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**Chemical Bonding**

*A comedic drama in two acts*

By Don Zolidis

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## Cast of Characters

### The girl:

DANI, 18, salutatorian of her small high school class. A photographer.

### The family:

KAY, 53, her mother, diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

JACK, 56, her father, a Vietnam veteran.

GRANDPA OTIS, Kay's father, 75 years old, rides a hoverround, Korean War veteran.

AUNT STACY, 48, lives in Minneapolis

CHELSEA, 20, her cousin

NAOMI, 16, her other cousin

### Her friends:

TAYLOR, 18, a girl, videocamera in hand for everything.

NULA, 17, wild and somewhat stupid

CHIEF, 17, her boyfriend. Madly in love with Nula.

BRITT, 14, Taylor's little sister. Always hanging around.

### The guy:

KANE, 21.

### The workers at the plant:

EDNA, 60s, been there forever. Retiring.

PEARL, 60s, been there forever. Not retiring. Really, really funny.

MARY, 40s, a Mother of seven.

PETE, 40s.

SALLY, 30s

MR. BOB AMUNDSON, the foreman.

COMPANY LAWYER, Jessica, young and attractive

RORY, 18, a high school dropout, the new guy.

### Other random people:

OFFICER AARONSON, 30s

OFFICER CARY, 20s

NURSE ANGELA, 22

JISELLE, 20 her future R.A. at NYU

SANFORD, 18, a drug dealer

Breakdown: 25 total

14 female 11 male

**Setting:** Mabel, Minnesota. A small town. Present day.  
Later at a house on one of Minnesota's nameless lakes.

## Act One

*(DANI stands behind a small podium. She is dressed in a blue graduation gown, with miter and cords. She reads from notecards and looks up haltingly. She's not the best speaker in the world.)*

DANI

Congratulations class of 2010! We have officially made it! Thirteen years, and for some of us, more, I'm talking to you Jacob, have culminated in this moment. I never thought I would be standing here today. When one thinks about education, one is often struck by how... I believe it was Plato who said "the unexamined life is not worth living."

*(she looks out to the audience.)*

That was Socrates? Socrates. Okay. To be fair, I didn't say it *was* Plato, I said I *believed* it was Plato, there's a difference. Well I am not a good comment on the American educational system apparently. Back to my speech.

*(she looks down at her notecards again.)*

I believe it was *Socrates* who said "the unexamined life is not worth living" and we have been examined a lot. From Standardized tests in fourth grade, to standardized tests in fifth grade, to that mile time trial we all had to do in sixth grade, to standardized tests in seventh grade... we have been examined. And what have we learned? Well...

*(she looks down at her cards again.)*

Actually I'm not going to read this. This speech is terrible. They made me write this in my communications class and it's awful. I just wanna talk to you, okay?

*(pause. She tries to think of something to say.)*

You ever do that? You ever think you've got something deep to say and then it turns out there's absolutely nothing in your brain? I just had that moment and I am beginning to freak out. Um... but... getting on with it. Graduation. Crap. Is anybody else out there like totally terrified? I know I shouldn't because I'm like salutatorian and all; I would have been valedictorian except for Mr. Jackson's long-term sub, but I'm not going to get into that. But it's like: part of me just wants to stay in homeroom forever, you know? And then part of me is like, no, you should burn everything to the ground and then spit on the ashes, you know? I'm not going to do that, Officer Weeks. I'm totally over that.

But um... we're done with high school. And we're moving on. Yeah.

*(she stands there.)*

So okay that wasn't better than what I had on the cards. Do I have time to do that over?

*(lights down on her.)*

*(lights up on DANI, still in her robe. She has her hat in her hands. KAY, dressed up, approaches, followed by JACK, in an ill-fitting suit.)*

KAY

There you are!

DANI

Hey.

*(KAY gives her a big hug.)*

KAY

Don't worry about it, honey. I thought it was great.

DANI

You're required to say that.

KAY

Only a little bit.

*(JACK extends his hand.)*

JACK

Good try.

DANI

Thanks Dad.

JACK

We weren't hoping for much.

KAY

You be good.

JACK

It was honest.

KAY

It was very honest. I thought it was a lot better than that Asian girl's.

DANI

I wish you wouldn't call her `that Asian girl'. I've known her since I was six.

JACK

I liked the part where you threatened to burn down the school. It's nice to add crime to your graduation speech.

KAY

She did not threaten to burn down the school. She only said she thought about it. Who hasn't thought about it?

JACK

Sane people. It was beautiful window into your soul, Dani. I'm glad we've raised a monster. Makes me feel good.

*(DANI steps away from them.)*

DANI *(to the audience)*

Let me step out of this for a second. This is Mabel, Minnesota, cheese curd capitol of central Minnesota. Cheese curds, if you don't know, only vaguely resemble cheese and squeak when you eat them. We also have a ten-foot statue of a guy named Dutch Jake, who is like Paul Bunyan, except he's Dutch and his name is Jake. And everyone who comes to our town is like, "hey look it's Paul Bunyan" and we're like legally required to say, no that's Dutch Jake, he's like Paul Bunyan except he didn't sell out. I don't know. The whole town is weird.

*(TAYLOR enters with videocamera, wearing a graduation robe.)*

TAYLOR

Oh my God, that was the most awesome speech ever.

DANI

It really wasn't.

TAYLOR

I have the whole thing right here.

DANI

Great.

TAYLOR

It's already up on Youtube.

DANI

That makes my life perfect.

TAYLOR

When you threw down those notecards I thought you were really going to let everybody have it, you know? I was so waiting for that. Like, if I was giving the speech I'd just be calling everybody out, you know? Hey! Miguel totally cheated on me he's a complete snake! I just want a pulpit, you know?

DANI

Wow.

TAYLOR

You ever just wake up and are filled with hate?

JACK

All the time. Are you talking to me?

DANI

My Dad has problems. Don't worry about him.

JACK

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

*(NULA and CHIEF bolt on holding hands, also dressed in graduation robes.)*

NULA

What's up!

TAYLOR

Say something for the camera.

NULA

Do I look okay?

*(She fixes herself.)*

CHIEF

You're gorgeous.

NULA

Really?

CHIEF

Absolutely.

NULA

I love you.

CHIEF

I love you.

JACK

I need to get out of here.

KAY

Honey. You go out and have fun tonight.

JACK

Don't tell her that.

KAY

Safe fun.

TAYLOR

Oh we have really safe fun.

JACK

Taylor. You're in charge of her.

DANI

Oh come on.

JACK

Taylor is responsible. Dani is lucky to have a friend as pretty and responsible as you.

TAYLOR

Thanks!

JACK

You should teach Dani how to get your hair to do that. I tell ya, every morning she's in the bathroom for an hour trying to iron her hair or whatever, and it never looks half that good.

KAY

All right, let's go, Jack.

JACK

Be home by ten. You've got a big day tomorrow.

DANI

I'm not coming home by ten.

JACK

All right, ten fifteen.

KAY

Let's go, Jack.

JACK

All right, all right, I'm going.

*(They leave.)*

TAYLOR

Your Dad is so awesome.

DANI

Yeah he's a treat.

NULA

Okay I want to send a video message.

TAYLOR

No.

NULA

No I want to send a video message!

TAYLOR

I heard you the first time and I said no.

NULA

I'll just do it on my phone then.

TAYLOR

Fine. Okay.

NULA

Chief I need you to go over there for a little while.

CHIEF

Why?

NULA

Just do it.

CHIEF

I don't want to leave you.

NULA

That's so sweet.

TAYLOR

And cut. Brilliant.

NULA

That's not my message!

TAYLOR

Yes it is. It's over now. I wanted to capture you in your natural environment. Like filming monkeys or something.

NULA

Shut up I'm not a monkey.

TAYLOR

I said you were like a monkey, not an actual monkey.

NULA

Oh. Wait. What?

DANI

Don't worry about it Nula.

CHIEF

Aw no I gotta go take pictures with my family.

NULA

Can I come?

CHIEF

They've already said they don't want you in the pictures.

NULA

Why?

DANI

Clearly jealousy.

NULA

I'll miss you.

CHIEF

I'll miss you too.

DANI

I already miss you.

NULA

Stop hitting on my boyfriend.

DANI

I wasn't hitting on him, I was mocking you.

CHIEF

Why would you do that?

DANI

Because the fact that I'm single leaves a gaping void in my heart.

CHIEF

I gotta go.

NULA

Go if you have to.

*(CHIEF starts to leave.)*

TAYLOR

Anyway, I had something to tell you –

*(CHIEF returns. He takes NULA's hands and gazes into her eyes. Pause. He touches her nose.)*

I totally forgot what I was gonna say.

CHIEF

You're like my sunshine.

*(he leaves. NULA watches him go.)*

TAYLOR

Shoot. I totally lost it.

DANI

That reminds me of my graduation speech.

NULA

Yeah! Your speech! I'm so glad you hated on that sub. That was the best part of graduation. That guy was so rude. He was always like 'stop texting your boyfriend in class.' And I wasn't even texting that much.

DANI

You text like every three seconds.

NULA

No I don't. I totally just went three seconds without texting.

*(she takes out her phone.)*

*(GRANDPA OTIS wheels in on a hoverround.)*

GRANDPA OTIS

Where is my baby!? Where's my baby girl?!

DANI

Hey Grandpa.

GRANDPA OTIS

Look at you. Look at you! You're like seven feet tall. You blot out the sky.

NULA

She just looks that tall cause you're in a wheelchair.

GRANDPA OTIS

Who's this genius?

Grandpa Otis this is Nula. DANII

What? GRANDPA OTIS

Nula. DANII

Her name's what now? GRANDPA OTIS

Nula. NULA

What the hell kinda name is that? GRANDPA OTIS

It's Irish, actually. NULA

I never heard of it. GRANDPA OTIS

Well it's her name, what do you want her to do about it? DANII

What? GRANDPA OTIS

Never mind. DANII

Where's your mother? GRANDPA OTIS

I think they headed home. DANII

Good. I'm free. GRANDPA OTIS

I thought you drove here. DANII

GRANDPA OTIS

So what if I did?

NULA

How do you work the pedals?

TAYLOR

Nula. Just stop opening your mouth okay?

NULA

What did I say? I was just wondering how he moved the pedals.

GRANDPA OTIS

I gotta little dwarf in there. I just tell him how fast I want to go. And then I got another dwarf for the breaks.

DANI

Grandpa.

GRANDPA OTIS

I feed `em fish.

DANI

There's a lever in there he can use.

NULA

See that's what I wanted to know.

GRANDPA OTIS

You look beautiful, by the way.

DANI

Thanks, Grandpa.

GRANDPA OTIS

Much prettier than that Chinese girl.

DANI

Korean.

GRANDPA OTIS

Whatever. She looked like a marshmallow with legs. They shoulda never let her on stage.

DANI

She was valedictorian.

GRANDPA OTIS

I don't care if she was some kind of female Korean Einstein, you don't put someone on stage looking like that.

TAYLOR

I thought she looked very pretty.

GRANDPA OTIS

Good for you.

DANI

I should really be going Grandpa.

GRANDPA OTIS

Getting rid of me, huh? Everybody's trying to get rid of me.

*(GRANDPA OTIS produces a brochure for Shady Acres.)*

Look at where your mother wants to lock me up: Shady Acres Retirement Village. You ever heard of a place more terrifying and evil in your life?

NULA

Hey my Grandma lives there.

GRANDPA OTIS

Your Grandma, huh? What's she look like?

NULA

She looks like an old lady.

GRANDPA OTIS

Is she uh... you know, big, or - ?

DANI

Grandpa!

GRANDPA OTIS

I'm not dead yet. And I don't need to live in some kind of godforsaken retirement village with bocce ball and friendly elderly people getting injections of happy juice every day. I'm perfectly fine.

NULA

Well you are in a wheelchair.

GRANDPA OTIS

You are a piece of work.

*(He wheels off.)*

Bye Grandpa. DANİ

So are you coming out tonight? TAYLOR

Yeah, but I can't stay out late. DANİ

Why not? TAYLOR

I got a job interview tomorrow. DANİ

Oh. Bummer. NULA

*(Lights change. DANİ steps out.)*

*(To read the rest of this play, please contact me at [donzolidis@yahoo.com](mailto:donzolidis@yahoo.com))*