

the **Kids Are Alright**

"Eleven Birthdays"
#112

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WRITER'S DRAFT - 11/13/18

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ACT ONE

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

PEGGY thumbs through a magazine at the table. She lands on a colorful tourism ad for "MEXICO: LIKE EUROPE, ONLY CLOSER."

PEGGY
(under her breath)
I find that hard to believe.

She keeps staring at it despite herself.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)
Like all Catholics, my Mom and Dad
viewed leisure activities with a
good amount of skepticism, even
fear. They channeled their shameful
desire for, say, exotic trips into
more domestic pursuits.

MIKE slides a gift box into frame, blocking the ad.

MIKE
Happy birthday, Peg. No wrapping,
just like you asked.

PEGGY
Like we're spending three dollars
on paper because it has some
reindeer on it.

They kiss. Peggy opens the box to reveal a NOVELTY SPOON RACK with fifty TINY SPOONS attached. She plays up her enthusiasm.

PEGGY (CONT'D)
Oh, Mike. Spoons!

MIKE
You always say we don't have enough
silverware. And each one's from a
different state. It's like that
road trip we talked about except,
you know, the spoon version.

As Peggy picks up the spoon rack to hang it on the wall, she steals a final glance at the Mexican beach.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)
My mom felt guilty asking for more,
because Dad wanted one thing for
his birthday, and one thing only.
And he preferred to receive that in
the privacy of their bedroom.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

From outside their bedroom door, we hear --

MIKE (O.S.)
Oh yeah, Peg. That's the spot.

INT. MIKE AND PEGGY'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mike has his pant leg hiked up, pointing to the elastic on his brand-new DRESS SOCKS.

MIKE
You want it to hit right there
above the calf. A man's gotta feel
supported.

INT. TIMMY, JOEY, WILLIAM & PAT'S ROOM - MORNING

We PAN across JOEY and PAT to land on WILLIAM -- all are in bed, asleep. The sun has barely risen.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)
But us kids? We loved birthdays. In
a house with eight boys, it was the
one day a year we got to feel
special. And we started early.

CHYRON: WILLIAM'S BIRTHDAY, JANUARY 1972. William's eyes FLY OPEN. He leaps out of bed.

INT. DINING ROOM/FRONT DOOR - LATER

SUPER EIGHT FOOTAGE: We pan across BALLOONS and a hand-painted "HAPPY BIRTHDAY WILLIAM" banner as the FAMILY sings. There are surprisingly dramatic SHADOWS on the wall.

ALL
"Happy birthday to you, happy
birthday to you..."

REVEAL MIKE holding the camera, with a stadium-bright LIGHT BAR attached. Everyone squints painfully.

ALL (CONT'D)
"Happy birthday dear William..."

Mike points the camera at William, who's temporarily blinded.

WILLIAM
Aaaah!

ALL
"Happy birthday to you."

MIKE
Make a wish, buddy.

WILLIAM
I wish I could see.

TIMMY
If you say it out loud, it won't
come true.

William blows in the wrong direction until Peggy steers him
by the shoulders. They applaud just as LAWRENCE enters
through the living room in his CLERICAL COLLAR.

MIKE
The prodigal son returns!

LAWRENCE
A little too late, I see.

PEGGY
Sorry we couldn't wait. These boys
and cake -- I nearly called in the
riot police.
(handing forks to Frank)
Pass these down. I'll cut the cake
this time. As much as I love
finding your appendages in my
drying rack.

Lawrence takes his seat, and the last fork.

EDDIE
What, no fork for me?

Mike puts his camera down and heads to the spoon rack.

MIKE
Can I interest you in a decorative
spoon?
(choosing for Eddie)
You seem like a West Virginia man.

EDDIE
What does that mean?

PEGGY
You're the state everyone forgets
about. Now grab those candles.

Eddie pulls out the candles as Peggy continues passing down
slices of cake. The boys devour them, in a trance. Pat
immediately spits out a dime onto his plate.

JOEY

Whoa, there's cake money?

PEGGY

(very decadent)

I might've baked in some change
from your father's car ashtray. A
special surprise for the slow
chewers.

Joey starts stabbing the cake with his knife, fishing.

WILLIAM

Hey, my cake, my cash!

He tears out of the room holding the cake, Joey in pursuit.

PEGGY

Careful running with that knife!
You could fall and bend it.

EDDIE

You want me to toss these candles,
Mom?

PEGGY

You think I buy new candles every
time you kids decide to get older?

MIKE

They are getting pretty nubby.

PEGGY

You'll thank me when we have money
left to retire on.
(disapprovingly)
Disposable candles. Let's have
caviar while we're at it.

MIKE

Well boys, looks like your mom's
into recycling now. We've got our
very own ecologist in the house.

As the remaining boys laugh, Peggy glowers at Mike.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

My mom hated waste, but more than
that, she hated my father telling
her what to do. Any time he told
her to drop something, she would
pick it up and run. Fast.

MIKE
(re: candles)
No point saving those goners.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)
Challenge accepted.

As Peggy picks flecks of ICING off the cake, we CUT TO --

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW WEEKS LATER

A homemade PINOCCHIO CANDLE in the center of a bundt cake, in front of BABY ANDY in his high-chair. The family gathers around, singing. CHYRON: ANDY'S BIRTHDAY, FEBRUARY 1972.

ALL
"...Happy birthday to you!"

Peggy immediately leans forward and blows out his candle.

EDDIE
Hey, what if he was still wishing?

PEGGY
And I'm going to wait here all day
'til he drools on it? Enough about
him, what do we think of my
Pinocchio?

EDDIE
Is that who that is? I thought it
was Nixon.

JOEY
They're both liars with big noses.

Peggy smacks him upside the head.

PEGGY
Watch how you talk around my
candle. Of all the things I've
made, it's my proudest creation.

WILLIAM
...Should we be offended by that?

LAWRENCE
Let Mom be proud. She's got genuine
artistic talent.

PEGGY
Oh, I don't know about all that --

The doorbell RINGS. Peggy starts to cross out.

PEGGY (CONT'D)
But I can't wait to rub it in Helen
Riggio's face.

INT. FRONT DOOR/LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Peggy is hugging her "friend" HELEN RIGGIO at the door.

PEGGY
Helen! So good to see you. Come in.

They enter into the living room, Helen holding up a TUB full
of more leftover wax.

HELEN
Leftover wax, care of the Altar
Society. Sorry it took me so long,
Carl and I just got back from
Acapulco.

PEGGY
I noticed your tan.

HELEN
Not all of it, believe me. The way
those beaches are down there, I'm
the same color all over.

PEGGY
Sounds like you have plenty to go
over in Confession. I can't even
remember our last vacation.

HELEN
You look like you got plenty of sun.

PEGGY
That's just the light from Mike's
camera.

They head towards the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

TIMMY enters through the front door, dejected. He plops down
next to William and Pat in front of the TV.

TIMMY
Another day, another rejection. The
life of an actor, I guess.

PAT
You missed cake. I ate money!

TIMMY

I'm glad you enjoyed yourselves,
because I waited for hours outside
the Brady Bunch house hoping they'd
need a spunky neighbor kid.
Nothing. Just some second AD who
said I had a great *punim*.

WILLIAM

He wasn't in a van, was he?

TIMMY

It means "face." Showbiz term. It's
all I hear these days -- "nice
face, kid, if only we had a part."

Timmy looks glumly to the TV, where he notices a group of
KIDS DANCING on a boxcar set, lined up like on "Soul Train".

KIDS (ON TV)

(to the tune of "Rockin'
Robin")

"Check your bindles at the door./
Boogie on down to the dance floor./
By the railroad tracks, where you
will see..."

TIMMY

What is this?

A man costumed in the style of a 1930's hobo, BOXCAR BILLY,
leaps onto the screen and finishes the verse.

BOXCAR BILLY (ON TV)

"Boxcar Billy's Hobo Jamboree!"

KIDS (ON TV)

"Boxcar Billy."

(clap clap clap)

"Birthday Boogie."

(clap clap clap)

"Dance with Boxcar Billy to the
birthday boogie song."

WILLIAM

All the kids with birthdays get to
dance. And then they fight over
scraps of bread.

ON THE TV, one of the kids dances to the end of the line and
starts SWATTING at Boxcar Billy's bindle, like a piñata.

TIMMY

I can sing and dance. And I love bread! This could get me the national audience I deserve.

WILLIAM

Good luck. It's a local show.

TIMMY

Yeah, 'til they find their star.

Joey crosses in from the hall.

JOEY

"Boxcar Billy." Nice. That's where I learned hobo code. Zigzag means "beware of dog" -- comes up a lot.

TIMMY

Can you help me get tickets for my birthday? I was made for this.

JOEY

It'll be tough. Lotta kids out there who want to boogie. But I'll put out some feelers.
(motioning to TV)
I love when the pigs bust it up.

ON THE TV, the kids cheer on two cartoonish COPS as they wag their batons at Boxcar Billy, chasing him in circles.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Helen has left. Peggy washes dishes as Frank enters with the Pinocchio candle.

FRANK

This Nixon is really good, Mom. You ever think about selling candles for the campaign?

PEGGY

It's Pinocchio. You people.

FRANK

Well thanks to some compromising recordings of our previous President, I'm now in charge of the Young Republicans Club. And we've got to kick our fund-raising into high gear before I've got a mutiny on my hands.

PEGGY

What goes on in this club?

FRANK

I'll have a table at the swap meet next month, you could sell some there.

PEGGY

A swap meet? You know how I feel about crowds. This family included.

Mike enters, having overheard.

MIKE

Not sure that's the best idea, son. Your mom doesn't know much about politics.

PEGGY

That's not true. I know to look for the letter "R."

Mike pats Peggy on the shoulder sweetly, but patronizingly.

MIKE

(to Frank)

See what I mean?

Peggy gives Mike a look as he crosses to the fridge, oblivious. She eyes her growing supply of wax.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

And just like that, my mom was a political fundraiser.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY - A MONTH LATER

Eddie, Peggy and Pat stare down solemnly as they sing. Eddie is wearing a CROWN with a big "18" on it.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

But first, there was one birthday that required her undivided attention.

PEGGY, EDDIE AND PAT

"...Happy birthday to you."

REVERSE to REVEAL a gravestone with another crown on it, also "18." The inscription reads "JILL CLEARY, 1954-1954: DAUGHTER, SISTER, VICTIM."

PAT
"And many more..."

CHYRON: EDDIE (AND JILL'S) BIRTHDAY, FEBRUARY 1972.

PEGGY
Seems like it was only yesterday
the doctor heard two heartbeats.
Twins. We couldn't believe our
luck. Months I planned for Jill's
arrival. My first baby girl.

EDDIE
(under his breath)
You don't know she was a girl --

PEGGY
My only girl. But when the day
finally came, the day I'd get to
hold my precious daughter in my
arms... she was absorbed in the
womb. And there was Eddie all
alone. So big. So well-fed.

EDDIE
I didn't eat her!

PEGGY
Of course not. No one's blaming
you. Though you were the only one
in there with her.
(to the grave)
Happy birthday, Jill. Chocolate
cupcakes. Your favorite.

Peggy lights a single candle on a cupcake, and places it on
the grave. A GUST of wind BLOWS OUT the flame. Pat yelps.

PAT
She's here! The ghost of Jill!

PEGGY
Oh, that's nonsense, Pat. She's
terrified of Eddie.

Pat turns away from the grave, shielding his eyes. He peeks
nervously, then points to a RED-HAIRED GIRL across the lawn.

PAT
She's over there!

PEGGY
(to Eddie)
This is going to be very
distracting. Will you ask that girl
to leave the cemetery?

Eddie walks off, livid, muttering to himself.

EDDIE
It's just one day a year. One day a
year...

EXT. CEMETERY - LAWN - MOMENTS LATER

The red-haired girl leans in close to one of the graves and
snaps a photo. She faces away from us as Eddie approaches.

EDDIE
Hi, sorry to interrupt your
mourning, but could you maybe wrap
it up soon?

The girl turns around -- it's WENDI. This is the first time
they've met. And she's confused.

WENDI
Sorry, am I in your way?

Now that Eddie sees her, he's instantly smitten.

EDDIE
No! No, no, not at all. You're so
far out of my way it's like, how'd
she do that?
(re: her camera)
Whatcha shooting?

WENDI
It's for a project. This is the
grave of Beth Kittering. The first
female gynecologist in Los Angeles.

EDDIE
I thought all gynecologists were
lady doctors.

WENDI
(laughing)
That's just a euphemism.

Eddie struggles over that word as Pat yells from a distance.

PAT
Eat her before she eats you back!

WENDI

...Do you know that boy?

EDDIE

I'm here to bury him alive,
actually. Sorry. He thinks you look
like someone.

WENDI

Lucille Ball. I get that a lot.

EDDIE

Not exactly. He thinks you're the
ghost of my dead sister Jill.

WENDI

Oh. I don't get that one as often.

EDDIE

It's her birthday -- well, it's our
birthday -- and my mom wants you to
leave so he'll stop --

WENDI

Wait, it's your birthday? That's so
strange, because it's my birthday
too.

(ghost noises)

Oooooooh.

Eddie's face goes white.

WENDI (CONT'D)

I'm kidding.

EDDIE

Oh! Ha, ha. Right. Sore subject.

Off Wendi, smiling at a sheepish Eddie.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

William sits in a chair, reading "The Further Secrets of
Quaytar." Timmy runs in from the backyard, Joey behind him.

TIMMY

Guess who's the next member of
Boxcar Billy's Chain Gang?

He pulls out his ticket and starts dancing with it. Mike
crosses through the dining room to poke his head in.

MIKE

Are you talking about that hobo baby show? You're way too old to be on that garbage.

TIMMY

It's not garbage, it's a children's variety show. And it says --
(reading the ticket)
"All members of the studio audience must be ten years or younger..."
Wait, that's not fair!

MIKE

You're almost twelve. If you want to dance around with a bunch of vagrants, I know a great underpass.

Mike exits. Timmy is crushed.

WILLIAM

If it makes you feel any better, they just changed the rule. Things were getting too rowdy, a bunch of older kids were sneaking in. Them and some middle-aged jockeys.

TIMMY

Yeah but they don't deserve stardom. I do.

JOEY

Hey man, jockeys are underrated. All that power packed into those freakishly small bodies.

TIMMY

And there's no way around it?

WILLIAM

Nope. They even check birth certificates. Which feels excessive to me, but hey, it's a tough town.

JOEY

(to Timmy)

Don't you worry your pretty head about this. I've got a plan B.

EXT. CEMETERY - GROVE - A LITTLE LATER

Wendi is laughing as Eddie recounts a story.

EDDIE

And then she tried to make me take
communion again with a wig on...
God, this stuff sounds really weird
when I say it out loud.

WENDI

You deserve a real birthday. You
know, one that's not at a cemetery.
(going for it)
Any chance you're free later?

EDDIE

I doubt it. We're off to the Church
in case I want to confess my crime.

Wendi takes out a small notebook and writes in it with a pen.

WENDI

Well if they don't send you to baby-
eaters jail --
(hands him a note)
Give me a call.

She starts to cross away as Eddie opens the sheet of paper.
Her NUMBER is written on it. He stares at it, mouth agape.

EDDIE

Did you just -- ?

WENDI

I did. Happy birthday, Eddie.

She walks away. As soon as she's gone, Eddie fist pumps.

EDDIE

Yes! Birthday miracle!!

Then, a GUST OF WIND -- the same that blew out the candle --
BLOWS the note out of Eddie's hand.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

No, no, no!

Eddie chases the note across the lawn. It lands in the path
of a RIDER MOWER, which instantly SHREDS it, SPRAYING
confetti in Eddie's face. He is speechless for a beat, then
shakes his fist at the heavens.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

JIIIIIIILLLLLL!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. ROSE BOWL SWAP MEET - PEGGY'S BOOTH AREA - DAY

CHYRON: LAWRENCE'S BIRTHDAY, FEBRUARY 1972. Mike speaks into a PAY PHONE.

MIKE

You sure you can't make it? ...No,
I understand. That is one of the
tricker psalms. Well, your mom will
miss you. She's soft that way.

ANGLE ON Peggy at a nearby table with Frank, where a HIPPIE
COUPLE peruses her candles.

MIKE (CONT'D)

(calling off)

Peg, you wanna talk to Lawrence?

PEGGY

I'm good.
(to the Hippies)
Four dollars apiece.

FRANK

You two buying this as a joke?
Something to light your reefers
with -- "blaze up with Tricky
Dick"?

HIPPIE DUDE

(sarcastic)

No, man. I just really love the
military-industrial complex.

FRANK

Well, good.

They cross off as Mike approaches.

MIKE

Well, our eldest is too busy to
leave the seminary for his
birthday. Or to give a heads up,
apparently.

PEGGY

He better be turning water into
wine by now, that chiffon cake was
my Everest.

Eddie arrives carrying a box loaded with more candles.

EDDIE

Kind of spooky driving with these.
I felt like I was being watched.

As he pulls them out, we see these new candles are definitively shaped like NIXON'S FACE. An older artist in a caftan, GAIL, leans over from her nearby booth.

GAIL

Excuse me, did you make these? The likeness is so striking.

PEGGY

Thank you. He makes it so easy with the nose.

GAIL

I love the rust and earth tones. It puts me in mind of Sedona. I made love to a spirit there in a vortex.

FRANK

(sotto, to Peggy)
If she comes any closer, we make a run for it.

GAIL

I'd love to bring one home. Perhaps I could interest you in an artist's trade, for one of my pieces?

Gail reaches under the table and retrieves a large WATERCOLOR PAINTING of a Schnauzer. Peggy immediately changes her tune.

PEGGY

You hear that, Mike? I'm an artist.

MIKE

I tuned out after "vortex."

GAIL

I could make a portrait of you. Or of a loved one.

PEGGY

(no one comes to mind)
Loved one?
(then)
Oh, I know!

Peggy reaches into her wallet and pulls out an eight-by-ten school photo of Eddie. She indicates him standing nearby.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

This is my son Eddie.

EDDIE

Awww, Mom. So sweet.

PEGGY

He has a dead twin sister, Jill.

She never made it to full term.

(a look to Eddie, then)

So the female version of him, but skinnier. Malnourished, even.

EDDIE

What, so she's going to stick pigtails on me? That's so creepy!

MIKE

(sotto, to Eddie)

Let it go, buddy. The painting's free. You should've seen what that headstone set me back.

GAIL

(re: Eddie's hair)

I see where you found your love of rust tones.

Eddie storms off as Helen approaches, hijacking Peggy's attention.

HELEN

Peggy Cleary, your little Nixons are the talk of the Rose Bowl!

PEGGY

Oh Helen, so kind. I don't know why people say such awful things about you.

HELEN

You know, a woman in my book club has a boutique at the Eagle Rock Plaza. Brand-new, very kicky stuff. Your candles would fit right in.

PEGGY

These? At a plaza?

MIKE

This stuff's just for the campaign. Communism takes over Vietnam, you never know when Glendale could fall.

HELEN

(to Peggy)

Well there's nothing wrong with making some cash on the side. If you change your mind, just holler. I'm going to go buy some shell art.

Helen walks off.

PEGGY

I haven't gotten this much attention since I saw that armed robbery.

(mulls it over, then)

I think I'm ready to hang it up. I don't need to be some high-powered businesswoman like Mary Tyler Moore or Betty Crocker.

MIKE

I hear you, Peg. And what do we need with malls anyway? Leave that fancy stuff to Helen.

As that gleam comes back into Peggy's eye --

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

You really think he'd learn by now.

EXT. ROSE BOWL SWAP MEET - ANOTHER BOOTH - SAME TIME

Joey and Timmy tiptoe over to a booth run by ERNIE, a middle-aged, rough-looking biker holding up bootleg concert tees.

ERNIE

You like the Beatles, I got the Beatles! You like Stones, I got the Stones! You like The Moody Blues, I don't wanna know you!

(spotting Joey)

Hey, Dr. Blankenship!

JOEY

(aside to Timmy)

Best not to leave a trail of breadcrumbs.

(handshake with Ernie)

Great to see you, Ernie. Meet my brother-in-law. He has needs.

ERNIE

Does he has cash? 'Cause my old lady don't buy her own beers.

JOEY
I understand.

ERNIE
I don't. The purse always somehow
gets left in the car.

TIMMY
I'd like a fake ID please.

ERNIE
Slow down, red. How old we talkin'
here? You want it for cigarettes?
Booze? X-rated movies?
(salaciously)
Voting?

JOEY
He's going younger. Say ten years
old. It's a long story.

ERNIE
Let's go with a passport then.

JOEY
(to Timmy)
Not a bad idea. If some of those
jockeys catch on to you, we can
book it to the airport.

Ernie hands Timmy a form, and Timmy starts filling it out.

ERNIE
Yeah, driver's license makes no
sense for a ten-year-old. Except in
Honduras. They got kid taxi
drivers. That place is a mess. I
really gotta get down there before
the party's over.

Off Timmy and Joey's looks --

EXT. ROSE BOWL SWAP MEET - PORTA-POTTIES - MOMENTS LATER

Eddie heads towards an open porta-potty before he notices Pat
crouching, terrified, nearby.

EDDIE
What are you doing?

PAT
She's back! She followed me here!

EDDIE

Clowns are people too, Pat, they're just trying to get through the day.

PAT

No. Jill! I didn't even know ghosts used the bathroom. Or girls.

EDDIE

Can everyone stop talking about Jill? She's not real.

PAT

Then how come we saw her at the cemetery?

After a beat, Eddie lights up with excitement.

EDDIE

The girl from the cemetery is here?

Pat points to one of the porta-potties. Eddie dashes over to it, nervously pacing outside.

EDDIE (CONT'D)

(practicing)

"Hey. Wendi! Long time. I know, I meant to call you, but your number blew into a power mower, so --"

The door opens. Eddie braces himself, but out steps a large RED-HAIRED GUY with a BEARD. Eddie's face falls.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

And that was the day we realized Pat needed --

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING - A FEW WEEKS LATER

PAT

Glasses, I got glasses!

CHYRON: PAT'S BIRTHDAY, MAY 1972. The family sits at the table, which is littered with bags of McDonald's. Pat gawks in his new glasses as Frank opens a gift.

FRANK

And I got... a glasses repair kit?

The CHYRON widens to read PAT AND FRANK'S BIRTHDAY.

PEGGY

Don't look so upset, you love tools.

(MORE)

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Besides, someone's going to need to fix his glasses. It's only a matter of time before --

PAT

They broke.

PEGGY

(to Frank)

I'll leave you to it. I've got a pot of wax that's bubbling like lava.

Peggy crosses into the kitchen. Mike watches her go, then tries to flash a reassuring smile to Frank.

MIKE

Gift of responsibility, pal.

INT. FRONT DOOR/LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Timmy enters the front door, holding a piece of mail. He opens it to find a PASSPORT from the KINGDOM OF DENMARK.

TIMMY

They have a king over there?

Timmy opens the passport. There's a picture of him next to the name "DONK SLIMHAMMER." Timmy wanders into the living room with a plate of cake.

TIMMY (CONT'D)

(angrily whispering)

Thanks a lot, bonehead. "Donk Slimhammer?" How am I supposed to pull off being from Denmark?

JOEY

Hamlet was Danish, isn't that like your dream role?

TIMMY

No, I'm clearly a Puck. Besides, I wanted to get famous with my own name, hello.

JOEY

It was only a matter of time before you had to change it anyway. "Timmy Cleary" -- eh. "Donk Slimhammer" -- I'm hiring that guy.

Off Timmy's frustration --

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Mike enters as Peggy pours hot wax into a Nixon mold.

MIKE

This stuff's really starting to
take over your life. Didn't realize
I married a career gal.

PEGGY

Things are busy now, but it'll slow
down.

MIKE

And until then? More store-bought
birthdays? I had to go to
McDonald's, then stop by the Sara
Lee outlet for a day-old cake. I
don't want these kids getting used
to the finer things.

PEGGY

Mike, no one in this family is
suffering because of a few
beautifully crafted candles.

MIKE

Except Frank, who didn't even get
his own birthday.

PEGGY

Well if he wanted that, he
shouldn't have been born so close
to Pat.

FRANK

It's not like he had a choice.

PEGGY

He could've hung on.

MIKE

Seriously, Peg, what's gotten into
you?

PEGGY

You got into me! You and Frank,
with your fund-raising ideas. I
stopped caring about politics when
we started electing Protestants
again.

MIKE

And the swap meet was great, but
now you're selling this crap all
over town --

PEGGY

Oh really? Is crap what they sell
at Carol's Tchotchkes at the Eagle
Rock Plaza?

WILLIAM (O.S.)

Mom, Dad, Pat's choking!

Mike and Peggy look at each other, then hurry to the --

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Pat is clutching at his throat.

PEGGY

Pat, for the last time, you do not
have asthma. That doctor was a con
artist.

EDDIE

It's the coins. Dad had me stuff
them in the weird new cake.

Mike picks Pat up by his legs and holds him upside down.
After a few shakes, a QUARTER drops out of his mouth. Mike
sets him back down.

PAT

I just wanted money cake, the way
Mommy makes it.

PEGGY

Well to start with, Mommy doesn't
use quarters. They're too large,
and much too generous.

Peggy glares at Eddie, then takes a beat.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

But I'm sorry. I should've made you
that cake, Pat. I've been busy.
(looking to Mike)
You don't have to worry about that
from now on. I'm staying right here
at home.

She and Mike share a smile, weapons finally down. Frank runs
in from the hallway, holding the phone.

FRANK

Ohmygodohmygod. The Committee to Re-Elect the President is on the phone. They want Mom to sell crafts at their big fund-raiser next month and get her picture taken with --
(worshipful)
Vice. President. Spiro. Agnew!

MIKE

Holy cow, Peg.

FRANK

It's like I'm dreaming.

MIKE

That's the opportunity of a lifetime.

PEGGY

It sure is...

Peggy's gears start turning.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

My mom saw an opening here to make my dad eat crow. And for her, that was the opportunity of a lifetime.

PEGGY

But you can tell him no. It's a busy month coming up, what with Timmy's birthday. I'd hate for him to have to eat McDonald's.

She crosses into the kitchen. Mike lunges for the phone.

MIKE

Hi, there. Mike Cleary.
(slightly offended)
...I'm her husband, yes. You bet, we'll be there. It'd be an honor.

Frank tries to lean into the receiver.

FRANK

The highest honor! Francis Xavier Cleary here, huge fan.

Mike shoves Frank away as he goes to write down the details.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY - A FEW WEEKS LATER

Pat and Eddie help Peggy put finishing touches on the birthday decor. She's gone all out this time -- balloons, confetti, and streamers everywhere.

PEGGY

(to Pat)

Grab me Timmy's banner from the closet there. Top shelf.

CHRYON: TIMMY'S BIRTHDAY, JUNE 1972. As Pat struggles to reach the shelf --

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Why can't you be taller? What's the point in feeding you if you're not doing anything with it?

PAT

The nurse at school said I lost an inch.

He gets on his tip-toes and pulls out a rolled-up poster wrapped in newspaper. He unrolls it.

PAT (CONT'D)

Eddie, you look beautiful!

He turns to REVEAL a portrait of Eddie in a frilly pink dress with pigtails.

EDDIE

Ew! Mom! What is that?

PEGGY

(scolding Pat)

That was supposed to be a surprise. I haven't gotten it framed yet. It's the painting of Jill from that sweet artist woman who should be institutionalized.

EDDIE

Seriously? You brought that into our house?

PEGGY

It's beautiful, Eddie. I expect you to hang it in your room.

(MORE)

PEGGY (CONT'D)

I have to live with the memory of
what happened to Jill every day,
why shouldn't you?

Eddie grabs the portrait from Pat and shakes it angrily.

EDDIE

I do, Mom, because you never let me
forget it. I've had the ghost of
Jill hanging over me my entire
life, but I'm done. I did not eat
my sister.

PAT

(skeptical)
Ehhhhh.

EDDIE

Jill is gone. If she ever even
existed in the first place.

Peggy looks surprised.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)

This was the first time Eddie stood
up to my Mom, and it took her a
moment to absorb it. Just like it
took Eddie a full trimester to
absorb Jill.

PEGGY

Fine. Give me the painting. I'll
put it away and I'll never bring up
Jill again. Except in my nightly
prayers.

Eddie hands her the portrait. As he goes to hand her the
newspaper, he notices a PICTURE OF WENDI on it. She's posing
next to her photo from the graveyard. The headline reads,
"GYNECOLOGIST'S MEMORY LIVES ON."

PEGGY (CONT'D)

(re: the headline)
Well that's every woman's worst
nightmare.

EDDIE

No way. It's her!

Eddie runs to the phone. As he picks up the receiver, we PUSH
IN DRAMATICALLY to his face.

EDDIE(CONT'D)

Hello. My name is Eddie. And I need
you to find a number for me.

INT. TIMMY, JOEY, WILLIAM & PAT'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Timmy sets an outfit on his bed.

TIMMY

(practicing in bad Danish)
Ja, I'm here to böogie, ja. Een my
country, ve don't have homeless
people.

Peggy enters, holding Timmy's crown. Timmy sits on top of his
outfit, hiding it.

PEGGY

Timmy, I got everything set up for
you. I even made those canned
hamburgers you like.

TIMMY

(anxiously)
Mmmmm. Be right there.
(as Peggy exits)
And we're thinking this'll be
wrapped up by noon, right?

PEGGY

Today is your special day. I'm in
no rush.

She closes the door. Timmy yells after her.

TIMMY

Rushing's fine, I love to rush!

REVEAL Joey, watching from the top bunk.

JOEY

Tick tock, big guy. That Hollywood
bus waits for no one. Not even...
Donk Slimhammer.

Off Timmy's mounting anxiety.

INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Frank and Mike are trying to paint features on a Nixon
candle. It's grotesque, like a bad drag impersonation.
Lawrence winces nearby.

LAWRENCE

Not a beautiful man, that Nixon.

FRANK

You shut your mouth. He's an exceptionally handsome President.

Peggy walks in, pointedly aloof.

PEGGY

You boys coming in for cake? We've got a birthday boy to celebrate.

MIKE

(irritated)

Little tied up at the moment. Any pointers would be appreciated.

PEGGY

Oh, I would help, but I'm just so busy with Timmy's birthday. I don't have room for anything else now that I love my children again.

(then)

Don't forget about the eyebrows.

MIKE AND FRANK

(deflated, realizing)

Eyebrows...

Peggy crosses back out with a birthday crown for Timmy.

LAWRENCE

Now that Mom's out, maybe I can come to the Agnew event tomorrow. Liven it up with some debate.

FRANK

You can burn flags in the parking lot. Dad and I will be inside with the real Americans.

(to Mike)

They said there'd be dancing, so I got us *boutonnieres*. You can pick your favorite.

Mike tries to pop another candle from its mold, but it melts all over his hand. He looks for a towel, panicking a little.

MIKE

This one's not ready, this one's not ready!

FRANK

Don't worry Dad, I've got you!

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Timmy wipes his face with a napkin, clearly rushing. The family is at the table (minus William), Mike lingering in the kitchen door.

TIMMY

Well I guess that's a wrap on my birthday guys, thanks for being here.

Peggy chimes in before Timmy can stand up.

PEGGY

Not so fast, mister twelve-year-old. I've got one last gift, but you kids'll have to follow me outside.

The other Cleary boys get up excitedly.

TIMMY

You know what we don't do enough of us in this family? Night-time gifts. Say we meet back here in six, seven hours?

PEGGY

I hope to be completely unconscious by then. C'mon, outside.

As the family exits, Timmy sidles up to Joey.

TIMMY

This better be quick. I've got to say *auf weidersehen* any minute.

JOEY

Dude, that's German. You gotta know this stuff.

EXT. DRIVEWAY/INT. GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The family waits by the garage as Timmy and Joey trail out.

JOEY

Another present just feels excessive. He's got a pretty big head as it is.

TIMMY

He's right about that.

PEGGY

Well I hope that head is ready to
shake and shimmy --

Timmy freezes.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

Because it's time for your birthday
boogie!

Peggy slides up the garage door, revealing a PAINSTAKINGLY
RECREATED (but totally homemade) copy of the "Boxcar Billy"
set, complete with a train backdrop, railroad tracks, and a
glittering RED CARPET.

BOYS

Whoa!

The younger boys run into the garage, marveling at the set.
Mike stares awestruck, a little speechless.

PEGGY

(to Timmy)

I know you like that show. And it'd
be pathetic for you to actually
dance around with those toddlers,
so I figured why not bring it here?

MUSIC plays. Timmy looks inside as Pat emerges from behind a
curtain dressed as Boxcar Benji. He sings to the recording.

WILLIAM

"Check your bindles at the door/
Boogie on down to the dance
floor..."

The other kids start forming a "Soul Train" line, dancing and
clapping on either side of the tracks. They motion for Timmy
to join.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

"By the railroad tracks, where you
will see/Boxcar Billy's Hobo
Jamboree/Boxcar Billy."

(clap clap clap)

"Birthday Boogie."

(clap clap clap)

"Dance with Boxcar Billy to the
birthday boogie song."

Timmy is overwhelmed. He looks to his Mom, who is beaming, then to Joey, who is motioning to run.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)
I was trapped. I knew if I left, my
mom would never forgive me. But if
I stayed, neither would my fans.

Timmy starts to slowly boogie in place, then off of everyone's cheering, runs into the garage and triumphantly struts his stuff down the line.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)
But I made my choice. I put family
before stardom. It was the last time
I ever made that mistake.

Peggy tosses a slice of bread into the fray. The boys make a mad dash for it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Peggy crosses through with fresh sheets when she sees Mike passed out in his chair. He's surrounded by unpainted Nixons. She frowns sympathetically.

INT. LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Peggy finishes painting a Nixon nose. As she sets it down, Mike stirs from his sleep. He looks up to see Peggy sitting next to a batch of perfect candles.

MIKE
You finished 'em.

PEGGY
It didn't take long.

MIKE
And what you did out there for
Timmy?
(taking a beat)
You're a miracle worker, honey. I
could never do what you do.

PEGGY
(sweetly, satisfied)
I know.

MIKE
I'm sorry if I've been hassling you
about all this. I guess I just got
used to you doing all this stuff
for me and the kids.
(MORE)

MIKE (CONT'D)

And seeing you go out in the world like that, it made me feel a little like... is she even gonna need me anymore?

PEGGY

Are you kidding? I look around at our family, what we've built -- and I realize you're the only one I like in this house.

MIKE

I feel the same way.

PEGGY

And if it makes you feel any better, I never really wanted to do this in the first place.

MIKE

You what?

PEGGY

I just liked showing you I could.

Mike struggles to catch up. Peggy plows ahead.

PEGGY (CONT'D)

But I do have to say, the money isn't bad.

She grabs a check off the side table and hands it to Mike.

MIKE

Four hundred bucks?!

PEGGY

Helen Riggio might be a terrible Catholic, but that woman is one mean candle broker.

MIKE

I don't like to swear, Peg, but holy Toledo.

He starts to hand the check back.

PEGGY

You keep it. Sure, I cook and I clean and I hunt Pat's rodent friends, but I'd like to chip in more around here.

MIKE

No. That's your money. You earned it. There's got to be something you're dying to spend it on for yourself.

Peggy considers this.

PEGGY

What if we went somewhere like Europe... only closer?

MIKE

You mean like Canada?

PEGGY

Like Acapulco. Or wherever that Helen and her bald husband went. So she had a margarita once, big deal.

MIKE

We could go to Acapulco.

(beat, winking)

Does that mean we're getting one of those... all-over tans?

PEGGY

Oh I'm definitely doing that, whether the beach we're on allows it or not.

They smile at each other, then kiss, as we --

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW WEEKS LATER

Frank, in a bathing suit and flip-flops, loads up an ice chest. CHYRON: JOEY'S BIRTHDAY, JULY 1972.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)
A few weeks later when it was
Joey's birthday, he requested we
all go to the beach.

Eddie, also in a bathing suit, helps Frank load the ice chest out the back door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - SAME TIME

Mike and Peggy enter from the hallway dressed to travel with two small suitcases.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)
My mom and dad were glad to
accommodate since they were already
headed to the beach. In Acapulco.

Peggy checks their AIRLINE TICKETS, then Mike and Peggy cross out the front door with their luggage.

EXT. BACKYARD/BACK PORCH - SAME TIME

Eddie loads Baby Andy into the station wagon. Timmy and Pat, wearing trunks and carrying beach towels, run out from the kitchen door and climb into the car.

ADULT TIMMY (V.O.)
But the rest of us were happy to
give Joey his birthday wish for a
family beach day. That he didn't
have to go to.

REVEAL JOEY standing on the back porch, in a bathrobe sipping coffee, looking not unlike Hugh Hefner -- except he's wearing one of Peggy's birthday crowns.

JOEY
Have fun! Take your time!

Joey waves as Frank drives off. Joey takes a sip from his coffee, sighs contentedly and then crosses back into the house, a big grin on his face.

END OF SHOW