

TWO AND A HALF MEN

"That Poor Bosendorfer."

a.k.a.

"Me, Jimmy Buffett, and Some Roman Candles"

Written by  
TED KOPULOS

REVISED DRAFT

September 25, 2010

CAST

CHARLIE

ALAN

JAKE

EVELYN

ROSE

TV HOST

CONDUCTOR

MUSICIAN

CELLIST

BAR PATRONS

TWO-AND-A-HALF MEN

"Me, Jimmy Buffett and Some Roman Candles"  
a.k.a.  
"That Poor Bosendorfer"

TEASER

FADE INTO

INT. ALAN'S BEDROOM - DEAD OF NIGHT

Alan is soundly sleeping in a somewhat odd position. After a moment, we hear some faint piano music. It is a new composition, a mixture of light classical with a slight hint of jazz. ALAN mumbles a bit. The music STOPS. ALAN's eyes suddenly fly open.

ALAN  
(grunting, confused)  
Huh?

He settles back into bed, in another equally odd position. The MUSIC resumes. It is the same section we just heard earlier. Again, the music STOPS and ALAN opens his eyes.

ALAN  
What the -- ?  
(he looks at the clock)  
Three-thirty?

He flings off the covers, upset. He grabs a robe, puts it on and heads for the door.

ALAN  
Why can he never wait until they get  
upstairs?  
(pausing at the door)  
On the piano? That poor Bosendorfer.

INT. FRONT ROOM - DEAD OF NIGHT

It seems empty. Barely noticeable is the door to the deck slightly open. ALAN storms in expecting to see CHARLIE doing what CHARLIE does at this hour with a woman.

ALAN

Okay, Charlie would you mind not --

ALAN sees that no one is around.

ALAN

-- being here?

Suuddenly, from the darkness, we hear a burp.

ALAN

Jake ... ?

ALAN turns on a lamp. JAKE sits up from behind the piano. He has a milk moustache and looks a little guilty about something.

JAKE

Uh, hi, Dad. Sleepwalkin', huh?

ALAN

No such luck. What are you doing up at this hour?

Caught for an explanation, JAKE glances down at the piano.

JAKE

Um ... nothing. Couldn't sleep.

ALAN mimes wiping his upper lip.

ALAN

You got a milk "thing". There.

JAKE licks off the moustache.

ALAN

Was that you playing the piano?

JAKE

Do you think it was me playing the piano?

ALAN

Well, I'm not sure. I was sleeping and it woke me up.

JAKE

(quickly, smiling)

Then it was me playing. Sorry, Dad.

ALAN

Well, you know your Uncle Charlie doesn't like you pounding on his Bosendorfer.

JAKE

His what?

ALAN

The piano ... there. Now get back to bed before he gets up.

(under his breath)

If he isn't still up.

(back to Jake)

And wipe off the keys first. Somehow Uncle Charlie always knows when someone's been there. When it comes to available women and his piano, he's downright clarevoyant.

JAKE

Claire who?

ALAN starts to fall for it, but JAKE smiles.

JAKE

Gotcha! You know it's more fun to pretend to not get it, than to actually not get it. Night, Dad.

ALAN

Good night.

(leaving, mumbling)

Don't talk to me about not getting it.

After a moment, CHARLIE comes in from the deck, looking to see if ALAN is gone.

JAKE

It's okay, Uncle Charlie. He's gone.

CHARLIE pats JAKE on the back and opens his wallet.

CHARLIE

Good work, Jake! You'll be a great wing man someday.

JAKE

A wing man? Thanks!

CHARLIE doesn't really hear JAKE's reply and automatically starts to explain the term.

CHARLIE

When two guys go out looking for -

JAKE laughs. CHARLIE realizes JAKE knows what it means.

CHARLIE

Oh ... you know.

JAKE

Sure, I hear your lecture to Dad every time you go out to the bar together. What do you know ... I got you and Dad in the same two minutes

He hands JAKE a few bills. JAKE is quite happy.

CHARLIE

Here you go. Twenty bucks as promised. Thanks for covering for me. And one other thing, Jake.

JAKE

What.

CHARLIE

You may be older, taller, your voice deeper, but don't fool yourself ... in a battle of wits you'll always be unarmed.

JAKE

(proudly)

Thanks, Uncle Charlie!

CHARLIE

I rest my case.

JAKE gets up. He has a sandwich on a plate.

JAKE

I come out to make a sandwich, I make twenty bucks, and I get to keep the sandwich! Man, I just love living here!

He heads back to his room. CHARLIE looks at his piano.

CHARLIE  
(whisper shouting)  
Hey! Come back here and wipe off these  
keys!

CHARLIE smells something pungent and looks down at the  
piano.

CHARLIE  
Oh, man ... Tuna fish?

FADE OUT

ACT ONE

FADE IN

INT. KITCHEN - MID MORNING

JAKE, as usual, is eating some kind of mixture in a bowl. CHARLIE sips on some coffee and reads the paper.

JAKE

You know, Uncle Charlie, I don't think I'll ever get tired of eating Maple Loops.

CHARLIE

Enjoy it while you're still young. At my age you'll be eating Maple Loops with bran. Hey, thanks again for helping me out last night.

JAKE

No problem. And thanks for the sawbuck.

CHARLIE

A sawbuck is ten dollars. I gave you twenty.

JAKE

Oh. What do you call twenty?

CHARLIE

Extortion. Eat your loops.

JAKE

Hey, how come you don't want my dad to know you were playing your own piano? He already knows that.

CHARLIE

It's what I was playing I don't want him to know -- or anybody else, for that matter.

ALAN approaches. JAKE is confused.

JAKE

Huh?

CHARLIE

Never mind. Good morning, Mr. Sunshine.



ALAN

(yawning)  
Good morning.

CHARLIE

Why so tired? All night cable  
festival?

ALAN glances at JAKE and thinks he's covering for him.

ALAN

Uh, no. Just didn't sleep too well.

ALAN looks in the refrigerator.

ALAN

Gotta make Jake's lunch. Hey, what happened  
to all the tuna fish?

JAKE

It's okay, Dad. I don't need a lunch  
today.

CHARLIE

What?

ALAN/CHARLIE

Are you sick?

JAKE

No, I got a field trip today. It includes  
lunch ... but I'll take another one just  
in case. I'll make it.

ALAN

(impressed)  
Well ... okay! Thank you!

ALAN goes to get a mug and pour some coffee for himself as  
JAKE begins creating a gigantic Dagwood sandwich in the  
background.

CHARLIE

Wow, a catered field trip. School sure  
has changed since our day.

ALAN

Why the long face? I used to love  
field trips in school.

CHARLIE

Hey, Alan, remember our field trip to the roller rink?

This is a sore spot with ALAN.

ALAN

Um, yes.

(quickly to JAKE)

So where's the field trip to?

JAKE, absorbed in creating his edible tower, doesn't reply yet.

CHARLIE

Your dad missed the bus back to the school.

JAKE

How?

ALAN crosses back to the table with his coffee. CHARLIE begins noticing the size of JAKE's sandwich.

ALAN

It's not important.

CHARLIE

He was in the can when he thought he heard the bus leaving, so when he tried running after it in his skates, his pants dropped down around his ankles and he fell on his butt and passed out.

JAKE laughs. CHARLIE smiles.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

The guys in the E.R. nicknamed your dad "Roller Pants" Harper.

JAKE laughs.

ALAN

Which your uncle made sure they put in the yearbook. So, where are you going today?

JAKE

Some concert.

ALAN

Well, that sounds like fun.

JAKE

Don't think so. It's going to be classic junk.

ALAN

Classical music is not junk.

CHARLIE

Your dad's right. Almost all modern music has its roots in the classics.

JAKE

Even rap?

ALAN/CHARLIE

Rap's not music.

JAKE

Jeez ... okay.

ALAN

Let's get going.

JAKE trods off. ALAN gets some foil to wrap the sandwich. He keeps pulling out the foil so he'll have enough.

CHARLIE

Holy cow! Look at the size of that sandwich! He's gonna need a school bus for that thing.

ALAN

You know. We really shouldn't discourage any interest Jake might have in music.

ALAN has some difficulty wrapping the sandwich.

CHARLIE

Yes, he's just amazing on the bass. After four years he can still only play the intro to "Smoke on the Water."

ALAN

I'm thinking maybe he's ready for another instrument.

CHARLIE

The kazoo?

ALAN

I gotta find a shoebox for this sandwich. You think of something, Charlie. You know a lot about music.

ALAN goes. CHARLIE is suddenly quite subdued about something.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I know a lot about music.

INT. FRONT ROOM - AFTERNOON

CHARLIE is now playing some of what we heard earlier. He makes some notations on his score pad. He hears a car pull up, grabs his music and dashes out the side door through the kitchen.

ROSE appears on the deck, but oddly not from over the railing. She peeks in and opens the door. She disappears for a moment. ALAN and JAKE enter from the front door.

ALAN

So how'd you like the concert?

JAKE

It was okay, I guess. They could really use some electric guitars and keyboards, though.

ALAN

It was Mozart.

JAKE

I don't care whose art it was. It needed to be goosed up a little.

ROSE returns, rolling a HUGE potted plant into the room. It's as tall as one of the doors. ALAN and JAKE watch for a moment.

ALAN

Well, look at that. Swamp Thing.

ROSE

Oh, hi, Alan! Hi, Jake!

JAKE

Cool plant. What's it for?

ROSE

Oh, I just thought the place could use a little greenery.

ALAN

So you brought us a rainforest. Say, did you carry that thing up the stairs all by yourself?

ROSE

I got great guns, Alan.

ALAN rubs his biceps. Another painful memory.

ALAN

How could I forget?

ROSE

Say, what was that beautiful song Charlie was playing a minute ago?

JAKE immediately is on alert and awkwardly tries to signal ROSE to drop the subject. She catches on.

ROSE

-- or yesterday or some other time. But not today. Maybe it was on TV. What do I know? Enjoy the plant. It might be a banana tree, but I'm not sure.

She trots out and over the railing.

ALAN

Jake, were you playing the piano again?

JAKE

I was in the car with you, Dad.

ALAN

Good point.

There is a knock at the door. ALAN goes over to it and opens it. It's EVELYN.

EVELYN

Hello, dear! Hi, Jake.

ALAN

Hi, Mom.

JAKE

Hi, grandma. Got a new recipe for you.  
Eggs Jake.

EVELYN

Eggs Jake?

JAKE

Kind of like Eggs Benedict ... but without  
the benedictine.

EVELYN

No, dear. They're called Eggs Benedict  
because --

(realizing)

Will you make breakfast for Grandma if  
she gets the benedictine?

ALAN closes the door and quickly changes the subject.

ALAN

So what brings you out to Casa de  
Charlie?

CHARLIE enters from the kitchen.

EVELYN

Charlie. Well, the gang's all here!

CHARLIE

Um, hi, Mom. Thanks for coming over.

EVELYN

You know I can never resist your annual  
invitation.

ALAN

You invited her?

EVELYN darts a quick look at ALAN. CHARLIE glares at ALAN  
who finally senses that he and JAKE should go. He starts  
ushering JAKE out of the room.

ALAN

Um, we'll leave you two alone. Jake  
wants to tell me all about Wolfgang.

JAKE

Now he sounds cool. Wish I could  
have gone to his concert.

And they're gone. CHARLIE just kind of smiles at EVELYN,  
not sure how to approach this.

EVELYN

Something on your mind or is this just a  
really slow game of Charades?

CHARLIE

Well, it's a little awkward ...

EVELYN

Oh, God, Charlie ... we've had every  
possible talk there is. I even had to  
make up a few when you wandered into  
unknown territory.

CHARLIE

Mom, did anyone else in our family have  
any musical talent? At all?

(quickly)

Besides you, of course.

She glances over at the piano, walks to it and then looks  
back at CHARLIE.

EVELYN

(smiling)

Ah. You're talking about your precious,  
artistic, wasted little gift, aren't you?

CHARLIE goes over to her.

CHARLIE

(hesitating)

Mom ...

EVELYN

Look, dear, every unused second brings me  
closer to death. And I know as much as  
you want that day to come, I'm putting it  
off as long as is humanly possible. So  
please, get to the point.

CHARLIE

Where did my instrumental musical ability  
come from?

BERTA appears from the back, carrying a laundry basket. She doesn't stop on her way to the laundry room.

EVELYN

What on earth are you talking about?  
You're a natural, Charlie.

BERTA

Most of the time you're unnatural.

CHARLIE goes around and sits at the piano.

CHARLIE

But it seems like it just kind of "happened."  
Like puberty. Does it run in the family?

EVELYN

Well, your Uncle Bernie played a little  
banjo.

CHARLIE

I'm not talking Deliverance here, Mom. What  
about Grandpa Ringgold?

BERTA returns with a now empty laundry basket.

EVELYN

Daddy? Oh, no, no, no, dear. My father  
had all the musical talent of --

ALAN enters. BERTA crosses past him.

EVELYN/BERTA

Your brother.

ALAN

What.

CHARLIE

Mom was just pointing out the similarities  
between you and Grandpa Ringgold.

ALAN

(smiling)

Oh? In what way?

BERTA

They're talking about musical talent, Skippy.  
Nothin' to see here.



ALAN

Hey, I co-wrote a musical revue in college.

BERTA

Right. And what are you doing now?

Caught, ALAN mumbles a little.

ALAN

Well, sometimes I pretend a patient's vertebra is a piano keyboard.

BERTA

You gotta get out more often.

BERTA exits.

EVELYN

Charlie, never question what you were meant to do. Just do it. And keep getting paid for it, too. Goodbye, dear. Bye, Alan.

She goes. ALAN yells after her.

ALAN

Hey, I've got rhythm!

CHARLIE picks up the cue and plays and sings.

CHARLIE

Who could ask for anything more?

INT. KITCHEN

CHARLIE is reading. BERTA is putting away groceries. She produces a bunch of cans of tuna fish.

BERTA

I'll tell you, Charlie, if Zippy Jr. keeps going through tuna fish at this rate, we're gonna have Greenpeace on our ass.

CHARLIE

The kid likes tuna.

BERTA

Sorry, Charlie.

ALAN enters.

ALAN

You know, something really weird has been going on around here the past few nights.

BERTA

The past few nights? You are one skinny ostrich.

ALAN

It's really weird, but I'd swear someone has been playing the piano real early in the morning.

CHARLIE

Well, it's not me. Maybe it's the ghost of Liberace.

BERTA

Hey, I just dust it, polish it, and buff out the occasional butt prints on the top.

She looks off toward the piano.

BERTA (cont'd)

That poor Bosendorfer.

ALAN

Well, then who else could it -- ?

All three slowly look at JAKE who walks by, wiping the inside of a Pringles tube with his finger and licking the salt off. They all slowly look back at each other for a moment and then laugh ... almost to the point of tears.

BERTA

One more of those and I'm gonna have to change my pants.

The boys instaneously stop laughing. Mercifully, the phone RINGS. CHARLIE is a little quick to answer it.

CHARLIE

Hello? This is he.

ALAN and BERTA note the proper grammar and tone CHARLIE is using.

CHARLIE

Well, I haven't really decided yet.

(beat)

Tomorrow? Certainly. I can give you an answer by tomorrow.

(unconvincingly)

Looking forward to it. Thanks! I'll call you tomorrow. Goodbye.

He hangs up the phone.

ALAN

Who was that?

CHARLIE

PBS.

BERTA and ALAN both laugh.

CHARLIE

(insulted)

What.

BERTA

What did they want? You volunteering to answer phones for them again?

ALAN

You answered phones for PBS?

CHARLIE

Court-ordered.

BERTA

He never got any pledges, but he once got fifteen phone numbers.

ALAN

Who knows? It could be Jake playing the piano. He might be a savant.

CHARLIE

You left out "idiot". Idiot savant.

ALAN

You know what they say -- talent skips a generation.

CHARLIE

No -- stupidity skips a generation.

JAKE walks by and lightly trips over his untied shoelace, but keeps going.

CHARLIE (cont'd)

With a few exceptions.

INT, FRONT ROOM - DEAD OF NIGHT

CHARLIE is lightly playing, working on his composition.

HALLWAY

ALAN sticks his head out from his room. He is now determined to find out who's playing the piano. He tiptoes slowly around the corner, only steps away from the front room.

BACK TO FRONT ROOM

As ALAN's just about to look around the corner, he stubs his toe.

ALAN

Ow! Damn it!

CHARLIE, alerted, tries running out of the room but runs into ROSE's gigantic plant. He wrestles with it but it falls on him, pinning him down.

CHARLIE

What the -- ? Oof!

ALAN turns the lights on and sees CHARLIE.

ALAN

Ah-ha! So it is you!

CHARLIE is motionless under the plant.

CHARLIE

You wouldn't happen to have a machete on you, would you?

FADE OUT

ACT TWO

FADE INTO

INT. FRONT ROOM

As we left it. CHARLIE and ALAN are struggling to put the plant back upright.

CHARLIE

Where the hell did this beanstalk come from?

ALAN

Rose brought it by. Said the place needed a few plants.

CHARLIE

Yeah, but "Jungle in a Pot"?

CHARLIE brushes himself off.

ALAN

Now ... what the heck's been going on, Charlie?

CHARLIE goes over to the sofa and sits.

CHARLIE

Other than being attacked by the plant from "Little Shop of Horrors"?

ALAN

Oh, I love that musical. Did you know Jack Nicholson was in the original non-musical movie? "Somewhere That's Green." Beautiful melody, but I always thought it would be more appropriate for Kermit the Frog to sing that song.

(a bad Kermit, singing)

"Somewhere That's Green."

CHARLIE just sits there. ALAN clears his throat.

ALAN

But I digress. Sooooo ... what's all this covert midnight tinkling you've been doing?

CHARLIE

Well, I've been working on a new piece.

ALAN shrugs and sits.

ALAN

(flatly)

What's her name?

CHARLIE

No, no. Of music. I've been working on a new piece of music.

ALAN

So? You're always working. Well, frequently working. Come to think of it I hardly ever hear you working.

CHARLIE

That's because you have one of those steady day jobs, Alan.

ALAN

Oh, right. I'm the responsible one. I forgot.

CHARLIE heads outside to the deck.

CHARLIE

And I usually start most of my sessions after breakfast, er -- lunch.

He deftly dodges ROSE's plant out of fear. ALAN follows him.

ALAN

Up at the crack of noon. That's you.

EXT. DECK

ALAN joins CHARLIE who looks out at the ocean.

ALAN (cont'd)

Just tell me, Charlie. What's the problem?

CHARLIE

Okay, okay. I got invited to be a guest on this TV show.

ALAN

They're bringing back Playboy After Dark?

CHARLIE

(distracted)

They are?

(back to it)

No, no. It's nothing like that. It's a real show. You know ... network TV.

ALAN

Ah. So what? You've done a few TV shows before. And don't forget about that real dandy infomercial for your kids' songs.

CHARLIE

True.

ALAN

And they haven't had to bleep you once yet.

CHARLIE

You haven't seen the outtakes. But this show's a little different.

ALAN

Oh. So that really was PBS on the phone yesterday? Oh, I really don't think they're ready for you yet, Charlie.

CHARLIE

No, it's a classy show. A bunch of musicians, real musicians, sit around and talk about music.

ALAN

Well, that sounds -- great, actually. What are you worried about, then?

CHARLIE

Then each guy gets up and plays one of his songs.

ALAN

(starting to understand)

Ohhhh. And you --

CHARLIE

What am I going to play, Alan? "Maple Loops"? One of my kiddie booger songs?

ALAN

You've written a lot more than kiddie booger songs, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Not like these guys. It would be like you being on a TV show with a bunch of real doctors.

CHARLIE heads into the kitchen. ALAN follows as before.

ALAN

I'll let that go because I know you're in artistic pain.

INT. KITCHEN

CHARLIE grabs a mug and pours some coffee.

ALAN (cont'd)

So -- you're worried about being the square peg at a round table.

ALAN realizes his bad pun, but chuckles anyway.

ALAN (cont'd)

Well, that was unintentional.

CHARLIE

Yeah ...

ALAN

Then the bits of music I've been hearing --

CHARLIE

Are from the piece I want to play on this show. But I don't know. Am I really a "serious" musician, or just some schlump who makes a ton of money playing the light stuff?

ALAN

(subito)

I'd go with "B".

(to CHARLIE)

Maybe they don't want you to play something new. Maybe they actually want you to play --



CHARLIE

One of my kiddie booger songs? I don't think "Don't Play in Your Pockets" would really help a pledge drive, Alan.

CHARLIE starts to go into the front room.

ALAN

Wait a minute, Charlie. I -- "Don't Play in Your Pockets?"

CHARLIE

My first generation of fans are growing up.

ALAN

Look, we can keep walking around and around the house until we turn into butter, or I can take you out and buy you a drink and talk through this.

CHARLIE, almost stunned, puts down his mug and gets out his cell phone and checks it.

ALAN

Hey, what are you doing?

CHARLIE

Checking the camera on my cell phone. If you're paying, I want to get it on record.

INT. PAVLOV'S BAR

ALAN and CHARLIE are at the counter. Two beautiful WOMEN are nearby. They occasionally glance over at CHARLIE. ALAN notices them, but CHARLIE is a little tipsy, lost in thought, and apparently oblivious to the women.

CHARLIE

You see, around my regular music buddies I'm the smart one. I'm the guy who knows everything. Or at least I'm the guy who sounds like he knows everything.

ALAN

You have "regular music buddies"?

CHARLIE

Stay on point, Alan. You're supposed to be the sober one.

ALAN

Right. Sorry. So you feel if you're sitting next to a bunch of these --

CHARLIE

Formally trained gods of music.

ALAN

Okay ... that you somehow won't fit in.

CHARLIE

Damn it, Alan. I fit in anywhere! Like here.

(yelling to all)

Don't I fit in here?

The CROWD generally grumbles approval. A few applaud. ALAN notices the general drunkenness of the crowd.

ALAN

Yes, you certainly do. Especially at this very moment. It's a good place for you to be. You blend.

CHARLIE

I can kick ass playing jazz. But it's "club jazz". It's just that I don't want to look stupid.

CHARLIE twirls a drink umbrella, sticks it in his mouth, ear or nose, and looks at ALAN.

ALAN

Oh, um, you could never look stupid.

CHARLIE angrily starts sticking more umbrellas in his hair. ALAN is helpless to stop him.

CHARLIE

Look at me, Alan! Look at me! Do I look stupid?

The entire bar yells versions of "No! No!"

ALAN

Um, not if you were in Hawaii.

CHARLIE

I'm serious, Alan!

ALAN tries not to laugh.

ALAN

Oh, I believe you're serious, Charlie. You haven't even noticed those two gorgeous women who have been checking you out since the moment we sat down.

CHARLIE

Oh, you mean the medium brunette, green eyes, halter dress and killer legs. Tall blonde, blue eyes, killer smile and rockin' mini-skirt?

ALAN

Amazing, Holmes.

CHARLIE

Enementry, my dear Wats -

CHARLIE falls off the stool. The entire crowd winces.

INT. FRONT ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

ROSE is watering the huge plant.

ROSE

There you go. Don't they ever water you, poor thing?

(suddenly suspicious)

Have you been fighting?

There is a knock at the front door. ROSE goes over and opens the door. It's EVELYN. She strides in.

EVELYN

Oh, hello, dear. Good to see you. Stalking in the daylight again, I see. Gives your face a little color.

ROSE

Oh, thanks, Evelyn. Just watering the plant. It looked a little thirsty.

EVELYN

Yes. I won't tell you what Charlie did once to my ficus in the middle of the night. Broke it in half looking for the handle to flush it.

ALAN and CHARLIE enter from outside.

CHARLIE

I don't. Maybe I should cancel.

ALAN

No, don't cancel. Just --

They freeze when they see both ROSE and EVELYN.

CHARLIE

Uh-oh. This never ends well.

EVELYN

Alan, leave me alone with your brother.

ROSE

I was just about to say the same thing. But it never works.

EVELYN

It does when you're a mother.

ROSE

Well, I'll get to work on that. Come on, Alan.

ALAN

Uh, what?

ROSE

I mean to give them some privacy.

ALAN

Good. Because I already have enough children.

EVELYN notes his remark. He quickly corrects himself.

ALAN

I, uh, think of Charlie more as a child sometimes.

ALAN swallows, nervous. CHARLIE's eyes widen.

CHARLIE

No, Alan. Don't go. I'll give you half the house if you stay.

ALAN

Not on your -- half the house?

EVELYN

Go, Alan!

ROSE pulls ALAN out to the deck. ALAN looks back once more at CHARLIE, who looks like a frog trapped in a jar.

ALAN

I love you, Charlie ...

ALAN walks into the plant and then navigates outside. EVELYN takes a few steps toward CHARLIE who almost literally has his back up against the front door.

EVELYN

Charles Eugene Harper, I know all about that show you're supposed to be on. They called me for some background on you.

CHARLIE

So they don't want me now, right? Thanks, Mom! Problem solved. You're the best.

EVELYN starts backing CHARLIE around the room, up stairs, around furniture, with neither one stumbling.

EVELYN

You are going on that show, young man. I didn't sleep with three of your music professors so you could graduate, only to have you toss it away because you don't think you're good enough.

CHARLIE

But Mom --

EVELYN

Don't "but Mom" me. I was good enough with your professors -- well, great with two of them -- and now it's your turn to take one for the team.

CHARLIE

Team? What team? It's just me.

EVELYN

Just you? Just you? Do you know how many times I had to listen to you plunking out "Clair De Lune" when you were ten years old? That stupid song is what caused my second divorce! Well, that and a secretary who, ironically, was actually named Claire.

CHARLIE sidles past EVELYN, careful not to make physical contact. He crosses over to the piano and sits at it. BERTA enters from the kitchen. She carries a dish rag and plate.

CHARLIE

But I've never written a hit "adult" song, or a cantata or a symphony. I'm just -- a plunker.

BERTA

Not exactly the way I'd spell it, but close enough for government work.

BERTA ducks back into the kitchen. EVELYN follows and changes her approach. She leans against the side of the piano. CHARLIE winces ever so slightly.

EVELYN

Well, that's just not true, Charlie. You're an amazing pianist, trained in the classics and with a natural flair for jazz.

CHARLIE smiles.

CHARLIE

And show tunes.

EVELYN

(excited)

Yes! You see? How many times have you accompanied me singing a classic show tune?

CHARLIE

Six thousand two hundred and thirty-three. Not counting encores.

EVELYN

(feigning humility)

And I wouldn't have sounded half as good with someone else.

(beat)

Well, a quarter as good. I did have to carry you a few times.

She smiles at CHARLIE, who laughs.

CHARLIE

Yeah. Thanks for pulling me through on those.

EVELYN sits next to CHARLIE on the piano bench. There's actually a nice moment. Just a moment. During the following, ALAN wanders back in a little, but stays out of sight.

EVELYN

You're the best at what you do, dear. That's what counts. That's all that anyone, even a mother, can ask for. I'm the best at selling expensive homes, Alan is the best at ... whatever it is he actually does with bones.

ALAN is insulted once again.

EVELYN

It doesn't matter how well other people do.

CHARLIE/EVELYN

Except in bed.

The two of them laugh and EVELYN stands and collects her purse. CHARLIE follows her to the front door during the following.

EVELYN

So you'll do the show?

CHARLIE

I'll do the show. Thanks, Mom.

CHARLIE manages an actual quick hug. EVELYN enjoys it but doesn't let on. CHARLIE opens the door and she starts out but turns back.

EVELYN

Just don't play "Clare De Lune" or  
I'll kick your ass live on public  
television.

She goes. ALAN walks into the room and yells.

ALAN

For God's sake, I'm a chiropractor!

INT. TV STUDIO

The broadcast is underway. There are five chairs in a semi-circle and a round table in the middle. Next to them is a baby grand. The HOST sits center. To his left are an elderly, distinguished-looking CONDUCTOR, and next to him is a black JAZZ MUSICIAN.

On the host's right are a very attractive Asian female CELLIST, and next to her is CHARLIE. Everyone is dressed up, except CHARLIE, who is dressed up more than usual, but still not quite as much as the others. There are a few cups on the table.

HOST

(into studio camera)

So remember, a pledge of \$500 will  
get you "The History of Jazz", an  
amazing ten-CD set ...

He holds up the box set of CD's.

HOST

... and the stunningly beautiful photo  
book "Symphony Halls of America"

The host looks around for the book. CHARLIE realizes his coffee cup is on it, smiles awkwardly, lifts the mug, wipes a ring off the cover of the book, and gives it to the host.

CHARLIE

Oops. A little ring around Davies  
Symphony Hall.

(to studio camera)

Sorry about that, San Francisco.



HOST

(flatly)

A three-hundred dollar value. We'd like to thank our panel today. Maestro Peter Strohovsky, guest conductor this season for the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

The CONDUCTOR nods. CHARLIE starts to applaud but then stops when he realizes no one else is applauding.

ANGLE ON ALAN, JAKE AND EVELYN

They sit in the front row of about three short rows of chairs for special guests watching the taping. ALAN rolls his eyes at CHARLIE's faux pas and instinctively puts out a hand to keep JAKE from also applauding.

JAKE

What? The old guy was funny.

BACK ON PANEL

The host continues his wrap-up.

HOST

Jazz trumpeter Raymond "Stone Man" Atherton.

He nods, possibly a little "stoned" himself.

HOST

Classical cellist Denise Sakai.

She nods. CHARLIE smiles widely at her. She stifles a smile back at him, but there's definitely been some chemistry earlier in the show.

HOST

And pianist, pop composer and beloved writer of children's songs, Charlie Harper.

CHARLIE nods out past the cameras as if there's a large audience. He holds up one hand as if they were applauding.

CHARLIE

Great to be here, Sid.

The HOST slightly bristles at being called "Sid".

HOST

So, Charlie ... we've heard from the others, and now it's your turn. What are you going to play us out with?

CHARLIE gets up and starts to walk around to the piano bench.

CHARLIE

Well, Sid ... this is a new piece I composed just for today. It has a little bit of jazz and a little bit of classical in it. I originally had a sort of high-falutin' title for it, but --  
(under his breath)  
I know I'm really going to regret this ...  
(normal volume)  
-- I've decided to call it "Evelyn's Theme."

REACTION SHOT - EVELYN

She actually is incredibly moved, but tries not to show it in front of ALAN and JAKE, who smile over at her. JAKE doesn't get the connection.

JAKE

Hey, that's your name, grandma.

Unconsciously she pats JAKE on the head, working her hand down and over his mouth.

ON CHARLIE

He plays a beautiful intro and suddenly goes into "Heart and Soul." EVELYN laughs out loud and covers her own mouth.

CHARLIE

Just kidding, Mom. This one's for you.  
But censored for PBS.

CHARLIE begins playing his beautiful classic/jazz mix as we:

FADE OUT

TAG

EXT. DECK - EVENING

CHARLIE is his old relaxed self, sipping on some concoction or another. ALAN enters from the front room with his own drink.

ALAN

Well, just got off the phone with Mom. You can actually still see her smiling through the receiver. That was a very nice thing you did, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I figure it should keep her off our backs for a few weeks.

ALAN sits.

ALAN

So ... after all the anxiety, all the worry and all --

CHARLIE

Yeah, yeah. Ask your question.

ALAN

How was the off camera response to your new work?

CHARLIE

The host said it was one of the most innovative works he'd heard in a long time.

ALAN

Well .. that's great!

CHARLIE

The other guys on the panel said it was smart, fresh and possibly a new form of jazz/classical fusion.

ALAN

Wow! You see? You had nothing to worry about.

CHARLIE

The female cellist actually asked me to dinner next Friday. And you know what they say about cellist's thighs.

Yes, once again ALAN sees CHARLIE pulling an incredible victory out of a possible disaster.

ALAN

Terrific, terrific. I'm very happy for you, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Yeah, and right after the show I got a call from the conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. They want to feature it in one of their New Works concerts next season at Disney Hall, and at the Hollywood Bowl for their Fourth of July pops concert. Yep. Just me, Jimmy Buffett and some Roman candles.

ALAN, quite jealous and deflated, looks over at CHARLIE.

ALAN

And which of these accolades means the most to you, Charlie?

CHARLIE

(simple)

Alan, there's always room for cello.

ALAN

Mmm-hmmm.

ALAN quietly stands up and opens the door to the front room.

CHARLIE

Hey, where ya goin'?

ALAN

I'm going to throw myself into the plant and pray it's carnivorous.

CHARLIE smiles and drinks.

FADE OUT

# TED KOPULOS PRODUCTIONS #001

For those of you not familiar with the honorable professional of television writing, this is called a “spec script”. That means I wrote it with no promise or expectation of any kind from anyone affiliated with (or who can even spell) Chuck Lorre or Warner Brothers. Spec scripts are more like calling cards for a writer to demonstrate that the writer has the ability to correctly format\* and paginate a television script. Oh, yeah ... also that they can develop story, character, dialogue, humor, pacing and lots of other neat creative elements. I’ve written a gazillion spec scripts in the last 30 years (from Love American Style in 1973 to this one) and have been so successful that none of them has ever gotten me any writing jobs, but one did get me in to pitch to three of the Star Trek shows at Paramount in the 1990’s (not to mention some very nice non-form rejection letters from some very famous writers and producers, typed on some very famous letterhead). It was great fun driving onto the studio lot on actual business and not as a stalker. I would trot over to the Hart Building, down the old hallways in need of paint and carpeting, wait in the non-air-conditioned outer offices for up to a half hour, and then try to animatedly tell my wonderful stories to producers, story editors and writers, a few of whom would apparently rather change the toner in the laserprinters and copiers or get a root canal than have to sit through a story pitch. I made a few of them laugh, and a few of them actually promised to pitch a few of my stories to their whole writing staff. And not one sale. But they would always invite me back. I figured either I was just charming and likeable, or else the office had a pool on how many times I would keep coming back to pitch before giving up. Whoever had 10.5 years won. I did actually sell a story to Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. An executive producer called me to tell me. Being the natural born cynic I am, I feigned happiness. I did not hear back until I called them to set up my next pitch session. When I asked about the fate of my sale I was told they decided not to buy my story after all, and instead a vaguely similar story was written featuring a different character on the show. This happens a lot in Hollywood. There are only a finite number of storylines in shows with established characters and situations. That’s why I’m not bitter. No, the reason I finally gave up pitching to a swell franchise like Star Trek is that my final pitch was to a young lady who had sold two stories, was less than half my age, and yet still got on staff somehow. She shot down every story I had, spoke to me as if I was fresh out of a community college TV/film writing class, and the pitch was over in less than ten minutes. I never called back. I finally gave up writing spec scripts and writing for TV and film in general. I wrote three Star Trek short stories on a whim a few years later and they were all bought and published by Pocket Books. Then I returned to writing and composing for musical theater. Then a year ago I had this idea for Two and a Half Men. I wrote a kickass cover letter to you-know-who and never heard back. I think it is true that everyone in Hollywood knows each other. Or that I must be on a secret industry list of “never hires”. Then again, I just may really, really suck as a television writer. I miss Star Trek.

\* This spec script is not in the proper format. God, I love irony.