

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

By Chris Stiles

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CHARACTERS

PETE	A young man of 17
DELORES	A waitress
DAD	
THE GUIDANCE COUNSELOR	
THE MILITARY RECRUITER	
MEGAN	Pete's girlfriend
MRS. BERGERON	A social studies teacher
JORDAN	Pete's friend
MR. BAUMER	A vocational arts teacher
AUNT SHELBY	
MS. MARLEY	An art teacher
LARS	Pete's older brother
MOM	
CHORUS	5-10 actors, could be doubled with other actors or could be separate actors

WHAT WOULD YOU DO? (IF YOU WERE ME)

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SETTING: The Garter Inn Café, represented by four or five tables arranged on the stage. The use of multiple levels, such as platforms, would work well.

AT RISE: *PETE is at a center table, studying a menu. The CHORUS sits at different tables, drinking coffee, studying menus, reading newspapers, etc. As the play begins the CHORUS looks up and speaks towards PETE.*

CHORUS 1: If I were you...

CHORUS 2: If I were you...

CHORUS 3: I'd spread your wings

CHORUS 4: And learn to fly!

CHORUS 5: And take a fall from the nest.

CHORUS 6: If I were you...

CHORUS 7: If I were you...

CHORUS 8: I'd seize the day

CHORUS 9: Grab life by the horns

CHORUS 10: And go for the gusto!

CHORUS 1: If I were you...

CHORUS 2: If I were you...

CHORUS 3: If I were you, I'd prepare for a new chapter in your life.

CHORUS 4: Because...

CHORUS 5: Because...

CHORUS 6: Because the world is your oyster

CHORUS 7: The world is your oyster!

ALL CHORUS: The world is your oyster.

(CHORUS begins to cross towards exit.)

CHORUS 8: If I were you...

CHORUS 9: If I were you...

(Enter DAD, who sits at a table.)

DAD: Gnooooooooomes!

CHORUS 10: If I were you...

(CHORUS exits. Enter DELORES.)

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DAD: Gnooooooooomes!

(DELORES approaches PETE.)

DELORES: Honey?

PETE: What?

DELORES: He's over there. Table three.

PETE: And he's been there every night?

DELORES: Every night.

PETE: And this is a problem?

DELORES: He doesn't order anything. He just sits and stares at the menu.

DAD: Gnooooooooomes!

DELORES: And he does that. It's driving the customers away. You need to talk to him.

PETE: Why me?

DELORES: He's your dad. And I think he wants to talk to you.

PETE: How do you know?

DELORES: I don't know. I'm just a waitress. Just go talk to him. Get him out of my restaurant. Tell him he owes me a tip.

(DELORES exits. PETE –still holding a menu –approaches DAD's table.)

PETE: Dad?

DAD: Gnooooooooomes!

PETE: Dad?

DAD: I am not your father.

PETE: But you look like my dad. Sound like him. I'm pretty sure you're him.

DAD: Nope. Wrong. I'm the ghost of your father.

PETE: But my dad's not dead.

DAD: Sure I am.

PETE: No, I think that's something I would know. Something Mom would've mentioned at breakfast. You can't possibly be dead.

DAD: It's part of me inside that's dead.

PETE: What killed it?

DAD: You did.

PETE: Me?

DAD: Well, you and your brother. Mostly your brother.

PETE: How did we...

DAD: Disappointment. Disappointment killed me inside. And I need you to avenge my death.

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PETE: Avenge your death by disappointment? How am I supposed to do that?

DAD: What are you, stupid?

PETE: Yes. I am stupid. It's called being 17.

DAD: This is partly what killed me. Just do what I ask.

PETE: Why can't Lars do it?

DAD: Your brother? He's most of the disappointment. No, it's up to you.

PETE: But what I am supposed to...

DAD: Avenge my death!

PETE: But how do I...

DAD: Gnooooooooomes!

PETE: What does that mean?

DAD: I'm begging you. For once, do something I ask.

PETE: But how do I know you're real? How do I know you're not a dream, or an anxiety attack? I've been feeling some pressure, you know, with graduation in three weeks and all.

(DAD rises.)

DAD: Gnooooooooomes!

PETE: Will you stop that?

DAD: Gnooooooooomes!

(DAD exits. DELORES enters, approaches PETE.)

PETE: What does that mean? "Avenge my death." How can you die of disappointment?

DELORES: At least he left the restaurant. Probably didn't tip, though. The dead are lousy tippers.

(GUIDANCE COUNSELOR enters, sits at a table.)

PETE: So what am I supposed to do?

DELORES: If I were you...

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: If I were you, I'd study hard.

PETE: You talking to me? *(HE gets up, crosses to GUIDANCE COUNSELOR's table and sits. PETE still has his menu; in fact, HE will hold the menu throughout the play until indicated.)*

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: If I were you, I'd study hard, buckle down, get my rear in gear. As your guidance counselor, I'm obliged to tell you there are just three weeks of school left, and your flunking three classes. One of them, National Government, is a requirement to graduate.

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PETE: I didn't realize things were so dire.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: You didn't? What's wrong? Are you distracted? Are you having trouble at home?

PETE: My parents have been fighting, I think. My dad isn't home much. But I guess it's going okay.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Then you need to get it together. You need to make up these zeroes, retake tests, come in for extra help. In other words, put the pedal to the metal! You need to get it together – and fast –if you're going to graduate.

PETE: This is overwhelming. Do you think I can do it?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Of course you can! You have to! Your future's at stake! You need to pull up your britches and...oh, who am I kidding?

PETE: What?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: You don't stand a chance.

PETE: I don't?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Not much of one.

PETE: You're a guidance counselor. Can you say that?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Look, Pete. I don't know you very well. I only see you once or twice a year. But your record speaks for itself.

PETE: My record?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: You flunk classes more often than not. You're often in trouble. You've shown no direction whatsoever.

PETE: What are you saying?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Do you really think you can get it together so fast? Do you think Mrs. Bergeron is going to slide you through National Government? Can you really make up all these credits –in three weeks?

PETE: What should I do?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: If I were you, I'd give up.

PETE: Quit school?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Sure. Stop wasting time. Get out there, earn a paycheck. Start contributing to society, for once.

PETE: I'd be a high school dropout. Where am I supposed to get a job?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: What about that concrete lawn ornament factory? I hear they're expanding.

PETE: Concrete lawn ornaments?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Sure. Bird baths, swans...

DAD: (*offstage*) Gnoooooooooomes!

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Gnomes, I think. I'm pretty sure they're hiring. Could be your future.

PETE: Did you hear something?

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GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I didn't hear anything. Look, just think about what I said. (*GUIDANCE COUNSELOR stands up, picks up check.*)
That's what I would do. (*GUIDANCE COUNSELOR exits.*)

PETE: Quit school? That would definitely kill my dad.

(*DELORES enters.*)

DELORES: Doesn't anyone around here tip?

PETE: Delores, my guidance counselor is telling me to quit school.
What would you do?

DELORES: If I were you...

(*MILITARY RECRUITER enters, stands at attention opposite PETE, holding a piece of paper.*)

MILITARY RECRUITER: If I were you, I'd stand at attention, look straight ahead and sign on this dotted line.

(*PETE crosses to MILITARY RECRUITER.*)

PETE: How can I see what I'm signing if I'm looking straight ahead?

MILITARY RECRUITER: Did I give you permission to speak?

PETE: Um...

MILITARY RECRUITER: Eyes straight ahead! Stand straight! Chin up!

If I were you, I would not be giving any lip to a representative of the United States Army.

PETE: The army? Seriously?

MILITARY RECRUITER: Do you have any options, son? Are you in any position to mouth off?

PETE: Probably not.

MILITARY RECRUITER: Probably? There is no probably in the U.S. Army, son. There is only "Yes sir" and "No sir."

PETE: But I'm not in the army.

MILITARY RECRUITER: Are you serious? Have you looked at your grades? Have you looked at your options?

PETE: Well, it's grim, but...

MILITARY RECRUITER: There is no grim in the United States Army, son. Your future is bright in the service. You are serving your country. Is there anything grim about serving your country, son?

PETE: I don't think I better say anything different.

MILITARY RECRUITER: Son, do you know what your problem is? You have an attitude. And do you know what we do with attitudes? We crush them. We crush them under the hot Iraqi sun. We freeze them in the cold Bosnian winters. We bury them in tunnels in the

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Afghan mountains, and we will make a man out of you, a man who is proud to serve his country.

PETE: Um, can I think this over?

MILITARY RECRUITER: If I were you, I wouldn't waste time "thinking it over." "Thinking it over" is for weak men. "Thinking it over" is for the spineless pinkos who let this country be overrun by communists and terrorists. "Thinking it over" is for the un-American. "Thinking it over" is for...hey, that guy looks like Osama Bin Laden. You there! Stop!

(MILITARY RECRUITER exits. DELORES enters.)

DELORES: A tip from the government? I don't even know why I bother to look.

PETE: I don't know. The military? Really, Delores. I know I haven't been the best student, but I still thought I might go to college. Me and my girlfriend talked about going to the same college. Maybe community college and...

(Enter MEGAN, sits at table at right.)

DELORES: Your girlfriend's here.

PETE: What?

MEGAN: If I were you, I'd break up with me.

PETE: What?

MEGAN: Studies show that post high school relationships rarely last a year past graduation.

PETE: What studies?

(PETE crosses to MEGAN's table, sits.)

MEGAN: And when the couple is separated by 500 or more miles, the odds are really bad.

PETE: 500 miles? Where are you going?

MEGAN: To college, silly. To Cornell.

PETE: Isn't that like, a really good school?

MEGAN: It's a very good school. Why do you think I've been studying so much?

PETE: I thought that was just your way of avoiding me.

MEGAN: Why would I avoid you? I love you.

PETE: Then we're not breaking up.

MEGAN: Of course we are. What's the point? I'm leaving for college in three months.

PETE: So I could go with you. Maybe I'll go to Cornell.

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MEGAN: Are you kidding? I've seen your grades. Are you even going to graduate?

PETE: Yes. Of course. Probably. There's a good chance.

MEGAN: Besides, weren't you talking about going to Montana with Jordan?

PETE: Maybe. Nothing's definite.

MEGAN: Oh, Pete. It's been fun, but...

PETE: Are we really breaking up?

MEGAN: If I were you, that's what I'd do. Make a clean break. Start fresh.

PETE: Wow.

MEGAN: I'm sorry, Pete.

(MEGAN exits. DELORES approaches PETE.)

DELORES: That's tough.

PETE: You heard that?

DELORES: I hear everything that goes on in here. Sometimes too much.

PETE: So what would you do, if you were me?

DELORES: If I were you...

(Enter MRS. BERGERON. SHE sits at a table with a pile of papers, grading as SHE speaks.)

MRS. BERGERON: If I were you, I'd learn the names of all the Presidents, beginning with Washington and ending with Obama. And the preamble to the Constitution. And the National Anthem.

(PETE crosses to MRS. BERGERON's table.)

PETE: Why?

MRS. BERGERON: Why? Why you ask? I'll tell you why. Out of respect for your great country, that's why. Out of respect for this great nation called the United States of America. Out of respect for the great men who have led this nation of ours. And out of respect for the Great American education system, which gives you the privilege –that's right, privilege –to learn the names of our great presidents, backwards and forwards. AND, if I have my way...if my congressman ever answers my letters, out of respect to the 28th Amendment, which, when ratified, will read: "All high school students will learn the names and order of the presidents, as well as the preamble to the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the national anthem and Nixon's resignation speech."

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PETE: But you already require all of those things, except for the Nixon thing. That's why I'm not graduating.

MRS. BERGERON: All the more reason to learn them. Plus, there's still time. So if I were you, I'd start studying now. Study session one. Name the presidents! Go!

PETE: Um, Washington, Lincoln...

MRS. BERGERON: NO NO NO! Have you learned nothing? If I were you, I'd use mnemonics to learn the Presidents. For instance, you erroneously stated Lincoln was the 2nd president.

PETE: He's not?

MRS. BERGERON: No, he's not! He's the 16th president. But just remember this. If you take the digits of the number 16 –one and six –and reverse them –six and one, and take the difference of the two numbers, you get five. And who is on the five dollar bill?

PETE: Um...

MRS. BERGERON: Lincoln! There you go! You'll never forget.

PETE: But what if I think of a nickel instead? Isn't that Jefferson?

MRS. BERGERON: AAAAAA! If I were you, I'd take the first letter of the last names of the first ten presidents –Washington Adams Jefferson Madison Monroe John Quincy Adams Jackson Van Buren Harrison Tyler –and take those letters –WAJMMAJBHT –and make a sentence with those letters to help you remember the order. Like, "Will a Japanese maple multiply after juvenile vampires bite Harry Truman?" WAJMMAJBHT! You'll rattle off the first 10 presidents like it was nothing. And you'd only have 31 to go.

PETE: Shouldn't you have a Q in there?

MRS. BERGERON: What?

PETE: John Quincy Adams?

MRS. BERGERON: AAAAAAA! Let's try the preamble. If I were you, I'd memorize it while doing hand motions. Like this. "We the people..." (*SHE holds out her hands.*) "...in order to form a more perfect union..." (*SHE clasps her hands together.*) "...establish justice..." (*SHE holds her hands out in front, moving them up and down like a balancing scale.*)

PETE: I think we did those motions when we learned it in the fifth grade.

MRS. BERGERON: Then why don't you know it now? Let's try the national anthem. I find it's easy to learn if you put the words to a tune.

PETE: Isn't already to a tune?

MRS. BERGERON: And you see how well that worked for you. I can't work like this! If I were you, I'd seriously start thinking about a career in the service industry.

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(MRS. BERGERON gathers her papers, exits. Enter MOM from opposite side; SHE leans against a table.)

MOM: If I were you, I'd...well, I shouldn't say this.

(PETE crosses to MOM.)

PETE: What, Mom?

MOM: If I were you, I'd...well, your father...

PETE: He says he's dead.

MOM: He's dead to me. Do you know what he did?

PETE: Do I want to know?

MOM: He ran over my lawn gnome.

PETE: Which one? You've got lots of gnomes.

MOM: That's the thing. All those gnomes? I hate them.

PETE: I thought you loved gnomes.

MOM: I loved the one gnome. Mr. Mordecai. The one your father hit with the riding lawnmower. Do you know where that gnome came from?

PETE: Didn't it used to be in Grandma's yard?

MOM: It did. It was my mother's gnome. And Mr. Mordecai was one of a kind, very rare. I've never seen anything like it. Made me think of Mom every time I saw it. And your father hit it with the lawnmower. How could that happen?

PETE: The throttle was messed up. It would surge suddenly. He probably just lost control. I fixed it though.

MOM: Yeah. You're pretty good with that kind of thing.

PETE: So what have you got against the rest of the gnomes?

MOM: Your father won't even say he's sorry. He won't even admit he did it! He blamed Lars. Like Lars has ever mowed the lawn. And now he keeps buying me new lawn gnomes, like that will make up for it. He buys two or three a week!

PETE: And...

MOM: If I were you, I'd make the gnomes disappear.

PETE: Disappear? Like how?

MOM: I don't know! Load them into the station wagon. Make it look like an outside job, a theft. Take them far, far away.

PETE: Like where?

MOM: Do I have to tell you everything? Really far away. Like Montana or something.

PETE: Montana. I've always wanted to go to Montana.

MOM: Really? I've never heard you mention that before.

PETE: It's just a dream.

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MOM: Well, if I were you, I'd help your mother out. Steal the stupid gnomes. Maybe your father will get the hint. (*SHE picks up a menu off the table, looks at it.*) Two dollars for a cup of coffee? I don't think so. (*MOM exits.*)

PETE: What am I supposed to do? My father wants me to avenge his death, my mother wants revenge on my father for running over a gnome. What would you do, if you were me?

DELORES: If I were you...

(*DAD enters opposite MOM. HE is wearing a sheet over his head.*)

DAD: Gnoooomes! Gnoooomes!

PETE: Dad?

DAD: Gnoooomes!

PETE: Dad! What are you doing? Why are you under that sheet?

DAD: I'm a ghost.

PETE: You are not a ghost.

DAD: I keep telling you, I've died of disappointment, doomed to walk the earth until my soul is redeemed.

PETE: You said that earlier.

(*DAD lifts the sheet up to reveal his face.*)

DAD: Hey, did you talk to your mother?

PETE: Yeah. She says you ran over Mr. Mordecai.

DAD: Who?

PETE: Grandma's gnome. You ran it over with the lawn mower.

DAD: Right. I was hoping she'd think Lars did that.

PETE: Are you kidding? I'm not sure Lars even knows where we keep the lawnmower.

DAD: I panicked. What could I do?

PETE: Why were you mowing in the first place? I told you I needed to work on the throttle.

DAD: You'd been mowing a lot of lawns. I thought I'd help out.

PETE: Dad...

DAD: Is Mom really mad?

PETE: She doesn't like all the gnomes you've been buying. And she says you're dead to her.

DAD: I am dead. Doomed to walk...

PETE: Yeah, yeah. Avenge your disappointment and all that. Do you have any idea how I'm supposed to do that?

DAD: I'm a ghost. It's a miracle you're able to communicate with me at all. And now you want the secrets of the netherworld?

PETE: Well, yeah, because...

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(DAD stands and throws the sheet back over his face.)

DAD: Gnooooomes!

PETE: Dad! Take off that sheet!

DAD: Gnooooomes!

PETE: Dad! Come back here!

DAD: Gnooooomes! *(DAD exits.)*

PETE: Why do you keep saying that? What is it you're trying to tell me?

DAD: *(offstage)* Gnoomes!

PETE: Will you stop saying, "gnomes?" Will you just tell me...wait a minute. Dad! I think I got it! Dad! Where are you? Dad!

(Enter LARS, riding a skateboard, skating around PETE.)

LARS: If I were you, little bro, I'd go into professional skateboarding.

PETE: Professional skateboarding?

(LARS stops skateboarding, stands by PETE.)

LARS: Totally, dude. Like, I've been skating professionally for over a year now, and I tell you, I'm living the dream, man. I'm living the dream.

PETE: You can make money skateboarding?

LARS: Not just money. Big money, dude. Like last year, I made almost \$200.

PETE: Who pays you this money?

LARS: People who watch me skate, man. I go down to Hyde Park, you know, where all the tourist dudes hang out, and like, I put out a box to collect money.

PETE: They just throw money in a box.

LARS: Totally. And not just pennies and nickels. I'm talking big money, like quarters. And once in a while someone throws in a Sacagawea dollar, which so totally awesome, because that's one of the coolest words there is. Sacagawea. Sacagawea. Say it.

PETE: Sacagawea.

LARS: Totally.

PETE: So you can really live on \$200 a year?

LARS: Totally, dude. I'm living a good life. I got a great place, and I eat all I want.

PETE: You live in Mom and Dad's basement.

LARS: It's not a basement, little bro. It's a basement apartment. Apartment.

PETE: It doesn't even have its own door.

LARS: It so does too, man. My own private entrance.

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PETE: It does? Where?

LARS: Behind the water heater, man. You can squeeze into the crawl space, and if you belly crawl through that, under the house, there's this door that goes to the outside, right next to the garden hose.

PETE: That door's two feet high, tops.

LARS: Yeah, dude. It's like a little Hobbit door. Sometimes, I pretend I share the space with Mom's garden gnomes. It's totally awesome. Like my skateboarding career. And that's what I would do...

PETE: Professional skateboarding?

LARS: That's what I would do, if I were you.

(LARS exits skating. Enter JORDAN, who sits at a table.)

JORDAN: If I were you, I'd go to vo-tech school.

PETE: Jordan! My good friend. Aren't we planning to go to Montana? Climb mountains? Go skiing?

JORDAN: Yeah, we talked about that. But you gotta think about getting trained, too. Vo-tech school, my friend.

PETE: That doesn't sound too bad. But what would I study?

JORDAN: Study to be a Septic Tank Technician.

PETE: What?

JORDAN: You know what a septic tank is, right?

PETE: Yeah...

JORDAN: Let's just say nobody wants to do anything technical with a septic tank.

PETE: You want to spend the rest of your life in a septic tank?

JORDAN: It's a job, dude. And a good paying one. In one year I'll be pulling in the bucks while our other classmates will be stuck in law school, eating ramen noodles.

PETE: But septic tanks?

JORDAN: There are other vo-tech programs, too. If I were you, I'd check it out.

PETE: So no Montana?

JORDAN: Septic classes start the week after graduation. If I were you, I'd go there with me, instead of Montana.

(Exit JORDAN. Enter GUIDANCE COUNSELOR. SHE sits down with a pile of papers, begins sorting.)

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Well, I guessed I messed up.

PETE: With what?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Apparently I'm not allowed to tell students to drop out of school.

PETE: It did seem odd.

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GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: It goes against our mission statement, or something.

PETE: So now you want me to stay in school.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Yeah, yeah. Look, I'm supposed to help you find your career path, or whatever.

PETE: What do you suggest?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: What?

PETE: What would you do, if you were me?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Why do I have to have all the answers? What makes me an expert on what's best for kids? Six years of college? Pshhh.

PETE: So...

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I don't know. Go to college. Join the army. Learn a trade. Don't do drugs. Make someone's day. Take the challenge. Perform random acts of kindness.

PETE: You're not making sense.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: My life is just one cliché after another.

PETE: So what do I do?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: How am I supposed to know that? Do I even know you? I meet with you once a year for five minutes. I can tell you your standardized test scores, your GPA, your ethnicity, the drugs you've been prescribed to take, but I have no idea what you really want.

PETE: Then you can't help me.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Oh, I'll help you. It's my job. Once upon a time, it was my passion. What happened?

PETE: Um...

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Don't answer that. Do you have anything for me to go on? Any dreams?

PETE: My friend and I were going to Montana. You know, hang out in the mountains, do some climbing. But I guess that fell through.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Montana?

PETE: Yeah.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Huh.

PETE: Why? Do you have something?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: What? No. Climb mountains in Montana? Seriously. That's not much to go on. If I were you...

PETE: Yes?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Nope. Still got nothing. Come back tomorrow.

PETE: And you'll have a plan?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I doubt it. I'm just going through the motions. I'm supposed to meet all the seniors three times. Usually I'm done by November.

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PETE: It's May.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Now you're sounding like my principal.

DAD: (*offstage*) Gnooooooooomes.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: That sounds like a ghost. I'm getting out of here.

PETE: It's just my dad. He thinks he's a ghost.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: That still sounds like enough reason to leave. I'm gone.

(*GUIDANCE COUNSELOR gathers papers and exits. Enter DAD, still wearing sheet.*)

DAD: Gnooooooooomes!

PETE: Dad!

DAD: (*lifting sheet*) Oh hey, Pistol Pete.

PETE: What is it? What ghostly message from beyond do you have for me now? Still need me to avenge your death?

DAD: I need you to mow the lawn. I'd do it, but I'm a ghost. Plus I wrecked the riding mower.

PETE: Sure, Dad. No problem. Anything else?

DAD: No problem? No arguing? No "I don't have time. I'm tired. I'll do it later?"

PETE: That's Lars. I never mind mowing.

DAD: That's true. You never complain about mowing.

PETE: Do you want me to change the oil? Maybe sharpen the blade?

DAD: Um...I guess so. You know what I really need done is that brush out back. And that tree stump. But the chainsaw is broken.

PETE: No it's not.

DAD: It's not?

PETE: I fixed it a couple of weeks ago.

DAD: You fixed it?

PETE: It was no big deal. I took it apart, cleaned it, put a new sparkplug on it. Runs great now.

DAD: You've always been good with that kind of thing.

PETE: I guess. It's easy.

DAD: You're like an idiot savant with small engines.

PETE: Did you just call me an idiot?

DAD: I have to go. Need to go walk the haunted spectrum, or something like that. It's a ghost thing.

PETE: Okay...

DAD: Thanks for mowing the lawn.

PETE: Sure.

DAD: And don't forget to avenge my death! (*DAD exits.*)

What Would You Do? (If You Were Me) – Page 17

PETE: I was hoping he'd forget that. I still don't know what he means.
The lawn I can mow. I mow lawns all the time. But avenge a death?

(DELORES enters.)

PETE: What would you do, if you were me?

DELORES: If I were you...

(Enter MR. BAUMER. DELORES exits. MR. BAUMER sits at a table and begins polishing a small mechanical part, like a lawnmower carburetor.)

MR. BAUMER: If I were you, I'd take Advanced Small Engines.

PETE: What?

MR. BAUMER: Advanced Small Engines. You took Beginning Small Engines, right?

PETE: When I was a sophomore.

MR. BAUMER: So now you take Advanced.

PETE: When am I supposed to do that?

MR. BAUMER: Next semester would make sense.

PETE: But I'm a graduating senior.

MR. BAUMER: That's not what I heard.

PETE: Even so, it doesn't matter. I'm not coming back.

MR. BAUMER: That's a shame. It would have been nice to see you in Advanced Small Engines.

PETE: When I took the beginning class, you acted like you hated me.

MR. BAUMER: That's not true.

PETE: You always yelled at me.

MR. BAUMER: You never listened.

PETE: You poured water on my head.

MR. BAUMER: You kept falling asleep.

PETE: You put duct tape on my mouth.

MR. BAUMER: You wouldn't stop talking.

PETE: So why do you want me in your class?

MR. BAUMER: Because you have a knack for small engines. You were always two, three lessons ahead of everyone else. I barely had to explain things to you and you got it. Everyone else had to rebuild one lawnmower for a final. You did three. Of course, two you did for your friends so they didn't have to do it, but that's not the point.

PETE: It was easy.

MR. BAUMER: That's why you should've taken the advanced class.

PETE: But you hated...okay, I was a punk in class.

MR. BAUMER: I'd have straightened you out, sooner or later. If I were you, I'd still think about Advanced Small Engines.

What Would You Do? (If You Were Me) – Page 18

PETE: Too late now.

MR. BAUMER: It's never too late. *(MR. BAUMER exits.)*

PETE: What do you mean, it's never too late? Am I really flunking high school? Am I coming back next year? Could I actually endure the shame of repeating my senior year? Delores? What would you do?

(DELORES enters.)

DELORES: If I were you...

(Enter AUNT SHELBY.)

AUNT SHELBY: If I were you I'd march RIGHT ON DOWN to MEGAMART, GO to the SERVICE DESK and GET YOURSELF AN APPLICATION!

(DELORES shrugs and leaves.)

PETE: What would I do at Megamart?

AUNT SHELBY: You do WHAT I DID! You GATHER CARTS IN THE PARKING LOT!

PETE: Sounds like a boring job.

AUNT SHELBY: BORING? BORING? My young nephew, you haven't LIVED until you've PUSHED A TRAIN OF FIFTY SHOPPING CARTS ACROSS AN ICY PARKING LOT! You haven't FELT LIFE until you've CHASED A RUNAWAY CART, ROLLING DOWN THE DOWNHILL SIDE OF THE PARKING LOT! You haven't EXPERIENCED A TRUE RUSH until some soccer mom BACKS INTO YOU WITH HER SUV, CRUSHING YOUR PELVIS!

PETE: Seriously. Why would I want that job?

AUNT SHELBY: Because MEGAMART doesn't care if you have a high school education. MEGAMART only cares about LOYAL WORKERS who will PLEDGE THEIR LIFE to the company.

PETE: But you got run over in the parking lot.

AUNT SHELBY: TRUE! But EVEN THOUGH I was hospitalized for THIRTY DAYS, MEGAMART REWARDED my LOYALTY and KEPT MY JOB WAITING!

PETE: So you're still pushing carts?

AUNT SHELBY: HEAVENS NO! My hip doesn't move so well now. But MEGAMART gave me the NEXT BEST JOB IN THE STORE!

PETE: What's that?

AUNT SHELBY: GREETER! EVERY TIME someone shops at MEGAMART, who's the FIRST FACE THEY SEE?

PETE: You?

What Would You Do? (If You Were Me) – Page 19

AUNT SHELBY: ME! (*SHE talks to invisible customers.*) WELCOME TO MEGAMART! WELCOME TO MEGAMART! WOULD YOU LIKE A SMILEY FACE STICKER, LITTLE GIRL? WELCOME TO MEGAMART! EXCUSE ME SIR, IS THAT A RETURN? THEN YOU NEED THIS BIG ORANGE TAPE ON YOUR BAG! WELCOME TO MEGAMART! I'M SORRY SIR, BUT YOU MUST WEAR A SHIRT IN THE STORE!

PETE: I don't know, Aunt Shelby.

AUNT SHELBY: If I were you, I wouldn't bother finishing school. I never did! WELCOME TO MEGAMART! WELCOME TO MEGAMART! SIR! ONLY THE ELDERLY AND PREGNANT MOMS ARE ALLOWED TO USE THE SCOOTER CARTS! COME BACK HERE!

(*AUNT SHELBY exits. DELORES enters.*)

DELORES: I wish I loved my job like she does. And if I were you...

(*Enter MOM. DELORES exits.*)

MOM: If I were you, I'd bring down all the laundry from your room.

PETE: I did that yesterday.

MOM: You did? Then why am I missing a sheet?

PETE: Dad's got it.

MOM: What?

PETE: He's wearing it. It's part of his ghost thing.

MOM: Oh for crying out loud. What is his problem?

PETE: He says disappointment killed him.

MOM: He wants to talk about disappointment? Talk about a husband who destroys a family heirloom and then blames his sons.

PETE: I think it really bothers him. He keeps shouting, "Gnooooooomes."

MOM: Well, it should bother him. I hope it bothers him a lot.

PETE: So you can forgive him?

MOM: No, I can't forgive him. He destroyed Mr. Mordecai and denies the whole thing. Let him suffer in eternity.

PETE: What if I can fix it?

MOM: Fix Mr. Mordecai or fix the relationship?

PETE: I don't know. Both?

MOM: I threw the gnome in the trash. As for your dad, I wish I could do the same.

PETE: I really think he's sorry.

MOM: Then he can tell me that. And he can bring back my sheet. And he can buy me a thousand gnomes, but he cannot replace Mr. Mordecai.

What Would You Do? (If You Were Me) – Page 20

PETE: I'll see what I can do.

(MOM exits. Enter DAD from the opposite side.)

DAD: If I were you, I'd perform an exorcism.

PETE: What are you talking about, Dad?

DAD: There's some sort of spirit in our backyard. I need you to get rid of it.

PETE: Like a ghost?

DAD: I'm the only ghost around here. And there's only room for one supernatural entity on our lot. So get rid of it.

PETE: What exactly is this spirit?

DAD: It lives in the old tree stump. The one near the fence. It has this spooky face that sticks out of the stump and stares at you. It freaks me out.

PETE: The tree stump?

DAD: Yeah. Get a priest or something. Burn some incense.

PETE: Does this spirit look like a wizard?

DAD: A wizard...

PETE: Yeah. Like an old wizard, with long hair and a beard.

DAD: As a matter of fact, it does. How did you know?

PETE: Because I made that guy.

DAD: What?

PETE: I made it. I carved it in the stump.

DAD: What are you talking about?

PETE: I was clearing brush for you last week. Remember? I got bored, took the chainsaw and carved the wizard dude in the tree stump.

DAD: You did that?

PETE: Yeah. But if you don't like it...

DAD: No! I like it. I mean, now that I know it's not some creepy tree sprite. You really did that? Because it's like, really good.

PETE: Thanks.

DAD: I had no idea you had that kind of talent.

PETE: It was nothing, Dad.

DAD: It was something. It was definitely something. *(DAD exits.)*

DELORES: Hey. He didn't do that creepy ghost cry.

PETE: He didn't, did he? So what should I do now?

DELORES: If I were you...

(GUIDANCE COUNSELOR enters, sits at a table. DELORES exits.)

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: If I were you, I'd come sit down. Pay your friendly guidance counselor a visit.

PETE: You want to see me? Again?

What Would You Do? (If You Were Me) – Page 21

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I have to, remember?

PETE: Oh yeah. Each senior, three times.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Right. Anyway, I was looking at some Montana schools...

PETE: Why?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Didn't you say you wanted to go to Montana?

PETE: Yeah. You remembered that?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I made a note. And there are plenty of schools in Montana.

PETE: I'm not sure I'm cut out for college.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: (*getting notes from her bag*) I thought of that. So I got to looking at your grades and your test scores.

PETE: Not pretty, huh?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: No, but grades aren't everything. Your vocational test scores are interesting.

PETE: Really. How so?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Well, you're not likely to be a doctor or a lawyer.

PETE: I could have told you that without the test.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: But you're very mechanical.

PETE: Yeah?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: And artistic. Interesting combination.

PETE: Okay.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: And you seem like a hard worker.

PETE: You can tell that from a test?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: No, but I've seen you all over town mowing lawns. You mow my neighbor's lawn, all 2 acres of it.

PETE: The Randall's?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Yeah. One day I watched you take apart their weed eater and put it back together again.

PETE: The pull cord broke. I put a new one in.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Mr. Baumer said you were good with small engines. And Ms. Marley, the art teacher, said you had an artistic soul.

PETE: You talked to teachers about me?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I'm just trying to find something for you.

PETE: I thought you hated your job.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I get weary from time to time. But once in awhile, I get some diamond in the rough that makes it worthwhile.

PETE: I'm a diamond in the rough?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I never said that.

PETE: But...

What Would You Do? (If You Were Me) – Page 22

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Here. Take these pamphlets. (*SHE hands PETE a stack of pamphlets.*)

PETE: What are they? (*HE sets down his menu to take the pamphlets.*)

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Every school you could think of in Montana. If I were you, I'd look through them all. See if something strikes a chord.

PETE: I thought I wasn't going to graduate.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I looked into that, too. You almost have enough credits. National Government is the only class you have to pass.

PETE: Mrs. Bergeron is insane. You wouldn't believe the stuff you have to memorize in that class.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: She might be insane, but she stands between you and a diploma.

PETE: But I'm way too far behind in that class. I only have three weeks.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: That's true. You won't make it in three weeks.

PETE: And your point is...

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Mrs. Bergeron teaches summer school...

PETE: Summer school? No way!

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: Will you just listen? Mrs. Bergeron thought if you worked hard...REALLY hard, you could probably finish your work a week or two into the summer. She'd even pass you conditionally, so you could walk at graduation.

PETE: She'd do that?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: She's insane, but she's not an ogre.

PETE: Two weeks of summer? I guess. (*HE looks through the pamphlets.*) You're not going to suggest one?

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I can pick out a diamond in the rough, but I can't polish it.

PETE: That sounds really weird.

GUIDANCE COUNSELOR: I've been a guidance counselor a very long time.

(GUIDANCE COUNSELOR exits. Enter MS. MARLEY, who sets candles on floor center stage, lights them and sits in the lotus position in the middle of the candles.)

PETE: This is a lot of stuff to go through. It's a lot of stuff to read. How am I going to get through all of this? How am I going to make any decisions?

MS. MARLEY: If I were you, I'd take a deep breath.

PETE: Ms. Marley?

MS. MARLEY: In with the good air, out with the bad.

What Would You Do? (If You Were Me) – Page 23

PETE: What's with the candles?

MS. MARLEY: Aromatherapy. Sit down.

(PETE sits near her, probably not in the lotus position.)

PETE: What are you doing?

MS. MARLEY: I'm seeking my artistic self. Do you want to seek your artistic self?

PETE: I don't know what that means.

MS. MARLEY: You're a very creative soul, Pete. I can see that in my class.

PETE: You can?

MS. MARLEY: Most students make copies. I show them what to make –a painting, a pot, papier mache –and they copy what I do. They're nothing but Xerox machines.

PETE: Is that bad?

MS. MARLEY: Not if you want a grade. You, however, are not in search of a grade. You are in search of your artistic soul.

PETE: Are you allowed to say these things? Because I gotta say, it sounds a little religious.

MS. MARLEY: Eight to three I teach primary colors. Off the clock, I help students like you find their ar...

PETE: Artistic soul. You said that.

MS. MARLEY: Smell this candle. What does it make you think of?

PETE: *(sniffing)* I don't know. The forest?

MS. MARLEY: What kind of forest?

PETE: A forest with...trees?

MS. MARLEY: Oh come on. You're an artist! You can do better. Close your eyes.

PETE: It's very weird to have a teacher talk like this.

MS. MARLEY: I'm an art teacher. I'm allowed. Now close your eyes. Breathe deep. What do you smell?

PETE: A forest. A forest thick with trees. Old trees. A forest that's never been harvested, the trees centuries old.

MS. MARLEY: This is great! Take another breath. In with the good air. Clear your mind. What do you see?

PETE: I see...darkness.

MS. MARLEY: Go deeper.

PETE: Darkness in the forest.

MS. MARLEY: Keep going!

PETE: And out of the forest...out of the forest...

MS. MARLEY: What? What? What comes out of the forest?

PETE: A...a gnome.

MS. MARLEY: A what?

What Would You Do? (If You Were Me) – Page 24

PETE: A gnome. A small, bearded gnome.

MS. MARLEY: A gnome. Wow. What do you think that means?

PETE: How should I know? You're the spiritual guide.

MS. MARLEY: I can only tell you so much. It's like the primary colors. I can teach red, yellow and blue, but I can't help you paint Mona Lisa.

PETE: Everyone's been speaking in riddles lately.

MS. MARLEY: What?

PETE: I don't know. I'm just trying to figure out what to do with my life. I don't know how to make sense of a gnome in the forest.

MS. MARLEY: Okay. Let me try to help. It's the least I could do. You were always one of my favorite students.

PETE: But I got a D in your class.

MS. MARLEY: Shhh. Let me try this candle. (*SHE breathes deep, inhaling aroma.*) Okay. I'm getting something.

PETE: What is it?

MS. MARLEY: It's...it's a message.

PETE: A message? From who?

MS. MARLEY: From...from the gnome.

PETE: You're kidding.

MS. MARLEY: Do you want help or not?

PETE: Sorry. Go on.

MS. MARLEY: (*breathing deeply, focusing*) Yes...yes. Uh-uh. I understand.

PETE: What is it?

MS. MARLEY: He says, "Any chainsaw can cut, but your chainsaw can heal."

PETE: Any chainsaw can cut, but your chainsaw can heal.

MS. MARLEY: Right.

PETE: What am I supposed to do with that?

MS. MARLEY: I don't know. Sounds like gibberish to me. But maybe...

(*DELORES enters.*)

DELORES: Hey! You can't burn candles in my café. You're covering up the smell of the grease.

MS. MARLEY: (*gathering her candles*) I gotta run, Pete. Good luck.

PETE: Wait! I don't know what this means! I don't know what to do! Oh, Delores. What would you do, if you were me?

DELORES: It's closing time.

PETE: Do I have to leave? I got a lot to sort out.

DELORES: Can you lock up?

PETE: Sure...

DELORES: I'm out of here, then. Don't start any fires.

PETE: Thanks, Delores...

(DELORES exits, leaving PETE alone, center stage in darkness.)

PETE: *(speaking to audience)* What would you do, if you were me? What should I do? Should I make everyone happy, or should I make myself happy? My parents expect nothing but want everything. What a dilemma! Is it better to live up to no expectations, like my brother, or take a risk and surprise them all? Maybe I should just take off for the undiscovered country of Montana. What then? Nothing is resolved, is it? I may or may not graduate from high school, my girlfriend says in all probability we're through, finito, and my mom won't speak to my dad because he ran over Mr. Mordecai. What would Mr. Mordecai do? Was that you, Mr. Mordecai, coming to me in a vision? I swear there was something in those candles besides perfume. What did you say, Mr. Mordecai? Are you some sort of prophet gnome with great words of wisdom? "Any chainsaw cuts, but your chainsaw can heal." What the heck does that mean, Mr. Mordecai? Your chainsaw. My chainsaw. I don't have a chainsaw. Just my dad's. Like he's ever used it. He bought it at a garage sale and couldn't get it started. I took the whole thing apart and found it clogged with sawdust. Cleaned it, rebuilt it, got it started. Works great now, but does it heal? Is that what you said, Mr. Mordecai? A chainsaw that heals? It did make me feel better the day the guidance office told I'm not graduating, the same day Megan dumped me, the same day Mom stopped talking to Dad. I was so bummed, I came home and carved the wizard dude into the stump out back. I was covered in sawdust and my ears rang, but I felt great, for awhile. If only I could...if I could just...my chainsaw heals...wait a minute. You know what, Mr. Mordecai? I think...

(MEGAN enters.)

MEGAN: Pete?

PETE: Megan? What are you doing here?

MEGAN: I felt bad...I shouldn't have said...

PETE: We're not breaking up?

MEGAN: No...I mean yes, we're breaking up. It's best, isn't it? You don't know what you're doing; I've got Cornell waiting for me.

PETE: I know what I'm doing.

MEGAN: You do? What?

PETE: I'm following the wise words of Mordecai.

MEGAN: Mordecai? Who's Mordecai?

PETE: Mr. Mordecai. Short fellow. Very wise.

MEGAN: Is he a teacher? What are you talking about?

PETE: He's a teacher of sorts. He was run over by a lawnmower.

What Would You Do? (If You Were Me) – Page 26

MEGAN: What? That's awful! Are you making this up?

PETE: How could I make this up?

MEGAN: You do some strange things sometimes.

PETE: Mr. Mordecai is a gnome.

MEGAN: Like this.

PETE: He came to me in a vision.

MEGAN: Will you stop it?

PETE: He told me, "Any chainsaw can cut, but your chainsaw can heal."

MEGAN: You're saying weird things just to hurt me. You're upset because we broke up, and now you're being weird just to lash out.

PETE: Mr. Mordecai is a prophet. He's going to change my life.

MEGAN: I'm sorry, Pete. I'm really sorry. What do you want me to do? Throw myself into the river and drown?

PETE: Now you're being weird.

MEGAN: I just did what I thought was best.

PETE: It is for the best. You were right. We're going to take very different paths in life. You've been a great friend, but you're going to do great things at Cornell and I'm going to do great at my thing.

MEGAN: Do you know what that thing is?

PETE: I think I do.

MEGAN: Pete... (*SHE crosses to hug him.*) I'm sorry I said you were weird. You're not weird at all, and you've been a great friend to me, too.

DAD: (*offstage*) Gnoooooomes!

MEGAN: What is that?

DAD: Gnooooooomes!

PETE: Just the ghost of my father.

MEGAN: But your father's not....

DAD: Gnoooooomes!

PETE: There's something I need to do. Something very important. And I need to do it now. (*HE embraces her, exits.*)

MEGAN: Pete?

DAD: Gnooooooomes!

MEGAN: Pete! Don't leave me here with a ghost!

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