

Drugs Are Bad

a play by Jonathan Rand

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Cast of Characters

BRAD

MOM

DAD

Setting

The living room of a house, or just a few chairs.

*For Marco and Robin Rand –
Hands down, the best parents I ever had*

(The action should be played entirely straight, like an intensely serious after-school special. Carrying a backpack, BRAD enters the living room, where MOM and DAD are waiting for him.)

BRAD. Mom? Dad? What's wrong?

MOM. Have a seat, son. Your father came home from work early today because I came across something that concerns all of us.

BRAD. What is it?

MOM. A few hours ago, I was looking for something in your room, and... Harold?

DAD. *(Pointing at something on the coffee table:)* Son, what's this...?

BRAD. Oh no.

DAD. Son?

BRAD. I don't wanna talk about it.

MOM. Answer your father, Bradley.

DAD. *What is it?*

(Pause.)

BRAD. An Algebra book...

(A pause, as MOM and DAD absorb the reality of this horrible situation.)

DAD. Are you learning?

BRAD. Dad, listen—

DAD. Are you?

(Beat.)

BRAD. Yes.

(MOM weeps.)

DAD. And when were you planning on telling us?

(BRAD shrugs his shoulders in guilt.)

I don't know what to say. I just don't know what to say. I'm besides myself here.

MOM. Where were you today, Bradley?

BRAD. What?

MOM. I want to know where you were. You promised me you'd go somewhere and loiter.

(*Beat.*)

BRAD. I went to school.

DAD. School?! *School?!?* What, you've suddenly got a *problem* sneaking off to the mall and wasting your allowance on violent video games?!

BRAD. I know, I just —

MOM. You just what?! You thought it would be *fun* to *learn* instead?!

DAD. (*Grabbing BRAD's backpack:*) Give me that.

BRAD. Dad.

DAD. Let's see what else you've been hiding from us.

BRAD. Dad, please.

DAD. (*Pulls out a CD:*) What is this? *Simon and Garfunkel?*

MOM. Simon and *who?*

BRAD. (*Embarrassed:*) They sing intelligent and wholesome lyrics.

DAD. You have got to be kidding me.

BRAD. Please. This is hard enough as it is.

DAD. (*Pulling out a magazine:*) And what is *this?*

BRAD. Dad, stop.

MOM. Let me see that. *Molecular Systematics?* Is this what I *think* it is?

BRAD. It's a scientific journal...

DAD. A scientific journal! What about *Playboy?*

BRAD. Please...

MOM. We paid good money for that subscription.

BRAD. I cancelled it.

MOM. You did *what?! Why?!*

BRAD. Please don't make me say it.

DAD. *Say it.*

(Beat.)

BRAD. I only read the articles.

MOM. But the graphic nudity!!

(DAD is scandalized to find two plastic bottles or cartons of milk in the bag.)

BRAD. It's not what you think.

DAD. Oh, it's exactly what I think. *(To MOM:) This...is milk.*

MOM. *(Trying to pronounce:)"Milk"?*

DAD. That's right. Street name "Bovine Teat Candy." It gives all the junkies their fix of *vitamins and minerals.*

MOM. Bradley, do you want strong bones and teeth?! Is that what you want?!

BRAD. *(Suddenly blowing up:)* Maybe that *is* what I want!! Okay? Maybe I *like* it.

DAD. Don't you dare...

BRAD. No! You listen to me for once! This isn't the first time I've had milk, all right? I've also experimented with...*fat-free.*

MOM. No...

BRAD. Yes! And you know why? It makes me feel good!

DAD. No son of mine is health-conscious. No son of mine.

BRAD. Well maybe you need to find another son!

(Silence.)

Listen. I'm sorry for disappointing you. But this is how I *live.* Okay? This is what I *do.* This is *who I am.* I don't *like* it when you sneak malt liquor into my room every night. I don't *like* breaking curfew like you insist I do. I don't *like* binge-eating junk food and watching Austrian porn.

DAD. You don't?

BRAD. No.

MOM. Not even a *little*?

BRAD. No.

DAD. What about Grandma's Christmas weed?

BRAD. Flush it every year.

DAD. I don't know what to say. I just don't know what to say.

BRAD. I'm sorry, Dad. Mom. All right? It's just so hard to live the life you want me to live.

DAD. Why, son? Why is it so hard? You don't see your mother and I running off to the "library" or "eating food with nutritional value."

BRAD. It's just... It's a different generation. I mean, everyone else is doing it. Like, the other day, when I was buying groceries for the family –

MOM. (*Pure disgust:*) UGH.

BRAD. I'm in the checkout line, and I see Greg and Tracy – even Bobby Sanders! – all bagging groceries. All working really hard to support their families. I just wanted to do something like that, too. I couldn't help it.

MOM. If Bobby Sanders helped an old lady cross the street, would you do it, too?

BRAD. Maybe.

MOM. This is disgusting.

DAD. Son, the bottom line is that your behavior is unacceptable.

BRAD. I can't help it.

DAD. Well you better start helping it real soon, Mister!

BRAD. (*Erupting:*) Yeah, well, at least I'm not a Boy Scout!

(*Silence.*)

That's right – I know all about your little secret.

MOM. What are you talking about?

BRAD. Oh, he hasn't told you? Dad here used to earn merit badges...for *merit*.

MOM. Don't you dare spout lies about your father, Bradley.

BRAD. Y'see, Dad doesn't know what happened last week when he had me go up the attic to get his home-tattoo kit. Found an old box of things from the old days. Some pretty eye-opening stuff in there, Dad, including your old Scout vest.

MOM. That's not true.

(*Beat.*)

DAD. (*With quiet intensity:*) You shouldn't have opened that box.

MOM. Excuse me?

DAD. That was private.

MOM. I don't believe this...

DAD. It was a rough time in my life.

MOM. A Boy Scout?! You mean to tell me you did community service? Voluntarily?!

DAD. I was eight years old, Delores. I wasn't thinking. You know what it was like—it was the *seventies*.

MOM. Great. So now what? Our son will think, "Well, my dad used to be respectful of his fellow man; maybe it's time to join the *Peace Corps*."

DAD. Delores...

MOM. You're becoming one terrific role model for our son.

DAD. We all make mistakes. These things happen.

MOM. Not to everyone.

DAD. Oh yeah? Miss Soup Kitchen Volunteer?

(*Silence.*)

MOM. We agreed to forget about that.

BRAD. Mom...?

DAD. I'm sorry.

BRAD. You helped the homeless?

MOM. (To DAD:) You swore you'd never tell anyone.

DAD. It was out of line.

MOM. You *swore* to me.

BRAD. I can't believe you two are all down on your low-horse. Look at you two. You're just as guilty as I am now – no – *worse*. And here you're trying to tell me how to live my life. How about stepping back and remembering that it's *hard* being a teenager.

DAD. Son, now listen—I can see how you would be confused. But your mother and I need you to *learn* from our mistakes. When I found your mother in that soup kitchen, I knew it was my duty to save her from that despicable place, and bring her to the lifestyle where she and I both belong: producing, directing, and starring in adult films.

MOM. He's right. You just can't be the kind of person who follows the rules and helps those in need. While that lifestyle may be "trending," it's just not right. Don't forget that there's sex *and* drugs *AND* rock & roll. All three. Yours for the taking, if you'll just reach for it, Bradley. *Reach* for it.

BRAD. Look: I appreciate all you've done for me. I do. But in the end, it's not your life. It's my life.

DAD. As long as you live under this roof, you'll follow our rules.

BRAD. You just don't get it, do you? This is how I choose to live! Okay?! If I want to eat healthy, pass high school, and abstain from sexual intercourse, then I sure-as-sugar will!

DAD. You watch your language, son.

BRAD. Then I sure as *hell* will!

DAD. Thank you.

BRAD. Oh—and you know what you missed during your frisk?

(BRAD *pulls some papers out of his bag.*)

A scholarship. Full-ride to Princeton. That's right – I'm quitting my rebellious punk band, and I'm going to college.

MOM. Absolutely not! I *forbid* you to succeed!

BRAD. It's too late, Mom. You two can't stop me. This is my life, and I'm going to live it. And if I decide to pursue a degree in pediatric medicine, then that's the way it goes. Goodbye!

(BRAD starts to storm out. Then he turns.)

And I'm taking Susan with me!

(He's gone. If there's a door, he slams it.)

MOM. Susan?! That prude wears turtlenecks! She leaves everything to the imagination!

DAD. Honey, please. It's over. He's gone.

MOM. I guess you're right.

DAD. Our son. Going to an Ivy League college.

MOM. Dear Lord...

DAD. Dating a wholesome young woman.

MOM. I know...

(Silence.)

We're the greatest parents that ever lived.

DAD. Oh yeah.

(They each pick up a bottle of milk and clink them together in toast fashion. Blackout.)

End of Play