

My Dad was Fifteen Feet Tall (2F, 2M)
by Maxim Vinogradov

CAST (in order of appearance)

DAD (M, 40s)
JOHN (M, 16)
LUCY (F, 16)
MARLENE (F, 16)

All alterations to gender or age are not only permitted but celebrated.

Stage directions are to be entirely ignored. Shred them. Cook them. Eat them with marinara. Lines should be tailored to suit actors. Improvisations and ad-libs are encouraged. If the lights, set, props, etc., written here are not to your liking, happily explore. This play now belongs to you.

It's important to hold the audience's hand with regards to dual time settings. If there's a way to project or establish the date, it may be helpful.

The first vital ingredient to this play is that the script is intentionally absent all of the important details of people. People are not words. When actors read from a script, it's the only time of their day where they're honest. People are not honest. People are lying 99% of the time they spend talking. For sixteen year-olds, this number is doubled. John does not tell the truth until his final two sentences. Marlene tells the truth once: "I like Lucifer," then never again. John and Marlene's dads don't tell the truth the whole play. Lucy's dad is once in a while as earnest as he mentally can be. Lucy slips in S11's "*She was?*" then after her final words in S11, she becomes the only

honest character, except momentarily for the beginning of the séance monologue in S12.

The second vital ingredient is tension. Exclamation points are not volume. If a teen yells, they break the tension and ruin what chance this play had. Every seething thing a teen says is a restraint on an even worse thought. Again: even the releases aren't fully honest.

If you produce this play with at least half a cast of non-male actors, at least half a cast of actors of color, and have a seat occupancy of 50 or less, please inquire about having your rights' fees waived by the playwright.

October, 2004. DAD makes himself a drink then grabs the landline phone. He dials. He's gruff. Charming. Probably a burnout.

DAD. Hey, Jeanine! It's, uh. Oh! Can I speak with Jeanine? Well, I've got a date with her tonight and I wanted to—Uh-huh. I didn't know that. Is there somebody else in the house named Jeanine? Someone who isn't your—? All right, pal, we can stop yelling. Hey! All right, if we could just tone it down a few—Well, all right, now, can you put your wife on the line then? I'd like to speak with her about this as well—I mean, I had a whole night planned and—Hello? (*he hung up*) Figures. 3-5-6? 5-6-3! (*dialing*) 5-6-3-4-4. Uh. 5-6-3-4-4-4? 1? Oh! Uh. Hi! Fran! Long time, no talk. We had history together. With Mrs.

Grenshaw. Oh—Oh, well, can you put Fran on? Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah, that makes sense. No, no—

JOHN enters wearing a snowcap. He inherited his dad's charm and knows he's got both impunity and immortality in everything he does.

JOHN. Dad!

DAD. (*quickly hanging up*) John! What's up?

JOHN. So. I was gonna go to Friedman's tonight to play Halo.

DAD. Okay. You need a ride?

JOHN. I can find someone.

DAD. Uh-huh. Yeah, I'll take you. You need me to pick you up? How late are you thinking?

JOHN. I really mean that I can ask somebody else's dad.

DAD. So I'm picking you up?

JOHN. I can totally ask somebody else's dad.

DAD. I'm picking you up.

JOHN. If you can.

DAD. Sounds good, kiddo. J'eat?

JOHN. Not hungry. Can you also take Sam and Ethan? And pick us up?

DAD. Hold on. You didn't eat? I made hotdogs yesterday. Buns are in the fridge. You want me to toast 'em?

JOHN. I'm honestly not hungry.

DAD. I'm not asking if you're hungry.

JOHN. I will eat when I get back, I promise.

DAD. What time is that at?

JOHN. Oh, yeah—Wait, what time are you...?

DAD. Tonight? Oh, don't worry about me. Cancelled.

JOHN. Word?

DAD. She had a—So, she's a nurse. Had a shift and couldn't get a night shift off I guess. These things happen.

JOHN. Postponed then?

DAD. Probably not.

JOHN. What's wrong with her?

DAD. She's got no proof that she has teeth.

JOHN. Yeah?

DAD. None in any picture. Closed lipped smiles. And I feel like every tooth she doesn't show is a tooth she doesn't have. So, just—Hold on. You're going to Friedman's to play Halo? Isn't that game old?

JOHN. You buying us Halo 2?

DAD. I didn't say that, I just mean... Is there gonna be...?

JOHN. Uh?

DAD. Come on. Booze? Girls?

JOHN. I mean, there *might* be.

DAD. All right, all right, don't do anything stupid, all right?

JOHN. I won't. I swear I won't.

DAD. Good. You going like that?

JOHN. What do you mean?

DAD. It's barely October and you've got a hat on!

JOHN. It's like mid-October and girls like hats.

DAD. Girls do not like—Come on. Take the hat off, would you?

JOHN. I mean, I was just gonna leave it on.

DAD. All right. What do I know? Lemme know when you're ready to go.

JOHN. Uh. I'll go change my pants.

JOHN exits. DAD makes another drink.

DAD. John!

JOHN. Yeah?

DAD. Wanna drive?

JOHN. What's that?

DAD. Do you want to drive?

JOHN. The car?

DAD. Jesus, Mary, and—Yes, the car.

JOHN. I don't have my permit yet.

DAD. Let's just have you drive, all right?

JOHN. Yeah, for sure!

DAD dials.

DAD. Hi, Keira? Yeah, it's—Jesus Christ, can we just talk?! I need to speak with you. It's about John drinking. I wouldn't call this late if it weren't important. John's going drinking tonight with friends and thought you should know, seems like a thing parents should both know. If we wanna talk about it, I don't trust you to not shriek at me while I talk, okay? So, we would talk in person. Yeah! What, do you have plans tonight? I mean. I mean. He isn't John's father. The hell would he even contribute? Let him worry about his own kids, and we'll worry about— (*"I'm pregnant"*) You're what? Uh. How, uh? How far along are...?

Hang up.

DAD. John, how long's it take to change your pants? John!

JOHN. What?

DAD. Are you coming?

JOHN. Yeah, one sec, I gotta pick my pants!

DAD. I'm waiting by the car.

2

Halloween, 2004. LUCY, in her house. She's reserved and smart: her revealing anything about herself is like the world's slowest leg wax. She hears a knock at the door. It's MARLENE, dressed as an owl and with a large case. MARLENE is terrified and infatuated with LUCY, but hiding both.

MARLENE. Happy Halloween!

LUCY. Yeah. Hey.

MARLENE. Oh, I like what you've done to the place. I definitely feel the spooky.

LUCY. Yeah, I didn't do that.

MARLENE. Are you not gonna wear a costume?

LUCY. Do I need to?

MARLENE. For the—? Oh, no. Just because it's... Wow. Your house is just spooktastic. I can feel them standing in the corners of the room. Your backyard looks terrible. I love that. Good choice.

LUCY. Yeah. Can we just get this started?

MARLENE. Yes. I'm gonna set some things up if that's okay.

LUCY. Of course.

MARLENE. Are you allergic to fire?

LUCY. No.

MARLENE. Okay, I'm gonna light some candles first then we can turn the lights off. Okay?

LUCY. Why would we do that?

MARLENE. If we turn the lights off first then I can't light the candles.

LUCY. Why do we need to turn the lights off?

MARLENE. Oh. The dead don't come towards the light. They made that mistake once already.

LUCY. Then... Okay, can we just dim the lights?

MARLENE. The candles'll light the room just fine. It won't be dark.

LUCY. We're gonna just dim the lights. We'll do everything else at two thousand percent.

MARLENE. It's already gonna be really hard if it's just the two of us. Electricity's just gonna make it impossible.

LUCY. How many times have you done this?

MARLENE. I mean. I did it a lot more when my dad lived with us.

LUCY. Oh, right. How's he doing?

MARLENE. Cleveland.

LUCY. Sounds nice.

MARLENE begins setting up a table with a pentagram cloth, candles, etc.

MARLENE. Thanks for calling. I just mean, it's really good to hang out again.

LUCY. Yeah. Do you need anything from me?

MARLENE. Uh, a picture of her. Even an old license? A passport?

LUCY. Yeah, I have her... Actually, I have a framed picture of her.

MARLENE. Good. The dead are into aesthetics.

LUCY. My dad's in it too, is that okay?

MARLENE. Even better! You might get both!

LUCY. I don't want both.

MARLENE. They can take turns on the Ouija board!

LUCY. I don't want both. Can you make sure we don't get both?

MARLENE. Oh. Well. I mean. So. Okay, so, do you remember when we were in fourth grade and tried to make a voodoo doll of Mr. Renault and then his dog got hit by a dead tree?

LUCY. I remember those two things separately.

MARLENE. I just... I don't want you to be upset if I miss.

LUCY. Then don't.

MARLENE. Okay. Sounds good. So, when are you moving?

LUCY. Soon. Ideally.

MARLENE. Are people gonna know a guy died in this house?

LUCY. Most people already do.

MARLENE. Makes it so nice and spooky. I always liked your house. Was a lot bigger when I was here last time. Eighth grade, right?

LUCY. Where does this go?

MARLENE. Oh, don't touch anything! Some of the stuff in there isn't good for touching. Oh boy, if anything changes color, wash your hands.

LUCY. Uh-huh.

MARLENE. Why Canada?

LUCY. Uh, I got into a school there.

MARLENE. Like another high school?

LUCY. You can't tell anybody about this, all right? Same thing as my mom. If people know, I'm done for, okay? They're gonna be looking for me and you can't tell anybody anything.

MARLENE. Oh, I love that.

LUCY. It's a creative writing program at the University of British Columbia in Okanagan. They think I'm my mom. Or, they think I'm thirty-something— Never heard of her.

MARLENE. Can you pull that off?

LUCY. I've been going to the bank as her. You can't tell anybody.

MARLENE. I won't. I thought your mom was famous.

LUCY. It's the kind where people don't know that she is. The books she was writing were sent up to people who were shitty at writing, those people put their names on the cover, we still collect the... *I collect the royalty checks.*

MARLENE. Got it. Uh. So you don't want to at all talk to him?

Knock on door.

MARLENE. I wasn't followed.

LUCY. It's Halloween. This happens.

JOHN enters. No hat.

LUCY. Oh. Uh. John. Hey.

JOHN. Hey. Uh. Hey, Marlene.

MARLENE. Holy moly, what are you doing here? Hi. Are you two still in touch?

JOHN. I was just walking around. Uh. Just saying hey.

LUCY. Hey. Good to see ya. Happy Halloween.

JOHN. Yeah. Happy Halloween. Uh. So, I just wanted to talk with you about—

MARLENE. Do you wanna come in?

LUCY. No, let's not—Would you look at that. Uh.

MARLENE. Oh, my goodness: a reunion of the old carpool! John, what've *you* been doing for the past two years?

JOHN. Yeah. I actually never went inside your house. I just assumed you still lived here.

MARLENE. Oh, boy. How cute are we? Wow. Where does middle school go? Probably to the place we bury things. Oh, man. Oh, I'm so sorry I forgot to say: John, I'm sorry that your dad's dead.

LUCY. Jesus, Marlene. Yeah. Sorry about that.

JOHN. Um. Thanks. Yeah, I'm sorry I didn't say the same. Like, back in April and all that.

LUCY. Yeah, February. Well, I didn't walk up to your house, so there wasn't really the opportunity. Uh. How are you feeling?

JOHN. I'm all right. Been rough, but, y'know, more celebrating his life than anything else.

LUCY. Yeah. Were you on your way to Ethan's? You're still friends with Ethan, right?

JOHN. Oh, I was gonna skip that.

LUCY. Well, aren't you two close?

JOHN. Not like close-close. I mean. Yeah. Not... I'm just kinda partied out. Like, I'll party more when we're juniors, but—Yeah, I'm kinda just gonna skip it.

LUCY. Uh-huh.

JOHN. I mean, were you going? Do you still not go to parties?

LUCY. No.

JOHN. Gotcha. Yeah. Uh, I like your candles. This is really cool. What are you two up to tonight?

LUCY. Yeah. Look, so, this is a fun reunion and all, but this is a bad time. I mean, both for you and for me. We can totally talk about dad suicides on a later

date, though. Let *me* call *you* about it so...

JOHN. Oh, my God. Your dad killed—?
Oh, shit. Lucy, I'm sorry.

LUCY. Yeah?

JOHN. Oh, my God, I'm so sorry. I had no idea. I mean. I heard stuff about—like, I heard stuff. I'm so sorry. I just didn't know for sure your dad killed himself.

LUCY. Surprise.

JOHN. Uh. I'm sorry. He was a great guy.

LUCY. Don't think you ever actually met him. He was all right. It happens. That's my advice. Thanks for stopping by.

JOHN. Wait. I'm sorry, I came to talk to you about something and I got off track. I'm sorry to hear that. Uh. I didn't plan on Marlene being here. It's really good to see you.

MARLENE. Good to see you. Sorry about being forward earlier in

recognizing your dad's suicide. I want to give you condolences but less forward.

JOHN. What are...? Wait, you guys know *my* dad didn't kill himself, right?

MARLENE. Oh.

JOHN. Yeah, sorry. People've been saying that. It's not what happened.

LUCY. He drove into a lake.

JOHN. Yeah, but not on purpose, like... He didn't *kill* himself.

LUCY. I mean, he just kinda did the definition of it, but, yeah.

JOHN. 'Cause he was drunk, he wasn't killing himself.

LUCY. Your sister straight up told me your dad called your—

JOHN. I don't have a—She's my *stepsister*—and she really shouldn't say that. I came here to talk to you.

LUCY. I get that. Because your dad killed himself.

MARLENE. Lucy, I have a good idea.

LUCY. Like, I figured you'd flag me down at school or something—it's been like two weeks right? Yeah, I figured you'd say something. It's pretty niche.

MARLENE. John, would you like to help us with something?

JOHN. I can in a sec; I really wanna talk to Lucy. I'm sorry.

LUCY. Woah, what?

JOHN. Do you remember when we were kinda dating for that week in eighth grade and we were going to the Halloween dance together? This has a point.

LUCY. No, no, no, no, no—John's gotta go to the party.

JOHN. I'm not going to the party. I was Spiderman and you were gonna be Mary Jane? Remember?

LUCY. What? What does this have to do with anything?

JOHN. I was just remembering that today and remembering this bond that

we used to have and it just felt so weird that we hadn't talked in so long—

LUCY. Wait, eighth grade? I didn't go to any of the dances.

JOHN. Yeah, I know. That's why we broke up.

MARLENE. John? What are you doing tonight?

JOHN. Well, that's what I came to ask you.

LUCY. Are you for real asking me out right now?

JOHN. No! No, no, no! Not at all!

MARLENE. Lucy, it'll work with three. I promise. John already knows the big secret, so you don't lose anything! Halloween's the only night we can try this; it's like hell's visiting hours.

JOHN. What I did wanna ask is kinda bigger, and stay with me... What?

LUCY. John, I'm not going out with you.

JOHN. I wasn't asking to go out with me. Sorry that that was unclear. I was—

LUCY. And can I talk to you for two seconds?

MARLENE. I feel like if you do, you're gonna convince me of something, and I don't want that right now. John, we need your help.

LUCY. Marlene! No, no, nope! Nope! Please stop.

MARLENE. If we're leaving the lights on, we need three!

JOHN. What are we doing with three?

MARLENE. (*re: Ouija board*) We need your help talking to Lucy's mom.

LUCY. Marlene.

JOHN. Oh. I can help. Yeah. (*re: Ouija board*) Is your mom like, y'know, the Steven Hawking...?

MARLENE. What? No, no, no, no: Steven Hawking is alive.

LUCY. Jesus, Marlene.

JOHN. Oh, wow. Oh. Is...? Is your...?

MARLENE. What? He knows. He knows! He doesn't know? How does he

not know?! We carpooled together for like eight years! Oh, my goodness, did he actually not know?

JOHN. Oh, Lucy, I'm so sorry. When'd that happen?

MARLENE. I'm so sorry. Oh, my goodness—I'm so sorry.

LUCY. Jesus, Marlene.

MARLENE. I don't understand! How didn't he know?!

JOHN. Well, I mean, we lost touch! I'm really sorry we did that. I'm sorry I didn't know your mom died.

MARLENE. No. Lucy was three when Angie died.

JOHN. No. No, her mom moved to China. She studied pandas there. When'd she pass away?

LUCY. Jesus, Marlene. You were literally the only person at school who knew that!

MARLENE. I'm so sorry! I'm so honored also, but I'm really sorry!

JOHN. Wait, what? Why'd you tell me...? How did she die? Oh. Oh. So, like, both of your parents are now...?

LUCY. You can't tell anyone.

MARLENE. Like Harry Potter.

LUCY. Marlene.

MARLENE. I just—I think it's a beautiful thing: I wish I were an orphan besides my parents dying—I'm so sorry I did this.

LUCY. Okay, let's make sure this is just crystal clear. John. You cannot tell anybody. Okay?

JOHN. Hey, I mean it's okay. You could've told me. Like, people'll get it, y'know? I don't think anyone's gonna, like, call you names.

LUCY. No, I mean—Why would call me—? What? What names? No. You can't tell anybo—Look around. There's nobody here. Zero living relatives. What am I?

JOHN. *I* would never call you any names.

LUCY. Jesus—Okay. I am supposed to be a ward of the state. I'm sixteen. I'm currently a big oops. If you tell the wrong person and they tell the right person, I move somewhere and spend my next year and a half in foster care.

MARLENE. Wait. When are you moving to British Columbia?

LUCY. Jesus, Marlene.

MARLENE. Oh, he wasn't supposed to know that either. I'm gonna be in this pillow.

LUCY. Thank you. Okay. I don't know why this is like this—why the state doesn't know. Nobody at the funeral home or anywhere triggered any silent alarms. You can literally tell nobody that I'm alone here. Do you understand how much you can fuck up my life if you tell anybody that I'm alone here?

JOHN. Got it. That—That sounds really terrible.

MARLENE. It's okay to have dead parents; it theoretically isn't your fault.

LUCY. Marlene.

MARLENE. **incoherent pillow mumbling**

JOHN. How did... How did your mom die?

LUCY. Melanoma.

JOHN. I'm sorry that I didn't know that.

LUCY. No. It was kinda great that you didn't.

MARLENE. **incoherent pillow mumbling**

LUCY. Just run it through the wash first and then you can say it. Okay?

MARLENE. John's a third and that means we'll be able to reach her. Two won't do it. Especially with the lights on.

LUCY. Swear on your life that you won't tell anyone any of this.

JOHN. I won't. I swear I won't.

LUCY. Goddamn it. Okay. You wanna do a séance?

JOHN. Yeah.

MARLENE. Terrific! John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt, is this your first time contacting the spirit world?

JOHN. Uh. Yeah. You guys do—like, you guys do witch stuff?

LUCY. I don't—I don't do—

MARLENE. No, she just helps me and participates and does it too.

JOHN. Okay. Yeah, okay. Yeah, I'll help. Uh, yeah.

MARLENE. Fantastic! Lucy, can you go get that picture?

LUCY exits.

MARLENE. John, can you put these on each point of the pentagram? Literally for the love of God: don't light them yet.

JOHN. Okay. Can't believe I believed pandas in China.

MARLENE. Oh, don't worry about that. She told Alexa Kline that her mom was a cage boxer in Paris, trying to make her

way back to America. The one I kept hearing most recently was she just lives up north somewhere under a different name. I thought the three of us knew. Sorry for spilling.

JOHN. Yeah. Have you and Lucy kept in touch?

MARLENE. Not exactly. She'll still...

JOHN. She still kinda make fun of you at school?

MARLENE. I think it's just to keep up appearances. It's really toned down from eighth grade; she's making great progress. I actually went to your dad's funeral. It was really great. Great day out, still in the sixties. Your mom said really pretty things. Lucy's dad's funeral was terrible. February's just an awful time to have people die. Sorry, John, we were talking about your dead dad. Two weeks? Do you still see him on the street?

LUCY enters.

LUCY. Marlene! You know what? Why doesn't someone go get candy? I didn't get any candy. We don't want kids ringing the bell and interrupting, so let's leave a bowl out.

MARLENE. I love that idea! But I need to set this up still. John, the 7/11 down the street?

JOHN. You want me to go?

LUCY. Yeah, just for a second.

JOHN. Uh. Okay, I still need to talk with you.

LUCY. Don't worry. I'll let you back in.

MARLENE. Oh! Grab Tootsie Pops!

JOHN exits.

MARLENE. (*a la Mr. Owl*) A one, a two, a three—

LUCY. Think he's scared off?

MARLENE. No. Hey, have you ever actually talked to your mom before?

LUCY. I don't think so.

February, 2004. Power's out. Lanterns and flashlights. DAD enters, his nose in his books. He's obsessed with them and jumping in and out of lucidity. LUCY carries an exhaustion and disgust with him.

MARLENE. You want to be alone to think about your dead parents. I'm gonna keep setting things up.

LUCY. Hi. *Hi*. You didn't pay the power bill, so I moved everything in the fridge to the garage, but it's March in less than a week, so I don't know how long all of it's gonna last. Just in case, I bought us granola bars, jerky, and your favorite—apples! If you want anything savory, you gotta order it or just pay the power bill. There was *some* meat, but it's gonna go bad, because, again, you didn't pay the power bill. If that's something I need to do from now on, you gotta just tell me.

DAD. Dinner?

LUCY. We can't. There's no power.

DAD. There's...? Ah. I'll hit the breaker.

LUCY. You didn't pay the bill.

DAD. It's expensive. We don't have all that much money.

LUCY. We do. We have Angie's royalty checks, remember? We also have granola bars, jerky, and apples; what do you want? You want an apple? Hey, can you tell me how to pay the power bill? Do I write a check to somebody? I know we can pay online so it'll just be a monthly withdrawal from the bank account, don't need to do anything, but I need all of Angie's info. Can you give me that? Could I find it in that desk drawer in your room? All right. I'll just look for it tonight.

DAD. We don't have the money.

LUCY. We do. We have a lot of it. Okay? Okay? Can you just...? If it's a bad night, and you're already sulking about it, then sulk about it with me. Just do it out loud. What was *her* favorite

food? What'd she like to eat? Just talk. J'eat at all today? Your cheeks are practically sticking to your skull.

DAD. I'm sorry. What'd you say?

LUCY. When was the last time you took a shower?

DAD. Uh, I just did.

LUCY. No, you didn't. I literally turned on the shower yesterday and laid shit out for you, why didn't you just get in?

DAD. I did.

LUCY. You're not looking at me. Please take a shower.

DAD. Come on—let's just—weren't you gonna bring someone over tonight? Didn't want to hold you from that.

MARLENE. I like this picture.

LUCY. Name one time in the past five years I've brought someone in this house.

DAD. No, no, you were gonna bring Angie, didn't wanna...

MARLENE. Your mom looks a lot like you.

LUCY. Just talk about her if you're gonna be like this anyways. I need to talk to you about something, so how much longer are you gonna be like this? What the fuck happened to you? It's been three weeks with this shit every night.

DAD. Do you remember when... when I taught you how to ride a bike? I remember you were too old. You were ten on training wheels. I remember letting go of you and that couple was walking down the street and they figured you easily knew what you were doing and you ripped right into 'em.

LUCY. We should bike again. It'll be good. Honestly, let's grab some flashlights, head lamps, whatever we got, let's go biking right now. Yeah! Come on! Let's not even think about it!

DAD. We're not going—

LUCY. That's the spirit! I'll go pull 'em off the rack!

LUCY exits.

MARLENE. Do you think she haunts this place too? Ooo, I wonder if they're haunting together.

DAD. Hey, Angie. We're going on a bike ride, if you wanna—I—(*becoming lucid; recognizing surroundings*) Oh, my God.

MARLENE. Like they're doing couples costumes on Halloween. Do you think Halloween is a bigger deal in the afterlife, or would it be like us having a holiday where we celebrate having skin or something? Like, it's boring?

DAD. Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

LUCY enters.

LUCY. Whew! Come on! They're off the rack! I'm so sorry but I nicked the car a little! And the bikes! But let's just do it! Come on!

MARLENE. Oh, sorry, you're still—got it. Sorry.

LUCY. No, no, no! What happened?! Come on! Hey! Come on!

DAD. That's enough.

LUCY. Dad! There are head lamps in the garage; we can go to 7/11 and—

DAD. Lucy, that's enough—

LUCY. No, no, no, no, no—You can do it. You got this. Come on. We're so close.

DAD. I said that's enough! That's enough. That's... That's enough.

JOHN enters with candy. Halloween, 2004.

MARLENE. John! You're back! Can you help me with the crystal ball?

JOHN. Uh. Yeah. I got Tootsie Pops. Why do two people need to carry it?

MARLENE. Think of it like a magician doing that electrical current thing—but instead of getting shocked it's whether or