

GOOD FOR NOTHING

By David Kruh

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CHARACTERS

NOTE: This play can, and should, be cast without regard to race or color. All that is required of the family is that the audience should sense – know, really – from the outset that something is clearly wrong with the way they are behaving. The fun is watching the family members discover the truth and how they deal with it. Hence the sparse descriptions of the cast below:

SON: much too perfect, almost annoyingly so, from the very beginning of the piece

MOTHER: seemingly out of a 50s sitcom or *Good Housekeeping*

FATHER: An equally perfect father

SET

A kitchen table with two chairs sits center stage. A coffee pot, a few dishes, and a couple of glasses; enough to make it clear that breakfast is being served.

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The lights rise on a meticulously kept suburban kitchen. The mother, also meticulously kept, is happily preparing breakfast. Enter an overly and unnaturally pleasant teenager. Their overly pleasant demeanor is, at first, enough to make you sick.

SON: Good morning, Mom.

MOTHER: (*nervously perky*) Good morning, sweetheart. Sleep well?

SON: Always do after a late night of studying. But I know it's gonna pay off today when I take that math test.

MOTHER: How about some pancakes this morning, dear?

SON: No time, Mom. Gotta get to school. (*pause*) Hey, is everything okay?

MOTHER: What makes you ask, dear?

SON: I dunno, you seem all... nervous, is all.

MOTHER: I just wanted to know if you wanted pancakes, dear. There's no reason to - (*collapses dramatically at the table*) Oh, what am I doing? Who am I kidding?

SON: Mom? Are you all right?

MOTHER: Son, I need for you to sit down.

SON: What is it, Mom? You can tell me anything.

MOTHER: Daniel, have you noticed that something is... different today?

SON: (*looking around the room, then at MOTHER*) Did you get a new hairdo or something? If you did, it looks very nice, Mother.

MOTHER: No, dear, look around you.

SON: (*looking around*) Okay, but I don't see – wait a second. Where is he? (*runs around the edges of the kitchen, yelling into the adjacent rooms*) Hello? Are you in there? Hello? Where are you? (*to his mother*) What happened? He was here just last night, when I went to bed.

MOTHER: Sweetheart. Please. Sit down. (*SON grudgingly sits down.*) I suppose the only way to say this is to just say it.

SON: What?

MOTHER: That cameraman who has been following you around? The one you thought was from an MTV reality show?

SON: Yeah?

MOTHER: He wasn't from MTV at all.

SON: He was from VH1? That's okay, I guess. It's still TV, right?

MOTHER: No. What I mean is that he wasn't a real cameraman. I hired him.

SON: You hired him?

MOTHER: Yes, to make you think you were on camera.

SON: You mean I'm not going to be on an MTV series?

MOTHER: No. In fact, there wasn't even any tape in the camera.

SON: But why?

MOTHER: Oh, sweetheart, do you remember how things were? Your grades were failing. You were sneaking out at night and disappearing for days at a time. Your father and I didn't know what to do.

SON: Dad? Was he in on this, too?

MOTHER: No, your father doesn't know what I did. And that's why I had to let the cameraman go. You see, I've been paying him out of my own pocket, and yesterday, I ran out of money.

SON: How could you do this to me? You've made me look like a fool in front of my friends.

MOTHER: Sweetheart, I did this to help.

SON: Help? I've been walking around like a big star. Everyone at Carswell High thinks I'm going to be on MTV. How is it going to help when they find out it's all been some kind of joke?

(A middle-aged man enters the room, unseen.)

MOTHER: It hasn't been a joke. Daniel, look at everything you've accomplished over the past six months. Your grades have improved. You haven't had one day of detention. The guidance counselors think you have a real good chance of getting into college, now, if you just maintain –

SON: This is a nightmare. It's an absolute nightmare. How can I go back there again? Don't you see what you've done? You've ruined my life!

MOTHER: I promise you that I will make this better.

SON: Yeah, right. How?

MOTHER: I don't know. I'll figure something out. Maybe we tell everyone that the show was cancelled.

SON: (*sees FATHER*) Dad! Dad, did you hear? Did you know what Mom has been doing?

FATHER: Yes, I heard. In fact, I knew.

MOTHER: You did?

SON: What? And you let her do this to me?

MOTHER: How did you know what I've been doing?

FATHER: Loretta, what I have to tell you now is very difficult.

MOTHER: What is it?

FATHER: Look around you, Loretta. Haven't you noticed what's missing?

MOTHER: No, I – (**looks around the room**) Oh, my God, where is he?
(**races off-stage out of the room**) Hello? Are you here? (**returns to the kitchen**) Where did he go?

FATHER: You won't find him. He's gone.

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