITTER: Come on—look at the funny face. Look at the funny face! Ha ha ha ha ha!

(More crying.)

Come on. *(Beat.)* You want the bottle again? You want the bottle?

BABY: *(Not sounding like a baby anymore.)* No I don't want the bottle.

BABYSITTER: I'm trying everything.

BABY: And you're pretty crap at it.

BABYSITTER: You're pretty crap at being a baby. *(Beat.)* Sorry. Please don't tell your parents I said that.

BABY: Relax. I'm like six months away from simple words.

BABYSITTER: So then...wait – I'm losing it.

BABY: Somebody is not the sharpest bulb in the tack box.

BABYSITTER: What?

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