

**Squeeze Play** had its world premiere at the Mile High Theatre, Hoboken, NJ, in June 2013 as part of a benefit called "7th Inning Stretch" (in a version that featured a "Mom" instead of a "Dad"). It was directed by Chris O'Connor.

COACH Victor Slezak  
MOM Barbara Pitts

*Silence. Darkness.*

*Two men standing on a baseball field. Local park sort of backstop, not a professional situation.*

*One man (THE DAD) wearing Brooks Brothers casual. Another man (THE COACH) is decked out in training gear. Carrying a clipboard with forms.*

**DAD** . . . beautiful day.

**COACH** Uh-huh. It sure is.

*The men stand quietly for a moment. Each staring off in different directions.*

*In fact, they should never look at each other throughout.*

**DAD** . . . I know what you're thinking.

**COACH** Yeah? (Beat.) What's that?

**DAD** No, I don't mean exactly—like, I'm a mind reader or something—  
—I just mean in general. I know "in general" what you're thinking right now. How you're feeling.

**COACH** Is that so?

**DAD** Probably.

**COACH** And?

**DAD** You're disgusted, Right?

**COACH** Pretty much. Yep.

**DAD** I can tell.

**COACH** . . .

**DAD** Well . . . that's . . . what would you do?

**COACH** Me?

**DAD** Yes. I'm just saying . . . in my situation?

**COACH** I dunno.

**DAD** Yes you do. (Beat.) I'm not being rude . . . I'm just saying that I can tell you think I'm an asshole for asking you this so you must have an idea of what the *right* thing to do would be. (Beat.) True?

**COACH** I guess I do. Yeah.

**DAD** Which is . . . ?

**COACH** You know.

**DAD** Yeah, I probably do . . . I have an idea what you're going to say . . . what most people in this situation would say . . . like, what MY dad would've said if he was you . . . (Beat.) I'm just curious about what you're going to say.

*The two men stand looking into the distance. Watching the boys practice across the great expanse of lawn in front of them.*

**COACH** I'm gonna say I wish you'd never asked me this. I wanna say "fuck you" and spit in your face and tell you that's not how we play this game and throw your kid off the team and make an example of him. And you. That's what I *wanna* do. And say. I would like to do that . . . right now. This minute.

**DAD** I see.

**COACH** That's what I'd *expect* to happen if I was a parent whose kid was on my team, if you did this and I heard about it . . . I'd come to me and complain and point fingers and do everything I could—go down to see one of those people at the "Y" or over

at the City Hall . . . *somewhere*—and complain about you and your conduct . . . *that's* the kind of thing I'd expect of myself or other folks I know. If I found out about it.

**DAD** Okay. Fair enough. (Beat.) But that's not what you're going to do. Right? Is it?

**COACH** No. I don't suppose I am . . .

**DAD** And why is that?

**COACH** You know why.

**DAD** I guess I do.

**COACH** Yeah, I guess you do. In fact, I'm *sure* you do. (Beat.)

I figure that's why you even had the balls to ask me this . . . to have the *guts* to ask another man to do something like you're asking me here.

**DAD** Maybe so.

**COACH** Because you knew I'd have to think about it, I'd have to give it some very *serious* consideration, thanks to the place I find myself in currently. The state of my life at the present time. (Beat.) So.

**DAD** It's a tough economy.

**COACH** Yeah, it certainly is.

**DAD** Hard to keep a job. Or find one again . . .

**COACH** Exactly.

**DAD** And money is tight. For families who are *struggling* . . . bills to pay . . .

**COACH** Yep.

**DAD** A kid in college.

**COACH** Exactly.

**DAD** I get that.

**COACH** Yeah? You do?

**DAD** I absolutely do . . . it's very hard these days. To make ends meet.

**COACH** But you're willing to help me with that.

**DAD** I am. Yes.

**COACH** You're . . . what . . . ? Tell me again?

**DAD** I'm happy to . . . you know . . .

**COACH** No, I don't. I don't know exactly because of the way you said it. Just sorta tossed it up in the air . . . like a screwball or a, you know, some kind of *curve* that you've thrown at me . . . just floating there over the plate. Waiting for me to take a swing at it.

**DAD** That's very poetic.

**COACH** Fuck. You.

**DAD** I'm not trying to be funny. I just like the way you put it . . . that analogy. It's true. I did kind of just *drop* it there. Like that. In your lap.

**COACH** Yeah, well—I guess you do what you gotta do.

**DAD** That's right. (Beat.) You do.

**COACH** Whatever.

HE DAD turns and looks at THE COACH. Watching him. THE COACH doesn't turn to meet his gaze.

**DAD** And I do feel that . . . not that I have to but I *need* to. *Want* to, even. I want to give my kid a chance . . . something I don't think I ever really got when I was his age . . . and my dad was even our coach! Of my little league team, isn't that crazy? He was the coach and he made me just sit there, watch the other guys play because they were better. (Beat.) He wanted to win more than he wanted me to play and learn and have fun. Dad wanted to win *trophies* and beat the other dads who weren't using *their* sons on *their* teams . . . that's how I grew up and I don't want that for my kid. I want him to play now . . . this year. On a great team, even if he's not good enough or the best or anything like

that. That is what I'm willing to pay you to do. Is to make him feel like he's got a chance.

**COACH** I get it.

**DAD** Thanks.

**COACH** Doesn't mean I like it. Or like you for doing it . . .

**DAD** I understand.

**COACH** . . . but I get *why* you're doing it. It's a fucked up way of seeing things, but I do follow your line of thinking.

**DAD** I'm glad.

**COACH** It's just . . . he's never gonna make it. You know that, right?

**DAD** What do you mean?

**COACH** Your kid. (Beat.) I can tell, even at this age. Some guys, they grow into the game—not even that. “grow” into it but it's a thing where they just get better and they get bigger and faster and stronger and it just occurs. Suddenly you've got a really good little ballplayer on your hands. Or it happens in school, middle school or even in high school occasionally, it just happens and one of these boys'll become a major talent almost overnight, just outta nowhere. But not your son. No way. (Beat.) You're giving 'em hope that doesn't exist. We can do this . . . I can put him out there and I can listen to the other players and the moms and dads yelling at me, telling me I'm crazy for playing him, even out in right field they'll think I'm some sorta fucking nutjob for doing it . . . but this is it . . . right here. I don't even think he'll get on a team next year, the skills he's got. I just want you to know the truth . . .

**DAD** No, I know. I know it. (Beat.) Yes.

**COACH** You're just delaying this. The fact that this game's not for him.

**DAD** I get that. I do.

**COACH** Okay. Just so you do.



- DAD** I try to do that. I'm usually home late from work but I'll try to do it more . . .
- COACH** Alright. Good. Anything you can do to help me out here . . .
- DAD** Of course.
- COACH** People're gonna think I'm outta my mind! Just so you know.
- DAD** Maybe.
- COACH** Not "maybe." For sure.
- DAD** I don't care. I really don't. (Beat.) And you promise that you'll keep him playing, no matter how he does? Whatever happens?
- COACH** I guess.
- DAD** No. Tell me for sure. That you will do that, no matter what.
- COACH** Yeah . . . sure . . . I will. (Beat.) Yes.
- DAD** Fine.
- COACH** And you'll . . . ?
- DAD** Yes. (Beat.) A check's alright? Or . . . ?
- COACH** I'd prefer cash. If you can.
- DAD** I'll make it cash.
- COACH** Good.
- DAD** Every week?
- COACH** That'd be good.
- DAD** Fine.
- COACH** Or up front . . . if that's at all . . . ?
- DAD** I'd rather do it once a week.
- COACH** Alright.
- DAD** Just to keep things . . . you know.
- COACH** Yeah.
- DAD** If you don't mind.
- COACH** Ok.
- DAD** Thank you . . . I mean that. I do.
- COACH** . . .

**DAD** Anyway, just . . . (Beat.) Thanks.

*The two men keep looking into the distance. THE DAD turns and holds his hand out. THE COACH doesn't take it.*

**COACH** I should probably get over there. Get the guys warming up—hand out these forms for all the physicals and stuff. Their tees.

**DAD** Sure.

**COACH** Okay.

**DAD** That's . . .

**COACH** Alright then.

*THE COACH nods but doesn't move just yet. Another long moment of silence between them.*

**DAD** . . . beautiful day.

**COACH** Uh-huh. It sure is.

*THE COACH nods. Gives THE DAD one of the physical forms. THE COACH walks off. THE DAD waves to his kid again. He smiles at him and makes a gesture like he's batting the ball or catching the ball. Nods and smiles and waves.*

*THE DAD keeps watching his child in the distance. Very slowly the smile falls from his face.*

*Now he is just staring.*

*A peppy version of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game" begins to play in the distance.*

*Silence. Darkness.*