

DEALING WITH LOSS

WILL: Can you keep a secret? Okay. This must be a secret. I think...I think I'm losing my hair. Don't laugh! This isn't funny. There just seems to be more on my brush than before. And the shower drain gets all clogged. Yeah, I know it's gross. *(Pause.)* But don't you see? I'll never be – you know . . . loved. Who wants to date a guy who's bald by the time they're sixteen? That's right, no one. At least, no one cute that is. I'll have to end up dating Maggie Millhouse. Just thinking of it makes me sick. . . *(Pause)*

Shut up! This is serious. Prom is coming up. What if I'm bald by then? Dude, my chances are already slim of getting a good date. Now I'm in serious jeopardy. And college? Forget about it. I won't make any friends. I'll be that guy that wears hats everywhere, no matter what. Stocking caps indoors, baseball hats at weddings. Who does that? I know. Bald guys. I'll go right from being sixteen to forty, thinking about rules and how many miles per gallon my car gets . . . Next thing you'll know I'll be that old guy that's meeting other grandpas for coffee at the gas station and yelling at kids to stay off my lawn.

What do you mean, Rogaine? *(Pause.)* I own you about a million! Wait – what if it doesn't work? What if it just turns my hair a weird color or there's some side effect that makes my tongue purple? What if it's even worse than being bald in the first place? W . . . Wait! Where are you going?

HOLLYWOOD, HERE I COME

MILES: Excuse me; we're filming here. If you absolutely must walk in front of our cameras, could you at least pretend you're zombies? Please, I may be a kid, but so were all the famous directors once in their lives. We all have to start somewhere. Please, please will anyone listen to me? I just need you to not walk in this little tiny area here while we film for, like, ten minutes. This is not too much to ask! Please, stop! Just walk around us. Please!

This is my fourth film. I am not an amateur! I demand respect! I am one or two steps from making it into the big time, but it'll never happen with people like you ruining my scenes, so would you please move!

(Pause) Finally, I never thought we'd finish shooting today . . . okay. Actors! Places. We're all clear. And . . . action! Yes, you walk in, zombie-like, and . . .

Oh my goodness! I'm ruined. Ruined! You people are killing me! All I ask for is a little peace and quiet and you all act like this isn't a big deal. I don't walk into your office and jump all over your desks. So why are you trampling over mine! I'm only seventeen and I am now having a heart attack and my ulcer is bleeding! Just know that the next brilliant movie director is dying on this sidewalk just because you clowns can't keep from walking on this tiny bit of sidewalk for five minutes!

Oh, sure... Now you stand there all still and zombie-like. Why couldn't you do that when we're filming?!

TRYING TO BE BAD

SEAN: I'm just too nice. No one likes a nice guy. I try to be bad, to be a rebel. It never quite works. I stole a book from Barnes and Noble. It wasn't even that hard really. I really felt that adrenaline rush, ya know? Felt like I was finally living life on the wild side. But do you know what happened next? My mother found it, read it and said it changed her life. For the better. She became less stressed out and actually started *laughing*. I hadn't heard her laugh in years. She *thanked* me. *(Pause.)* I don't know what book it was. I didn't even look at it. I just wanted to get out of the building. I think it was some Dr. Phil book.

Then I told Jim Raymond he could bite me. So what does he do? He bites me! Hard! Who does that? *(Pause.)* Yeah, I cried. So would you. But I stood up to him; told him what I thought of him. And guess what? Not one girl came over and told me how brave I was. How come no one's flirting with me? No girl is twisting her hair around her finger or giggling when they see me. I tell you, women are a mystery.

As a last resort, I bought this leather jacket. *(Pause.)* Yeah, it is cool, isn't it. But know what Lisa said to me? She said I looked cute. I said, "Cute?" thinking maybe this was a good thing. Then she goes, "Yeah, sweet. Like you're wearing your dad's clothes." I was like, "Excuse me?" Can you believe it? I give up. Girls aren't worth the trouble.

WASH CYCLE

ADAM: Hey Erin, how's it going? *(Pause.)*

There's nothing wrong with me—Geez, can't I even say hi to my own sister if I want to? *(Pause.)*

Listen...I've been meaning to tell you...I had a slight problem the other day when Mom asked me to do the laundry. She should never ask a man to do a woman's job so what can you expect, right?

(Big pause. Adam tries to avoid telling the story.)

Huh? Oh yeah...well, what happened was there was already a sweater in the machine. YOUR sweater. And I didn't notice it—I just threw a bunch of stuff in and ... well ... it's not really my fault that your sweater shrank to the size of a Barbie doll! You should take more responsibility and not leave your clothes laying around in the washing machine where they are very likely to shrink if they get wet! *(Pause.)*

Hey, stop yelling at me! You wouldn't have even noticed if I hadn't told you—you would have looked pretty funny wearing that sweater, but you wouldn't have known. *(Pause.)*

Okay, okay. I'm sorry. Next time I'll check first. *(Pause.)* Wait a minute! Next time YOU do the laundry. I'll do something more manly—like take out the trash. *(Pause.)*

I'm not buying you a new sweater. Forget it, Erin—if you want a new sweater get Mom to buy it—it's really her fault anyway—she should've never made me do the laundry in the first place. I *hate* doing laundry. It sucks!

NOT SO SILENT SLEEPER

EDDIE: Hey man. So . . . looks like you didn't get much sleep last night, huh? *(Pause)* Yeah, I could tell. The whole class could tell, actually. Um . . . I'm not sure how to tell you this. But you knew you were sleeping in class right? *(Pause.)* Well, you must have been really tired this morning, man, 'cause you *really* fell asleep in class. I mean, *really* fell asleep. *(Pause.)*

Yeah, I know you sleep all the time in class, and it's not that big of a deal for you. Even the teachers have gotten use to it. I don't understand that part of it. I wish I had the guts to sleep in class. But today, you were really . . . how do I put this? Entertaining? You starting making a whole lot of noise . . . *(Pause.)*

No...no you weren't *snoring*. The noise was coming from another area—the opposite end if ya know what I mean. The back and not the front . . . Musta been that bean burrito you ate for breakfast, but you were passing gas all over the place. *(Pause.)*

I am *not* lying—you were playin' songs, dude. And they were LOUD! Mr. Anderson was trying to ignore you, but everyone heard it—including Allison Griffin, who was definitely disgusted. I think she got a whiff of your scent. So you should probably forget about asking her out now—I don't think she's interested in a guy with such an *explosive* personality.

NO NEEDLES, PLEASE

SIMON: Look, I know I said I wanted my eyebrow pierced, but isn't there an easier way to do this? I'm not at all that thrilled with needles . . . never did too well at the doctor's office—I even refuse to get a flu shot—so can we look at some other options? Isn't there something we can just glue on that will make it look like it's pierced? *(Pause)*

Why am I doing this in the first place? I want to change my image—I need to look more cutting edge 'cause I'm in this band now, see? We just booked our first gig last night. Going to be playing this weekend. So I need this done before then. Some of the other guys have piercings and my bass player is so tattooed you can't even see skin—but I could never do that. I figure the eyebrow thing wouldn't hurt too much. But just now, when you pinched me there, I felt a little faint. Oh...I can handle pain, but I don't know if I can go through with this.

Everyone I know has some part of their body pierced, and I really like the way the eyebrow piercing looks. I figured how hard could it be? I mean, women bear children for crying out loud! I could certainly have a little hoop in my brow.

I can't believe I'm so nervous. I mean, I really am a lightweight, huh? You're not going to tell anyone about this, are you? No one is gonna hear about how nervous I was...

Ok. Be a Nike commercial. Just do it.

Oh God. Oh God. Oh God. *(Pause).*

Hey, that didn't hurt at all. I look pretty sweet, right?

AN OLDIE BUT A GOODIE

BEN: Carter...psst...hey Carter...come here. I want to show you something. *(points)* See that girl there? *(Pause)*. Right there! In the purple stretchy top ... on the treadmill right in front of us! *(Pause)*.

Yeah, her. What a body, right? I've been checkin' her out for awhile now. But I've only seen her from the back. Nice view, if you know what I mean. As soon as I'm done here, I'm gonna go swing by and check out the front end and maybe make my move. Watch me, Carter. Watch and learn. Nothin' better than picking up a girl at the gym. *(Pause)*.

Oh look, she's done. She's getting off the treadmill. I hope she doesn't leave before I get the chance to . . . *(suddenly look disgusted)*.

Holy cow, Carter! Look at her! Look at that face! Can you believe it? She's like sixty years old. How can she look so good from behind and then have a face like that? That's just cruel. *(Pause)*.

I am *not* into old ladies now. You thought she was hot too...before you saw her face. *(Pause)*

But Carter...ya know what? If you block out the face and look at the rest of her . . . she's not so bad. I mean, she's got a hot bod.

(Realizes what he just said). Oh geez! What am I saying? She could be my grandmother. Ughh! I'm making myself sick.

SUPERHEROES

ANDY: I don't understand your argument here. There's nothing to argue. Okay, so you say that Superman is not human. But if he's not human, then why do they call him the "Man of Steel?" We don't call him the "Alien of Steel," do we? He's a man. A *super* man.

The thing that's confusing is that Superman isn't an *earthling*, but that doesn't mean that he can't be human. Because when he lived on Krypton, he was a Kryptonian, which is sort of like an earthling . . . he didn't have any super powers on his home planet, only when he came here. The yellow sun of earth gave him powers, but when he was hangin' at home on Krypton, he was a totally regular guy, like us. His super powers make him a super human. But he's still *human*. Because . . . like . . . he has feeling and stuff like that. Only humans can have emotions. Plus he's in love with that girl, Lois Lane. Only humans can be in love.

Do you get it? Don't you understand? He's human. What's so hard about that? He looks human; he acts human; he probably smells human. That the giveaway right there. Everyone knows that aliens give off this weird odor. *(Pause.)* Are you sure you get it? Because you act like you don't. *(Pause.)*

Cool. Then you agree with me. Good. Okay . . . next topic. What's going on with Batman?

PANTSED

TAYLOR: Hey Mike. See that guy over there? Yeah, the creep in the blue shirt who's stretching? Well, last year he pantsed me on the soccer field when I was stretching just before a game. He pastned me in front of the whole team, and some of the hottest girls saw it. *(Pause.)* It does not matter what underwear I was wearing that day. *(Pause.)* That's just a rumor. I haven't worn superhero underwear since like . . . forever. Come on, who would do that? *(Pause.)*

Anyway, I've been dying to get him back, but never had the chance until now. I can't stand that kid. And I'm gonna embarrass him the way he embarrassed me. Revenge is sweet. *(Pause.)*

What am I going to do? Well, I'm just gonna wander innocently over there and make it look like I'm stretching too. And then when he least expects it, I'll streak across the field and pull down his girly little gym shorts. It'll be so sweet! Cover me, okay? Make sure coach isn't looking. Okay, here I go.

(Stretching) Hey man, how's it going? *(Looking up.)* Wait . . . where did he go?

(Looking behind him.) Hey—hey! What are you doing?

(Looking down and realizing he was pantsed again.) Oh man! He did it AGAIN! Okay . . . now this is truly war. Where did he go? I swear I'm going to get that kid.

(Pulling up his pants.) Geez, that kid is good. How did he do that so fast?

THE CHALLENGE

MAX: Okay, Owen, I'll accept your skateboarding challenge. You may be good, but I doubt you can compete with me. I've been doing stunts since I was a baby. So what's the bet? *(Pause.)*

Twenty bucks? Really? Okay. No sweat. And what's the challenge? *(Pause.)*

Say what? Whoever pulls a varial flip to a dark slide on the first try wins the money? A varial flip to a dark slide? *(Pause.)*

(Trying to act cool and play it off) Yes. Of course I know what that is. Everyone knows what that is. I can do it in my sleep. I was just practicing those the other day. Got it down, Owen. You really picked a bad move there . . . *(Pause.)*

Oh, you'd rather do a heel flip to a front side manual? Um. . . uh . . . either one . . . makes no difference to me. That's just as easy as the var . . . dark side . . . um . . . that other one. It's gonna be easy money.

Um . . . maybe you should go first, Owen. I think that's the fair thing to do. Or do you want to take some time to practice? Maybe we should do that. Let's go practice and meet back here in one hour, okay? And he who doesn't show up, forfeits. See ya in an hour, buddy.

(Pauses as he watches Owen leave. Then speaks to a friend.) Hey Gabe, do you have twenty bucks? Because I have no idea what a varial flip or a front side manual is and there is no way I'm going to be here when Owen gets back.

LOOK OUT BELOW

AARON: Dude, stop poking me in the head. I'm trying to study here. *(Pause.)*

You *are* too! You're flicking me or something; I can feel it. *(Pause.)*

I said cut it out. I'm not kidding, Paul. You're totally bugging me. *(Pause.)*

You're not? What do you mean you haven't done anything? *(Pause.)* You swear? Then what's going on?

(Runs hand through his hair and then examines what he finds.) Oh no . . . no . . . there's something all soft and mushy in my hair. Please don't let it be what I think it is. *(Looks at his hand.)* Oh for crying out loud! It is! It's bird crap!

(Looking up.) Look – way up there! That stupid bird is having stomach problems, and my head is his toilet. This is disgusting. Can you get it out of my hair, Paul? I have two more classes left today and I can't walk around with this feces on me! *(Pause.)*

Don't be such a girl about it; just get it out with a leaf or something. I don't' have time to go home; I've got a test next period. Just do it . . . *please.* *(Pause.)*

There's more? Oh man, where? Geez, now it's all over my shirt. What? Do I have a bull's eye on me or something? This is definitely the last time I study under a tree.

THE CAR ACCIDENT

MARK: Look, buddy—this was soooo your fault. You came outta nowhere. If you're gonna drive like that, you better watch where you're going. *(Pause.)*

Look what you did to my car! *(Pause.)*

It is *so* my car! ...well, actually, I's my dad's car—but you smashed it! *(Pause.)*

Yes, you did. YOU hit ME! *(Pause.)*

Oh, I see how it's gonna be—my word against yours, right? No witnesses so it's my word against yours. Well then YOU can call my dad and explain to him what happened. *(Starts getting frustrated.)*

Let's see how calm you are after talking to him, after he rips *you* a new one, after he tells *you* what a moron you are, after he makes *you* pay for all the damages! *(Pause.)*

Yeah, man, he's gonna freak and if he finds out this was my fault in any way, he'll never let me get behind the wheel of a car again.

Look, I know you don't know me at all, but I'm a good kid, and if we can just work something out here you'd be helping out the youth of America . . . the future of this country . . . that's gotta feel good, right? *(Pause.)*

Your car has no damages at all! Can you be generous for once in your life? *(Pause.)*

Fine—report it—collect the twenty-five dollars it will cost to fix your car. And enjoy reading about my death in tomorrow's paper, because my dad is going to kill me!

MIDLIFE CRISIS

JACOB: My dad bought a motorcycle. A Harley. *(Pause.)* No, it is not cool. It's embarrassing. He's totally having a midlife crisis. He puts on the whole costume. He puts on his leather chaps and leather jacket and boots—he's trying to look like some dude from Hell's Angels, but what he really looks like is an idiot. I was walking home with Kara and she goes, "Hey, isn't that your dad. I think that's your dad." Then he stops and says, "Hey Kara, how do you like my hog?" And he was flirting with her. It was disgusting. *(Pause.)*

Yeah, I suppose I'll inherit the thing eventually, though I totally doubt my mom will ever let me ride it. She has major fits every time Dad rides it. I guess she thinks he's gonna crash it, but seriously, I think he just drives around the neighborhood. I don't think he ever goes anywhere on it—I think he's too chicken to take it on the freeway—he just wants to look cool in front of the neighbors.

I swear I hope I don't get like that when I'm his age. Next thing you know, he'll be getting a tattoo that says, "Born to Be Wild." It's just so pathetic. He needs to grow up. Why didn't he just do all this crazy stuff twenty years ago when he wouldn't have looked so stupid?!

EXPENSIVE TASTE

BRIAN: Come on, Jeff, you said, and I quote, "You can wear anything in my closet, bro. Knock yourself out." Well, this came out of your closet, so I'm wearin' it. I've gotta look good tonight or Kimberly will kill me. It's the three-month anniversary of our first date, and she wanted the whole romantic thing, ya know . . . nice dinner . . . I gotta remember to pick up some flowers for her, too. And she specifically said, "You better look nice, Brian."

Now you're telling me there's no way I can wear this sweater? Forget it, I'm wearing it. It's Kim's favorite color, and I have to admit, I think I look pretty hot in it. I mean, look at me. I'd even date myself. *(Pause.)*

Why do you keep saying no, you hypocrite? *(Pause.)*
It cost you how much? *(Pause.)*

Three hundred dollars? Are you out of your mind?!
Who's Ralph Lauren? I've never heard of him . . . you are *insane* to spend three hundred bucks on this . . . what is this anyway? *(Reaches around to read the label.)* Cotton? Only cotton? You spent three hundred dollars on some stupid designer *cotton* sweater?! Man, you are craaaaaazy!

Ok, I won't wear it. I'll probably spill spaghetti sauce all over the thing. *(Pause.)* Hey, what about that black leather jacket in your closet? I'll wear that. Did you spend three paychecks on that? *(Pause.)* How much? *(Pause.)*

Okay, forget it. I'm wearing my own clothes. At least if something happens to it, I know I won't go bankrupt trying to replace it!

MATH TUTOR

ELI: Hey Karen, I couldn't help but overhear you talking to Mr. Jeffreys about needing a tutor and uh...I happen to know a *great* guy who could tutor you. And it wouldn't cost you anything. *(Pause.)* Who? Um...it's uh...it's...me! I could tutor you.

How am I in math? I'm superb in math. Math happens to be my favorite subject. Geometry is such a piece of cake. I'll have you scoring 100's on your tests in no time. You'll be amazed! Your friends will be amazed! Your parents will be amazed! And of course Mr. Jeffreys will be amazed!

(Pause.) Oh, no no no. I'll be doing this out of the kindness of my heart. No money needs to be exchanged. I'm doing this for the math students of America. Math continues to get a bad rap and I will make you see that math is nothing to be feared—you will begin to see the light! Numbers will become your best friend! And then maybe we can be friends too! *(Pause.)*

Oh...uh...sorry. I...um...I guess I got carried away there. But I really can help you—after school, weekends, anytime. *(Pause.)*

Yeah, I'm serious. You don't have to pay me

But...uh...just one favor...if I tutor you and I help you pass geometry—do you think maybe...uh...maybe you'd like to go out with me? *(Pause.)*

Oh, come one...I'm not that much of a geek...

Fine. See if I care! *(Watches her walk away)* And I hope you flunk your next test!

THE SHOPPING TRIP

STEVE: Mom, I am begging you...I will do anything you ask. I'll clean my room every day for the next year; I'll take out the trash and not complain; I'll do my own laundry. Geez mom, I'll even do the dishes until I'm twenty-one!

Just please *do not* make me go into that store with you. PLEASE! *(Pause.)*

Why? Why?! You have to ask why?! I cannot be seen in that store. If anyone sees me, recognizes me—I am a *dead* man! Don't you understand that? Kids at school will be talking about it for years. "Hey, Stevie, saw you picking out some pretty underwear with your mommy." Or "Hey, Steve, didn't know you liked wearing undies with hearts on them!"

Do you really want me to be scarred for the rest of my days? I will never live it down. They'll announce it at my high school graduation:

"Best Victoria's Secret Customer—Steven Wallace."
(Pause.)

You changed your mind? You're not going in? Oh thanks, Mom, really I owe you one. Thank you, thank you, thank you! *(Pause.)*

The Gap? Um...yeah...I think the Gap is cool. I can definitely be seen in the Gap. But Mom, could you walk in first and then I'll come in a little later? 'Cause if I should be seen by anyone I know...you get the picture, don't ya, Mom?

C-EFFORT

TOM: Why did I get a C? I worked really hard on this paper. Really hard it's at least a B paper. You hardly even wrote any comments on it. I have no clue what I did wrong in the first place. What's wrong with it? *(Pause.)*

Well, I'm sorry if this sounds rude, I don't mean to be, but how is that supposed to help me? "It's not as good as some other people's work." How am I supposed to improve with a comment like that? It's not very...constructive. Am I supposed to just read other people's papers before I hand in mine? I'm sorry, but I can't walk away with a grade like this. I stayed up late for three days working on it. I did all the research; I did everything you asked. And I just don't understand why I didn't do better. Where did I go wrong? *(Pause.)*

I *want* to get an A in this class. Can't you give me any more points? Any tips for getting better? I've never gotten a C in my whole life. I was an honor student at my old school. No disrespect intended, but are you *sure* this is a C paper? Maybe you got my paper mixed up with someone else's. This is a really good paper. Could you just give me some more comments? *(Pause.)*

"Go away." Go away?! That's your comment? What a teacher you are. I hate this school. I hate everything. But most of all, I hate that guy who sold me this paper. What a waste of money!

THE HAUNTING

JONATHAN: We can't live here anymore, Mom. *I* can't live here anymore. This place is spooky. Like "House on Haunted Hill" spooky. There are ghosts here. *(Pause.)* I'm serious!

Okay, I've been quiet about this for a few days now. But every night when I try to go to sleep, I hear footsteps in the attic. It's freaking me out. There's no other explanation! Maybe we can get our old house back. Call them now! Maybe we can sue the real estate agency too, for not telling us this place is haunted. Probably some family just like us were massacred, murdered right here. At this dinner table! Probably just eating pork chops and mashed potatoes and then, WHAM! Now they have nothing better to do then to haunt the new residents.

(Pause.) Mom, I'm freaking myself out! But this place just feels wrong. I feel like someone's watching me right now! Is anyone behind me? There's someone behind me, isn't there?

(Pause.) ...Wait...what? Dad's been putting boxes in the attic? Yeah, but has he been doing that at, like, midnight? He has? Oh. Hm....so then, I guess our house isn't haunted. *(Pause.)* Maybe. I still feel like someone's watching me. I swear it! Let's just go back to our old house. It's really the safest thing. Better to be safe than sorry, right?

VIEW FROM THE BENCH

FRED: I can't play this game? *(Pause.)* Why not? Just let me in once. What harm could it do? Why are you laughing? I'm not *that* bad. Am I? *(Pause.)* Wait . . . I'm *that* bad? So bad I could lose the game for the team if I go into the game just *once*? You're saying me just being at the same place as the team could make the team do bad? Why? What have I done to tell you I'm that bad? This whole thing seems a little harsh to me. *(Pause.)*

Oh that. . .well that wasn't my best day ever. I had a lot on my mind. I couldn't possibly think about sports that day. *(Pause.)* What do you mean, "it's important to know the rules?" Have you tried to read them? No one our age could understand these. *(Pause.)* Is everyone laughing *at* me? Why didn't anyone tell me? I had no idea I was a walking disaster area. I mean, I knew I wasn't good, but I didn't know it was *so* incredibly bad.

(Pause.) No, no. Never mind. Don't put me in, coach. I don't want to go in. I'll just embarrass myself in front of my friend and my dad. I'll just sit here. No! I don't want to play anymore. Don't make me play! I'll just warm the bench or something. Give the other guys water when they need it. Unless I can't do *that* right either.

(Pause.) Oh yeah? Well, maybe I *will* join the drama club. I can't be any worse at that, can I? Drama's cool, right? At least I probably won't publicly humiliate myself anyway.

MISTAKE #8,562

GEORGE: Ah, yes. My parents. They are extremely stupid. You wouldn't even believe it. My dad thinks he's always right; and my mom, well she thinks she's always right, too. But the truth is that I'm always right, and they're too dumb to know it. It drives me crazy sometimes. They never let me do anything because they think I'm going to act like a dumb kid. I'm the smartest person I know. Not to mention I have the most common sense. I practically came out of the womb at twenty-five. I'm definitely the most mature person in my family. They should just let me make all the big decisions, because everyone knows it'll be better that whatever they come up with. It's a wonder my parents graduated high school!

(Pause.) Why do you have that weird look on your face? Does it shock you that I talk about my parents like this? It's the truth. They are clueless. They think I'm just some sweet, dumb kid. But I got them eating out of the palm of my hand so bad, it's hilarious! They're so dumb, they couldn't see how dumb they were even if they looked into a mirror. Ha! *(Pause.)* What is it? You look so . . . what? Someone's behind me? Well who . . . Oh . . . Dad . . . *(embarrassed laugh)* How are you today? You're home kinda early, aren't you?

TASTE

NATE: Do you know that when I was a kid I had this thing for eating pencil erasers? I did. Know what else? I still do. It's true. They taste awesome. There are so many things people tell you not to eat that are delicious. You know how there are some people who have to smell everything, like markers? I like to taste things, or I did when I was a kid. And some things are actually good. I mean, why is it normal to eat Cheetos or candy, which have, like, no natural ingredients, and it's not normal to eat paste? Paste is sweet. And Play-Doh is salty. Paper is a little bitter, especially if there's stuff printed on it. And chalk is good too, but it's hard to eat. It's really . . . hard and sort of grainy. You could really have a great meal from just stuff you find in a classroom.

(Pause.) I'm not crazy. Try a pencil eraser. Try it! Go on, it's not going to kill you. I've eaten about a million of them. Probably even a billion. How tough could it be? It's so little but it has so much flavor. You won't regret it, I promise. Just try it.

(Pause.) See? What did I tell you? Awesome, right? It is not gross! Man, you are missing out. You've got to expand your mind a little. You're too predictable. You're missing out. Are you going to live your life eating meats, fruits, and vegetables? Come on. I mean, paste would really blow your mind. Really. It's better than cake. I swear.

HULK

ALEC: *(Loud and aggressive, in a deep voice.)* You better watch your back! The Rooster is going to rearrange your face! Tonight at seven—in my backyard—the fight of the century! The Rooster versus Spider Boy! Not to be missed. There's gonna be blood! He's gonna wish he was never born!

(Pause, then shouting, but in a more normal kid voice.) No, Mom! It's nothing! I'm just practicing! *(Turning to the right.)* How did that sound, Nick? *(Pause)* What's wrong with being the Rooster? I've always been the Rooster. *(Pause)* So what makes me sound tougher? The Hulk? It's been taken. The Blob?! Makes me sound fat. *(Pause)* Chuck is that weird kid in *The Goonies*. Vicious is a name you'd give to a guard dog. This is a pointless conversation. I'm the Rooster. And a rooster can definitely beat a Spider Boy. Please! Roosters can step on spiders . . . or at least peck them to death . . .

(Pause) So do you think people will come watch? The backyard is all set up. We have ropes and mattresses and everything. This is going to be the start of something big for the Rooster. *(Back to wrestler voice.)* The world better look out! The Rooster is coming!!

(Yelling in normal voice) No, Mom! Still just joking around. Everything is okay! Geez!

THE CALL

JACKSON: I'm going to call her. Right now. *(Pause)* No, I'm not scared. It's no big deal. It's not like I've never done this before. I mean, I've done this lots of times . . . Well . . . Three . . . Times. But I'm used to this. I just dial the number, and when she answers, I act all casual and say, "Hey, Brittany. What's up? What to hang out sometime?" I don't need to be more specific than that, right? That would be embarrassing, wouldn't it? If I came out and said, "Want to go out on a date?" Because if I say only "let's hang out" then if she says no, I can be, like, "Ok, fine." And she didn't *really* reject me because I didn't actually say it was a date. So then I can be like, "What's your problem?" if she tells people at school that I asked her out. Because I can be, like, "I didn't ask you out. I asked you to *hang out*. Two totally different things." Right?

(Pause) Yeah. So. I'm going to call. Now. It's going to be cool. Yeah. I think she'll say yes anyway. She'll say yes, right? Yeah. So I'm dialing now. Maybe you should go into the next room. I don't want an audience.

(Picks up the phone. Dials.) Hey Brittany? Hi, this is Jackson. How are you? Oh good, good. So anyway, I was, uh, wondering if you might maybe . . . uh . . . will you be my girlfriend?" *(Hits himself on head)*

MY SISTER'S CONFESSIONS

JOSH: Check it out, Sam—I swiped my sister's diary—thought it might be good for a laugh. I read the first couple of pages but they were pretty boring—let's start at the back. That should be the most recent gossip. Hopefully, her life has gotten more interesting since she started writing in this thing.

(Reading the diary) "The home test was positive. Now I just have to figure out who the father is."

Oh my God, Sam! Jackie's pregnant AND she doesn't know who the father is! Oh man, this is huge!

(Continues reading) "I think I'll keep the kid, I know I can always get Josh to help me with it and Mom and Dad will be supportive."

She's crazy! She's outta her mind! My parents are gonna freak! And where does she get the idea that I'd want to help raise some rugrat?!

(Reading) "And Josh—if you're reading this—none of what I wrote is true—haha! Surprise! This joke's on you! Just keep your filthy paws off my journal, you little creep."

Wow, what a relief. I mean I knew she was joking the entire time. Jackie's not that kind of girl. *(Pause)*.

I swear man . . . I knew it couldn't be true. But what I can't figure out is, how did she know I was reading her diary?