A Deeply Disturbing Dive into the Family Dynamics of a Teen Rom-Com
(Lights up on what seems to be a kitchen. DAD sits at a dining room table downstage right. RONNIE, his youngest child, a baby, is on his lap. RONNIE should be played by an obviously grown man who is significantly larger than DAD. A note: the father should always speak with a fairly thick, but still understandable regional accent possessed by literally no other characters. It shouldn’t belong to a specific region, maybe vaguely New York/New Jersey, and should not be consistent at all. There are two extra seats at the table. OLIVE, DAD’s teenage daughter, stands behind her chair and puts on a backpack. She is wearing a school uniform. There is a window upstage center. There is a counter with at least one barstool downstage right. The counter should have cabinets that can be opened.)

OLIVE
I can’t believe it’s my last first day at St. Jesus’s Implicitly Religious, Definitely Private And Very Expensive Preparatory School.

(DAD puts down his newspaper.)

DAD
I can’t either, it feels like just yesterday you were toddling around, just learning to talk. You were always such an unreasonably smart kid. You know, your first word was “antidisestablishmentarianism.” Just kidding, it was “ball.”

(He takes an intentional pause as if he is giving the audience a moment to laugh at his joke.)

Do you have everything, sweetheart?

OLIVE
Yes, Dad. For the millionth time, I have everything.

(TREVOR, OLIVE’s best friend since childhood, appears behind the window. He taps on the glass and speaks. He holds a bouquet of roses. It is obvious that he has a huge crush on OLIVE. He is extremely awkward and his voice is constantly cracking.)

TREVOR
Hey, Olive? Are you ready to walk to school with me, something we’ve done every day since kindergarten?

OLIVE
Give me five minutes, Trevor, my best friend and nothing more.
(TREVOR, clearly hurt by OLIVE’s lack of attraction to him, crumples up the roses and disappears again behind the window.)

DAD
I don’t know why you insist on walking to school, I could just drive you two on my way to work at my job that is definitely not mob boss… I gotta drive three hours to go pick up a horse head and your school is right on the way!

(RONNIE perks up, intrigued by the mob boss comment. In a ploy for attention, he decides to rip off a piece of the newspaper. He examines it and eats it. He coughs and spits it out. No one notices or stops him. OLIVE sits down.)

OLIVE
That’s so sweet of you, Dad! But you’re only a tertiary character and Trevor plays a significantly larger role in this story!

DAD
Of course, how could I forget!

(A beat.)

Hey, Olive, have you made up your mind about college yet? You’re running out of time.

OLIVE
Dad, I’ve already told you, most colleges don’t have deadlines for applications! They let you work on them for as long as you want because college essays make really good framing devices!

(OLIVE pauses and sighs.)

And besides, I’m having second thoughts. Trevor and I have always dreamed of going to State University together, as friends, but I think I want to go to the same made-up Ivy League school, Harvarbridgetonford, that my crush of four years is going to.

DAD
Oh, you mean Justin, the most popular, hottest guy at St. J’s Prep? It’s ok for me to acknowledge his hotness because it’s common knowledge that he is incredibly hot, objectively so.

(DAD puts RONNIE on the ground. During the next few lines, RONNIE, still trying to be noticed, begins picking his nose and eating what he picks out. Again, nobody notices or cares.)
OLIVE
He’s also the captain of the football team. Anyway, I’m just not sure how Trevor will react when I tell him I don’t want to go to State University with him.

DAD
You mean because he’s got a crush on you?

(TREVOR appears outside the window again holding a sign that reads “OLIVE, WILL YOU GO TO PROM WITH ME?”)

OLIVE
Ew, Dad! Of course he doesn’t have a crush on me! That would be gross!

(TREVOR, again hurt by OLIVE’s words, rips the sign in half and disappears again.)

DAD
Of course, how could I forget?

(RONNIE has stopped picking his nose. Desperate for attention, he wipes his hand on his shirt and crawls over to the table. He pulls on the tablecloth for a moment before pulling it completely off. He gets himself tangled in it and attempts to free himself to no avail. No one notices. Over the course of the next few lines he continues to struggle with the tablecloth. OLIVE speaks through this.)

OLIVE
God, Justin’s so hot. I can’t wait to be his girlfriend! He doesn’t know I exist yet, but we’re gonna have so much fun together at Harvarbridgetonford.

(Another beat.)

DAD
I don’t know what I’m going to do if you go to college so far away. Olive, would you reconsider going to school closer, with Trevor?

OLIVE
But Dad, why would I want friends when I could have a boyfriend?

TREVOR (offstage)
I could be your boyfriend!
OLIVE
And besides, everyone knows that you have to go to the same made-up Ivy League college that your hot future boyfriend is going to! If I don’t follow my high school crush to college, how will I know he’s not hanging out with hot college girls?

DAD (completely sincere)
I know, that is important.

OLIVE
You’ll still have Ronnie here to keep you company.

(She gestures to RONNIE who has finally gotten himself untangled. He looks up expectantly, waiting for their attention. When they continue to ignore him, he sighs and eyes one of the two barstools sadly.)

DAD
That is true.

(While this is happening, RONNIE has crawled over to one of the barstools and is attempting to climb it.)

Well, it’s settled then, you’re going to Harvarbridgetonford University!

OLIVE
Dad, you know I haven’t gotten in yet.

DAD
I just know you’ll get in! And if they don’t let you in, I’ll just have to make the admissions committee an offer they can’t refuse… But I probably won’t need to because you’re so smart and even though I’ve never once seen you do homework and your essay is full of cliche phrases like, “when life closes one door, it opens another,” and “I had to follow my heart,” they’ll just have to let you in! I heard that colleges love it when your essay reads like the narration of a sappy teen movie.

OLIVE
Me too! I also heard that colleges really just want to hear anecdotes about how crazy my life is. They don’t care about my ambitions or how I’m gonna change the world, they just want to know about that time that Trevor and I painted my room and the hijinks that ensued.
(A beat.)

DAD
You know, your mother would be so proud of you if she were here today and hadn’t died of that extremely vague, yet very terminal illness.

(He sighs. Melancholy orchestral music plays and the entire family and TREVOR, who has reappeared, turn to look at the mother’s empty seat in unison. The music fades and they all go back to what they were doing. TREVOR disappears, only to reappear in the window again, this time wearing protective goggles and headphones.)

TREVOR (loudly)
Hey, Olive! I’m setting up a fireworks display that will spell out your name!

OLIVE
Wow! What a fun thing for a nonsexual friend to do!

(TREVOR, again hurt, rips off his headphones and goggles and disappears again. A beat. The barstool tips over and makes a loud crash. No one seems to notice the noise from the barstool and RONNIE, unharmed and annoyed, crawls over to the cabinets under the counter. He procures a large bottle of wine and plays with it like a toy, looking over at OLIVE and DAD as if daring them to notice him. DAD picks up his newspaper and begins to read aloud.)

DAD

“Double Decker Bus Crashes Into Orphanage.”

OLIVE
Dad, you’re reading it upside down!

(DAD flips his newspaper over)

DAD
Oh! “Puppy Giveaway at the Ice Cream Parlor.” How nice! “Local High Schooler, Justin McHottie, Wins at Football.” Much more realistic. I bet you’re gonna miss all of this real news when you go to your made-up Ivy League school on the East Coast.

(TREVOR appears again behind the window. He is holding a violin, about to serenade OLIVE.)

OLIVE
I sure am! But my college will have large brick buildings covered in ivy and everyone will walk around in sweatshirts with the college’s name on them! I bet I’ll make so many new college-sweatshirt-wearing friends who will be so much cooler than Trevor!

*(TREVOR breaks the violin bow over his knee and starts sobbing as he disappears again.)*

Sounds wonderful! I’ve always wished I went to college.

OLIVE

Really?

DAD

Yeah, I was just too busy mob-bossing at the time.

*(RONNIE’s wine bottle breaks and leaving him in a pool of red wine and broken glass.)*

I mean, working. I was too busy working.

*(TREVOR has appeared again behind the window. He is holding an open ring box as if he is about to propose. OLIVE notices him.)*

OLIVE

Whatcha got there, Trevor?

TREVOR

A ring. For you.

OLIVE

What a cool gift for someone to give to their strictly platonic friend!

TREVOR *(through tears)*

I'll just walk to school by myself.

DAD

Gosh, what’s his problem? I’m not planning to off his father until next week!
(RONNIE, upon hearing this, pulls a loaded gun out of the cabinet. He looks at it for a moment, contemplating his next move. He finally stands up and speaks in a shockingly low voice.)

RONNIE

BANG!

(He mimes shooting the gun. DAD and OLIVE both jump out of their seats.)

That was a test and you all failed. If I had actually fired the gun, you would all be dead by now.

DAD

What the hell?!

RONNIE

Agent Johnny Danger, FBI.

(RONNIE aka Agent Johnny Danger pulls a pair of sunglasses out of his pocket and puts them on a la action hero.)

DAD

Cheezit, it’s the fuzz!

(DAD jumps out the onstage window. There is a glass-breaking sound effect. RONNIE aka Agent Johnny Danger takes a beat before speaking again.)

RONNIE

I was sent here one year ago by the FBI to investigate your father’s work, which is definitely mob boss. At first I was skeptical of my disguise. Wouldn’t they notice if their baby was a fully grown man? But apparently, you all are just too absorbed in your own lives to notice the 6’2” baby in your midst.

OLIVE

But what about the real Ronnie?

RONNIE

There was no real Ronnie, dammit! Your mother died three years ago, “Ronnie” was born last year!

OLIVE (coming to a realization)
Ohh, that explains it.

RONNIE
I have to say, in all my years with the FBI, I have never seen a family as messed up as yours. You act like you’re in a teen romantic-comedy. It’s deeply disturbing and I simply could not sit and watch for any longer. Now that I’ve blown my cover, I’ll have to be reassigned. But before I go, I just have one thing left to say: Olive, how could you not notice that Trevor clearly has feelings for you?! Maybe he’s not as flashy or as objectively hot as Justin (the boy’s hot), but he very obviously has feelings for you.

OLIVE
Oh my goodness. It all makes sense now… the roses, the fireworks, the violin- ohmygod, the ring! Wow, even for a rom-com protagonist, I’m unobservant. How could I have been so blind?

RONNIE (sincerely)
Sometimes the thing you’ve been searching for has been right in front of you the whole time. Go to him.

(A beat.)

Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have a mob boss to catch.

(He too jumps out the window.)

OLIVE
Trevor, I’m coming!

(She jumps out the window. A beat.)

OLIVE (v/o) (ala rom-com narration)
And that’s why I’ll never forget my last first day at St. Jesus’s Implicitly Religious, Definitely Private And Very Expensive Preparatory School. I followed my heart and that’s what mattered…

(A beat.)

...Which is why I believe I would be a perfect fit for Harvarbridgetonford University.

(Blackout. End of play.)