

Like Father...
By Will Hightower

CAST

Ted – A 52-year old blue collar father.

David – A 19-year old student.

SETTING

A suburban, middle class home in the present day.

Lights up on a living room. Inhabiting the living room is a couch, chair, coffee table, end table, and TV. Inhabiting the couch is Ted who is watching the History Channel. There is a blanket folded on the top of the couch. Sitting on the coffee table is a bottle of prescription pills. On the end table is an ash tray with butts in it and two beer bottles. The scene is quiet except for the TV's low ramble.

Ted falls asleep watching the TV and sleeps until David enters with a backpack. He sees his father sleeping on the couch and turns off the TV. As he is about to exit he sees the bottle of pills. Shit. He sneaks up to the pills and very quietly tries to grab them. As he clasps the bottle Ted's hand covers David's, holding him there.

Leave 'em there.

Ted

It's not—I just—Dad look I—

David

I know what they are David. I thought we talked about this.

Ted

Yes but I decided that it was best—

David

YOU decided what's best? And when did you start thinking you could do that?

Ted

I'm 19 Dad. I'm going to college now and I'm a grown man.

David

A man huh? A "man" doesn't rely on pills to make himself feel good. A "MAN" doesn't need to be carried by drugs.

Ted

They're not drugs they're—

David

Shut up! Listen Davey, I went through Hell when I was your age because of my Harley wreck. They took a kidney, half my liver and God knows what else.

Ted

David

(Almost under his breath)

And yet you still live this way.

Ted

Do you want to get hit boy?

David

No sir.

Ted

Don't give me that sir shit; I'm your goddamn father. Point being, I went through all that and I never relied on no goddamn pills.

David

What about when you had the heart attack? You took pills for that didn't you? And the chemo last year? Pills came with that didn't they? How is this any different?

Ted

Those were doctor prescribed. I wasn't self medicating like you, you little shit. I didn't even need them! I'm like a fucking cockroach, nothing can kill me. Not motorcycles, not heart attacks, not even fucking cancer! All without any need for this shit.

Ted indicates the pills.

Ted

How long have you been using these?

David

7 months.

Ted

Un-fucking-believable.

David

Dad, it's not like I'm fucking dealing dope. They're just anti-depressants!

Ted

They're a crutch! I thought you were stronger than this.

David

This has nothing to do with strength. It's depression, I can't control it.

Ted

Depression is bullshit. It's just an excuse. "Oh, I don't feel like it. I can't. I'm depressed". Get over it!

David

It's not something you get over Dad. It's a medical condition, brain chemistry! Sarah said that--

Ted

Your sister doesn't know shit. She's not a psychiatrist, she's a goddamn gynecologist. She's not qualified to be prescribing this shit. How long have you been "depressed"?

David

At least since 8th grade.

Ted

And you lied to me all this time, saying you're fine.

David

I was fine. I didn't know what I was feeling, for all I knew that was normal.

Ted

Right, you're so damn depressed that you do good in school and are always busy with work. Bullshit.

David

They're distractions Dad! I keep busy so I don't have to think.

Ted

Think about what? Think about how "bad" you got it? Look around son, you have a roof over your head and food to eat, that's enough to not be fucking depressed!

David

It has nothing to do with that!

Ted

Then what is the fucking problem?!

David

I fucking hate myself! That's the goddamn problem! I can't stop thinking about how worthless I am and how nothing matters because life is just a pointless amount of time I'm meant to suffer.

Beat

Ted

Why do you hate yourself son?

David

I don't know. I have no reason to. I... I just do.

Silence

Ted

And you tell Sarah all this before me? Why didn't you come to me?

David

I tried. I asked about anti-depressants and you told me that they are for pussies who can't deal with the shit they've gotten themselves into. Sarah said--

Ted

Let me guess, she said it was my fault?

David

What? No, how could it be your fault?

Ted

It's all Daddy's fault huh? I didn't hug you enough as a kid? Didn't give you the Nintendo you wanted, is that it? Now you're all fucked up because of me!

David

It's not your fault. It's not anyone's fault. It's a mental defect; neither of us can control it.

Ted

Is it genetic?

David

It can be, yes.

Ted

Well your goddamn mother is crazy. It's her fucking fault. If you want to take this shit, go live with her.

David

No, I'm not going to leave you here alone.

Ted

And killing yourself wouldn't be "leaving me here alone?"

David

I'm not going to kill myself.

Ted

How am I supposed to know that? We didn't think twice about Cole! What if you pull one of those stupid-ass stunts?

David

I'm not like Cole.

Ted

Everything was fine he said. Things were going great with his family and they just bought that new house. They come over for Thanksgiving and all is well! Next thing we fucking know his goddamn 5-year old finds him dead in the garage with the car running.

David

We don't know why he—

Ted

I know why. He couldn't fucking hang. That fucking pussy-ass-bitch couldn't hang with the big boys so he took the easy way out. Suicide is weak son. And I'll be damned if I have to bury my child.

David

Dad—

Ted

I've gone through a lot of shit, but I couldn't handle that. No parent should ever have to bury their child. Don't do that to me son. Don't fucking do that to me!

David

I'm not going to kill myself Dad! If I were going to I would have done it back in high school. Hell, I almost did! I gave it a lot of thought, too much thought. I'm going to kill myself but I thought, hey, you only die once, so let's make it good. I wanted it to be the most painful and longest death possible. I thought about cutting my wrists, pills, hell even lighting myself on fire! Nothing lasted long enough. Finally I figured it out! The longest, most painful way to die is to live forever.

Pause

Ted

And you're over that now?

David

Yes.

Ted

So instead of suicide, you are just going to sedate yourself.

David

I'm not sedating anything. It just prevents me from having random bouts of depression. If anything it makes me more productive.

Ted

More productive? But I thought the depression is what allowed you to be so damn successful? What happened to that?

David

Oh come on. Now you're being fucking ridiculous.

Ted

Stop taking them.

David

What?

Ted

Stop. Taking. Them.

David

No. Do you know what will happen if I just stop?

Ted

I don't give a shit. You're better than this.

David indicates the beer bottles and cigarettes.

David

And you're better than this.

Ted

That has nothing to do with this.

David

Yes it does! You self medicate too Dad! Drinking is a crutch; you use it to alleviate the pain of life. It's weak; you can't cope with your shit so you drink it all away. And by smoking and drinking like this *you* are killing yourself!

Silence

Ted
(Quietly)

Get the fuck out.

David

What?

Ted

GET THE FUCK OUT!

(Roaring)

*The echo lingers in the air for a moment.
David moves to exit.*

Whatever.

David

David exits and Ted returns to the couch. He is still tense and breathing from the argument. Ted picks up the remote and turns the TV back on. As soon as the TV comes on Ted feels a pain in his arm, dropping the remote. He is having a heart attack. He struggles with it for a moment and accepts his fate. He falls on the couch and settles in, similar to how he slept before.

Silence/Stillness

David reenters the living room with a bag from In and Out Burger. Approaches from behind the couch, not seeing his dad is “asleep”.

Hey... I got dinner. Two double-doubles, no tomatoes or onions.

David

David sees that his father is “asleep” and sets the bag on the table. He stares at him for a while before turning off the TV. David picks up the blanket off of the couch and half-covers Ted.

G’night Dad... I love you.

David

As he exits he pats his father’s foot and goes to bed.

End of play