

THE LONG RIDE HOME



Ed Vela

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

The Long Ride Home



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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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The Long Ride Home

COLLECTION. There are plenty of comical conflicts and heartfelt moments in this wonderful collection of five short plays that depict the unique and timeless bond between stepfathers/fathers and sons. A little-leaguer suffers the agony of defeat when he loses the championship game for his team and realizes his father's disappointment in "The Long Ride Home." In "Head," a father, in the midst of fixing the toilet, is taken off guard when his son decides to make a rather comical confession. In "Cecil Clarence Abernathy Explains It All to You," a naïve boy reads a school essay to his classmates relating the events leading up to his parents' divorce and how the new situation has turned into a real cash cow for him. In "Wine and Wafers," Norman decides to break the news to his brother and father during communion that he has broken up with his girlfriend and is now dating a Jewish boy. And in "Step-Hell," a teenager recounts the first time he called his stepfather "Dad" and the first time his stepfather called him "Son."

Performance Time: Approximately 45-60 minutes.

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Characters

(11 M, opt. extras, or 3M with doubling)

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(3 M)

PLAY-BY-PLAY: Little league announcer.

MICK: Trace's dad; little league manager.

TRACE: 12, Mick's son; little-leaguer; wears a baseball uniform.

Head

(3 M)

CY: 40s, father; wears grimy work clothes.

TAD: 16, son.

ROB: Tad's younger brother.

Cecil Clarence Abernathy

Explains It All To you...

(1 M)

CECIL: 12, School kid whose parents have divorced; naïve.

Wine and Wafers

(3 M, opt. extras)

BEAL: 40s, father.

NORMAN: 17, son.

ANTHONY: 13, son.

EXTRAS (optional): As Priest and Altar Boy.

Step-Hell

(1 M)

JORDAN: Teenager who has a new step-dad.

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Setting

The Long Ride Home

Inside a car, which is represented by two car bucket seats or two chairs.

HEAD

The back yard of a suburban home. A beat-up toilet sits dead CS. Assorted toys, pet bowls, and a garden hose also litter the set.

Cecil Clarence Abernathy

The front of a classroom.

Wine and Wafers

Saturday night mass at a Catholic church. One part of the stage has a communion rail and kneeling rail set, across the stage a pew is set. Near an upstage exit is a stand with a bowl of holy water.

Step-Hell

Bare stage.

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Props

The Long Ride Home

Baseball bat
Baseball

Baseball glove
2 Car seats or chairs

Head

Beat-up toilet
Toys
Pet bowls
Garden hose

Spatula
CD player
Old yellow piece of paper

Cecil Clarence Abernathy

Papers

Wine and Wafers

Communion rail
Kneeling rail
Bowl of holy water

Pew
Rosary beads

Sound Effects

The Long Ride Home

"We Are the Champions"
or another song
Sports radio station
recording
Fart sound

"Another One Bites the
Dust," or another song
"Tubthumping," or
another song.

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"I'd hate to be
in Trace Oliver's shoes
on what promises to be
a long ride home..."

-Play-by-Play

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(AT RISE: Little League World Series game. Three spots come up at different locations on the stage to highlight Play-by-Play, Trace, and Mick. During the scene, Play-by-Play looks intently out toward the audience as though watching the game. Trace looks out toward the audience as though watching the pitcher and occasionally looks toward Mick. Mick looks at Trace and out to the audience. As Play-by-Play speaks, Trace and Mick react and illustrate the commentary.)

PLAY-BY-PLAY: And so it's come down to this, here at the Little League World Series, the United States Champion from Lake Patterson, New Jersey, having once led 5 to 1 against the International Champions from Osaka, Japan, who now trail 6 to 5 in this bottom half of the sixth and final inning of play. Runner on first, two out, and little Trace Toliver stepping up to the plate. Trace Toliver the MVP of the U.S. Championship game. The manager's son. Averaging .417 swinging the bat this week in Williamsport. You couldn't ask for a better young man to have taking his cuts in the crunch. The pitcher winds up, there's the pitch...swung on and missed... He was swinging for the fence on that one. Trace looking over to his father, Mick, now gets back into the batter's box... Mick looks more nervous than Trace as he awaits the pitch... In the dirt, ball one. Trace showed a good eye on that sinking fast ball, and has evened the count at 1 and 1... Pitcher takes a look toward first, now delivers... Catches the outside corner for strike two, and Trace Toliver can't believe it. The elder Toliver having a tough time with that called strike, as Trace is now behind in the count... Trace dusts his hands with a little dirt as he crowds the plate... Pitch is on the way... High and away for ball two... Evening up the count at 2 and 2... Mick signals something into Trace as he awaits the next pitch... Fast ball over the middle... Dinger! It's

headed for deep right center... He could go yard... The center fielder, Ling Wan, racing to catch up with it... He's got speed... Wan leaps up at the fence... He caught it! The ball game is over! An impossible comeback for the Japanese team as they win the Little League World Championship 6 to 5! (*Spots go out on Trace and Mick.*) Can you believe it? Trace Toliver comes within two inches of winning it for the U.S. team...but falls short. Oh, there's a dejected bunch of 12-year-olds in the U.S. team's dugout. And I'd hate to be in little Trace Toliver's shoes on what promises to be a long ride home...

(Spot goes out on Play-by-Play. Lights come up on two car bucket seats, with Mick, left, Trace, right. Trace sits on the edge of the seat as far away from Mick as is humanly possible. Trace sits sidesaddle, and dejectedly bangs his head against the seat back. Trace let's out a pitiful whine, followed by an anguished groan. Trace pulls his hat down over his eyes. Mick slowly turns his head toward Trace, giving him a menacing look.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]

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"HOW YOU ANSWER
THIS NEXT QUESTION
WILL DETERMINE
HOW YOUR HEAD LOOKS
FOR THE REST
OF YOUR LIFE."

-Ly

Head

(AT RISE: The back yard of a suburban home. A beat-up toilet sits dead CS. Assorted toys, pet bowls, and a garden hose also litter the set. Cy, 44, dressed for grimy work, is scraping around the bowl of the toilet with a spatula. Tad, 16, enters. He watches Cy for a few seconds before speaking.)

TAD: Dad, what're you doing?

CY: I'm having a party. What does it look like I'm doin', Tad?
I'm fixing the head.

TAD: What's wrong with it?

CY: Had a crack on the base. It was leaking pretty bad. The epoxy's almost dry. I should be able to put it back in a minute.

TAD: Is that our toilet?

CY: If you mean it's the one from the boys' side of the house upstairs, you got it. And you guys better start doin' a better job of keeping it clean. Ya know how much crap I had to scrape off this thing?

TAD: Is that Mom's spatula?

CY: Yes, and shut up. What're you doin' out here, anyway?

TAD: Uh...I just needed some fresh air.

CY: You hate fresh air. You never leave your room. And your room smells like a dead rat.

TAD: My rat is very much alive, thank you very much.

CY: It still very smells. Like your smelly cockatoo and your smellier ferret.

TAD: Hey, I light incense every day to keep it from smelling too bad.

CY: Great, it goes from smelling like a zoo to smelling like a zoo at a pot party.

TAD: Dad, c'mon, I keep my door closed.

CY: No, you keep your door locked, and your mother is really starting to freak out about it.

TAD: Hey, it took me till now to get my own room. If I don't keep it locked, the kids are always coming in there.

CY: Yeah, but a padlock?! Besides Rob and Sammy usually leave you alone, and the girls are on the other side of the house. So why did you leave the confines of your stinky sanctum? The last time you were in this back yard is when you were mowing it.

TAD: Yeah, Rob mows it now, though.

CY: True, and not very well. Just when you got good at it, you had to pass the baton to your dyslexic little brother. Ya ever see Robbie try to mow in a straight line?

TAD: It's like watching a drunk do the lawn.

ROB: *(Calls from offstage.)* Hey, Dad! There's a big hole in the bathroom!

CY: *(To Tad.)* Speak of the devil. *(Calls to Rob offstage.)* I know, Rob. I got the toilet out here.

ROB: *(Calls from offstage.)* What for?!

CY: *(Calls to Rob offstage.)* Nevermind, just keep your little brother away from that hole.

ROB: *(Calls from offstage.)* Too late...

CY: *(Calls to Rob offstage.)* Whaddaya mean?

ROB: *(Calls from offstage.)* Sammy already peed in it.

CY: *(To Tad.)* Somethin' tells me we may have to check the ceiling tile in the bonus room for water damage. *(Rob enters, carrying a half disassembled CD player. Rob stands behind Cy, who doesn't notice him. Thinking Rob's still in the house, Cy turns to yell back to Rob but yells into Rob's ear instead.)* Rob! *(Lowers voice.)* Oops. Sorry, buddy. Look, go upstairs and make sure your little brother doesn't do anything else in that hole. And check with your mother about dinner.

ROB: What about it?

CY: If she's cookin' it. What it's gonna be. These are simple questions, Einstein.

ROB: *(Notices Tad.)* What's he doing out of his room?

TAD: Hey, I can leave my room, guys. I'm not Emily Dickinson.

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ROB: Who's she?

CY: Some agoraphobic poet from before your time. (*Finally notices CD player.*) What are you doing with that CD player?

ROB: Uuuuuuhh...fixing it.

CY: What was wrong with it?

ROB: Uuuuuuhhh...

CY: Oh, for pity's sake, Rob! You are always taking things apart!

ROB: But I always put them back together.

CY: But they never work when you put them back together!

(Tad, who had been obliviously looking away from Cy and Rob, now turns and notices Rob.)

TAD: *(To Rob.)* Hey, is that my CD player?!

ROB: Uuuuuuhh...it was kinda in your room.

TAD: And what were you doing kinda in my room?!

ROB: Aw, c'mon, Tad, that padlock's so easy to pick, you might as well leave your door open.

TAD: I'm gonna open something on you, you little—

CY: Hold it! There will be no blood spilled on this grass. This is not Gettysburg. *(To Rob.)* You! Put that back together. Put it back in his room. And then stay out of there.

(Tad grabs the CD player away from Rob.)

TAD: *(To Rob.)* Oh, no, ya don't! I don't want him doing any more damage. *(Inspects CD player.)* What did you do to it?

(Rob reaches into his pocket.)

ROB: Oh, here a few parts I had left over. I always have parts left over whenever I'm fixing something.

(Tad lunges for Rob but is cut off by Cy.)

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CY: *(To Tad.)* You, whoa. *(To Rob.)* You, go.

(Cy pushes Rob toward exit. Rob begins to exit but stops short.)

ROB: At this juncture, one might point out, that this wouldn't have happened, if he hadn't left his room.

(Tad hauls back like he's about to throw the CD player at him. Rob scurries off. Cy looks at Tad a moment before he speaks.)

CY: Okay, what're you really doing out here?

TAD: Geez, why don't we just call CNN? Me being out of my room is obviously a media event.

CY: Tadpole...

TAD: I hate it when you call me that.

CY: Hey, it worked when you were seven.

TAD: Yeah, well I'm not seven anymore.

CY: Sorry. So what gives?

TAD: Actually, I need to talk to you.

CY: Can I finish with the head first...? Head first? That's funny.

TAD: Only to you, Dad.

CY: Hand me the toilet seat, Tadpo— Uh, Thaddius.

TAD: I hate it when you call me that, too. *(Looks at the grimy toilet seat.)* Eeeuuuwww! Why didn't you just call a plumber?

(Keeping the toilet seat at arms length and touching it with only his fingertips, Tad hands the toilet seat to Cy.)

CY: Call a plumber? And listen to your mother grouse, "Cy, you were working graveyards that week. Why didn't you just fix it?" Besides the thing's warranty has gone out.

(Cy shows Tad an old yellow piece a paper.)

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TAD: Dad, is this the warranty or the Magna Carta? How old is this toilet?

CY: Twenty-seven years. And can you believe that's only a 25-year warranty!

TAD: No, Dad. I can't believe it.

CY: So, what's on your mind?

TAD: Well...uh...how 'bout those [Rockets]? *[Or insert the name of another team.]*

CY: How about 'em? They tanked. And it's baseball season. We should be concentrating on watching the [Astros] lose. *[Or insert the name of another team.]*

ROB: *(Calls from offstage.)* Hey, Dad! Mom wants to know if you've seen her spatula! She's makin' cookies.

(Cy looks at Tad. Cy holds up the dirty spatula.)

TAD: Hope she's making chocolate chunk.

CY: *(To Tad.)* Cut it out. *(Calls to Rob.)* Tell her to use a spoon.

ROB: *(Calls from offstage.)* You tell her. She'll beat me up.

CY: *(Calls to Rob.)* Okay, I'll take care of it. Just go to the bathroom and keep Sammy outta that hole.

TAD: You had to use her favorite spatula?

CY: It was the only thing I could find made out of rubber. I didn't want to scratch the porcelain.

TAD: Well, you better go tell her something before she comes out here and sees this.

CY: Maybe she won't notice.

TAD: Dad, Stevie Wonder would notice this freakin' toilet sittin' out in the middle of this back yard.

CY: Okay, go tell her...something...

TAD: Me? You said you'd handle it.

CY: I'm handling it. I'm sending you. It's called delegating.

TAD: It's called wussing out.

[END OF FREEVIEW]

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"I say divorce
is not all that bad."

-Cecil

Cecil Clarence Abernathy Explains It All To You...

(AT RISE: The front of an elementary school classroom. Spot up on Cecil, a sixth-grader. In a disjointed fashion, he reads his essay to his classmates.)

CECIL: (To audience, reads.) "My Mom and Dad Got Divorced," by Cecil Clarence Abernathy. My mom and dad's divorce got finalized the other day. And, now... (Gestures.) ...I live with just my mom, but I get to visit my dad often. I get to see him once a week for dinner, and every other weekend when my mom decides I'm not too sick. I am getting to see my dad more now than when he lived with us. My dad is an executive vice-president in charge of something...I don't know what. He is great because he can afford to send me to private school, and even though the blazer itches, I like it here. Last summer, my dad sent me to baseball camp, tennis camp, and football camp. Now I can throw a fastball, hit a ground stroke, and read man-to-man coverage on a blitz. My dad is a great dad, but I think Mom is even a better mom because her lawyer really stiffed Dad in the settlement. Mom got the house, the Lexus, most of Dad's stock options, and me. Dad got his golf clubs, his clothes, half the luggage, and the erotic fish." (Pauses to listen to his teacher. To teacher.) Huh...oh... (Reads.) "...the exotic fish.

[END OF FREEVIEW]

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"Am I my brother's keeper?"

—Anthony

Wine and Wafers

(AT RISE: A Catholic church, Saturday night mass. One part of the stage has a communion rail and kneeling rail. Across the stage a pew is set. Near an upstage exit is a stand with a bowl of holy water. From left to right, Beal, 42, Norman, 17, and Anthony, 13, stand at the railing, looking down the line left, as if awaiting a signal.)

NORMAN/BEAL/ANTHONY: *(As they make the sign of the cross.)* In the name of the Father, Son, Holy Ghost, amen.

(They all kneel on a rail pillowed with red velvet, looking over the cross rail, as if to receive communion. Beal fiddles with the rosary beads in his hand.)

ANTHONY: *(As he playfully crosses himself.)* Noggin, navel, wallet, watch—

BEAL: Anthony!

ANTHONY: Well, that's the way we learned to remember it in catechism.

NORMAN: He's right, Dad. It's real hard for the little kids to remember the sequence without it.

BEAL: I know. I know. We did it, too. I always wondered what the girls did.

NORMAN: Bonnet, beav—

BEAL: Never mind! Besides, you two aren't Eric's age anymore, so cut it out.

ANTHONY: I wish Mom and Eric had come.

BEAL: Your little brother spent the day vomiting. I think God will forgive him this one missed communion.

ANTHONY: But I volunteered to stay home and take care of him. Mom didn't have to.

BEAL: Oh, yeah, I got a big picture in my mind of all the care he would've gotten from you, Anthony.

ANTHONY: He's my little brother. I love the spastic monkey.

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NORMAN: I would've tossed my cookies all day too, if it would've gotten me out of listening to that sermon. What a snore.

BEAL: *(Looking left.)* Will you keep your voice down. You want Father Ragusa to hear you?

NORMAN: Dad, Father Ragusa hasn't heard anything since 1997. When I go to confession I have to yell my sins so loud they can hear me in the convent.

BEAL: Norman Beal Jr., that's not true.

ANTHONY: It is true, Dad. He's deaf and he's boring.

BEAL: Okay, enough from both of you. You're not supposed to be talking at the altar of God anyway, so dummy up and adore Christ!

ANTHONY/NORMAN: Sorry...

ANTHONY: Why did we have to come here on a Saturday night anyway?

BEAL: Because I'm taking a red-eye out tonight, and your mother says she can't drag you two out of bed on Sunday morning unless I'm there.

ANTHONY: That's because she doesn't use a pitcher of ice water if we're not up by eight o'clock sharp.

BEAL: My methods are unorthodox, but effective.

(A few moments of silence pass. Finally Anthony looks down the line left, straining to see around the other two.)

ANTHONY: What's taking so long?!

(Beal swats at Anthony.)

NORMAN: *(Looking left.)* Oh, it's just old Mrs. Neundorfer, choking on the wafer again.

BEAL: *(Looking left.)* What? Again?! Why doesn't that old cow just chew the stupid thing? C'mon, c'mon, hit her on the back.

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NORMAN: They can't, she's got osteoporosis.

[END OF FREEVIEW]

"Well,
I guess hell
Isn't so bad...
Sometimes..."

-Jordan

Step-Hell

JORDAN: *(To audience.)* Hell! That's what I've been in since my mom got remarried...the 17th level of hell! It was bad enough when my dad left, and I had to cope with it being just me, my mom, and my little brother, who I lovingly call Turd-Fungus! Now I got a new stepfather to deal with, and just for fun, he's brought along his two daughters—one younger than me, about Turd-Fungus's age; the other one two years older. And after only two weeks in this house, she thinks she's my personal jailer. I've started to call her "The Warden." Her fave thing to say is, "Jordan did it! Jordan did it!" Which wouldn't be so bad, except I'm Jordan! Herbert, my new daddy, is about as much fun as a trip to the dentist, and takes The Warden's side no matter what. The man can't throw a football, can't dribble a basketball, and is the only person I know that can make bowling a contact sport. Turd-Fungus likes him. Like I said, hell! But then, the other day, I got stuck with him, I forget why. And he had to take me to his office. There were these suit-and-tie types just hangin' around this Ozarka cooler, like water buffalo waiting to mate.

[END OF FREEVIEW]