

My Father Went To Switzerland And All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt
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There are two chairs seated side by side, to imitate the front seat of a car. MR. JACKSON is a driving instructor. Sits with a clipboard in the passenger seat, impatiently. EUGENIE runs on. She throws herself into the driver's side chair.

EUGENIE: Hi! I'm sorry I'm late, I'm not too late am I?

MR JACKSON: *(looking at watch)* Actually you're –

EUGENIE: *(interrupting)* Mrs Kushko is just a – oh she's so *(she waves her hands about)* about talking in class and I said I don't do it on purpose, and she said if I was going to waste her time by talking in class, then she was going to waste my time by talking after class. And I had to listen to her talk! Can you imagine? Do you think she's allowed to do that?

MR JACKSON: Perhaps we should –

EUGENIE: *(interrupting)* I explained to her that it wasn't on purpose and I explained about my driving lesson and I was going to be late, but she wouldn't listen. "Every time you open your mouth I add another five minutes." That's what she said. I really tried to explain but "every time you open your mouth I add another five minutes." That's what happened. That's why I'm late.

MR JACKSON: Are you finished?

EUGENIE: Um, I think so.

MR JACKSON: All right. Thank you for your very long, long, long, explanation. Shall we go? Hands in the ten and two position please.

EUGENIE: The whole thing is so unbelievable! Do you know what she talked about?

MR JACKSON: What? Who?

EUGENIE: Mrs Kushko. Do you know what she talked about?

MR JACKSON: I don't want to know.

EUGENIE: *(not hearing)* Switzerland. Can you imagine? I couldn't believe it. She goes to Switzerland every summer. I go to the mall, she goes to Switzerland. And she has so much fun in Switzerland. And they make the best chocolate in Switzerland. I think I know everything there is to know about Switzerland.

MR JACKSON: *(impatient)* Eugenie.

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EUGENIE: Go ahead. Ask me something. I'm positive I know it.

MR JACKSON: I would prefer to see you driving rather than hear you talk about Switzerland. All right? Hands in the Ten and Two position, please.

EUGENIE: And you know what else? She's been going to Switzerland ever since she was ten years old. Her father took her.

MR JACKSON: To Switzerland?

EUGENIE: Her father took her.

MR JACKSON: To Switzerland.

EUGENIE: Can you imagine? Her father wanted her to see the world. And he took her to Switzerland!

MR JACKSON: (*almost muttering*) Well bully for her.

EUGENIE: Huh?

MR JACKSON: Will we be driving at any point today Eugenie?

EUGENIE: Oh. Right. Sorry. Yes. Let's go.

MR JACKSON: Hands in the ten and two position. (*ONE doesn't move*) Eugenie. You're not doing it.

EUGENIE: Huh?

MR JACKSON: Driving?

EUGENIE: Oh. Right. Mr. Jackson?

MR JACKSON: Yes?

EUGENIE: Did your father ever take you anywhere?

MR JACKSON: What?

EUGENIE: I don't mean Switzerland. Who's dad does that? I guess Mrs Kushko's does but that's not normal.

MR JACKSON: Eugenie. This is a driving lesson. This is not therapy.

EUGENIE: I just wondered. I mean, we've been sitting here, side by side for weeks now and –

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MR JACKSON: Eugenie. We're not friends. I am the teacher and you are the student.

EUGENIE: I know but -

MR JACKSON: I'm not going to discuss this further with you. We are here to drive and driving is the only appropriate topic of discussion and that's the only thing I want to hear you talk about for the remainder of this lesson. Is that understood?

EUGENIE: Yes.

MR JACKSON: Now for the last time, hands in the ten and two position. Perhaps we can leave the parking lot.

EUGENIE does not move. She turns her head away as if she is trying not to cry, and failing. She gives a sniff. MR. JACKSON looks upwards and gives a sigh.

MR JACKSON: Are you upset?

EUGENIE: *(with a little whimper)* No.

MR JACKSON: Yes you are.

EUGENIE: No.

MR JACKSON: Clearly you're upset.

EUGENIE: *(really trying not to cry)* No.

MR JACKSON: I'm sorry. I snapped. I shouldn't have. Just forget I said anything.

EUGENIE: Ok. *(she sniffs)*

MR JACKSON: Can we wipe the slate clean?

EUGENIE: *(trying not to cry)* Uh huh.

MR JACKSON: *(this is a bad thing)* Are you crying?

EUGENIE: *(trying not to cry)* Uh uh.

MR JACKSON: You are.

EUGENIE: *(crying)* No I'm not!

EUGENIE cries full out, MR. JACKSON looks totally freaked out.

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MR JACKSON: Really Eugenie. Don't cry. I'm begging you. I'm not good with crying. I've never been good with crying. It's the one thing..... ok. Ok. It was the Switzerland thing. That really irked me. Not you telling me, but that someone had a father who would...

EUGENIE amps up her crying.

MR JACKSON: I'll tell you anything you want, just don't cry! Take a breath, take a big breath and suck those tears back into your head. Suck them right back into your head. Suck em back. (*EUGENIE is still crying*) Ok, don't suck. Let them all out. Get it all out of your system. Sure. Ah, Ah, Eugenie! You were wondering, you wanted to know if my father ever took me anywhere. I'll tell you. Ok? Will that help?

EUGENIE makes some noises, that might be words, but can't be understood because of her crying.

MR JACKSON: Did my father ever take me anywhere? No he never did. I'm an only child and he never took me anywhere. He's a lawyer. A big shot lawyer. Big cases. Always working and he was always busy. I was supposed to understand. But a kid doesn't understand squat. A five year old wants to play and go to the beach and make sandcastles. An eight year old wants to ride bikes in the park. A twelve year old wants to go rollerblading. My dad didn't see it that way. How's this? Is this working?

EUGENIE gives a whimper, she's clearly listening.

MR JACKSON: Ok. The only time my dad ever paid attention to me is when I worked too. When I had homework, or when I was working on a project, we were peas in a pod. I would make up homework, just so he would spend time with me. Then I started doing spelling bees. My dad loved spelling. He would quiz me for hours. And one year, I went all the way to nationals. I got to the finals of nationals. My dad was beaming, I saw him in the audience. I was so happy. I got to the finals and missed on my last word. Suffrutescent. Suffrutescent. Shrub like. Somewhat Shrubby. Language of origin? Can you use it in a sentence? Are there any other pronunciations? Suffrutescent. Suffrutescent. (*really taking time with this*) S-U-F-R-U-T-E-S-C-E-N-T. I thought I had it. I was all set to sit down and "ping." The bell that tells you the word is spelled wrong. The bell of doom. For whom the Bell tolls. "Ping!" S-U-F-F-R-U-T-E-S-C-E-N-T. I knew it had two "F's." I knew it. I'd spelled it right before. And my dad, my winner of a dad he didn't congratulate me for how far I'd gone. He didn't say, good show, better luck next time, you did great, I love you. He said I didn't try hard enough. If I had tried I would have won. I would have got the word and then, and only then, would he have been proud of me.

By now EUGENIE is completely wrapped in the story and has stopped crying.

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EUGENIE: That's terrible!

MR JACKSON: That's when I knew my dad was an ass. That's when I concocted my plan for revenge.

EUGENIE: *(with wide eyes)* What did you do?

MR JACKSON: Ha ha! I went to high school. Top marks every year. The highest marks in my class. Scholarships to wherever I wanted to go and whatever I wanted to do. I was a star. Star quality. Something really to be proud of. My dad insane over the moon. I'm the talk of the town. University, same thing. Top marks every year. The highest marks in my class. I'm really going to be somebody. But then, oh then, right in the last year, right in the last second. BOOM!

EUGENIE: What?

MR JACKSON: I dropped the ball. Dropped everything. Dropped out of everything. Failed it all. Ignored all protests and pleas. Toppled my tower and laid it to ruin. And with the rubble scattered at my feet, I looked my dad in the eye and said *(triumphantly)* "That's for the spelling bee, Dad!" And he.... Kicked me out of the house. And now I live in a rat hole. And I teach brain dead teenagers, no offence,

EUGENIE: None taken.

MR JACKSON: I teach them how to drive. I teach driving. *(all of a sudden puzzled, realizing this isn't really a triumph)* Boy. I sure showed him.

EUGENIE: How come we got stuck with the mean dads? How come we didn't get the dads who take us to Switzerland?

MR JACKSON: Oh, what could be so wrong with your dad? I'm sure my story is a thousand times worse than yours.

EUGENIE: It's not revenge worthy I guess.... It's still mean though.

MR JACKSON: What happened.

EUGENIE: I asked my dad to go driving with me. To practice? And he laughed at me. He said no. He said he'd never get into a car with me. I'm too silly. I'm just a silly girl and I'll probably be silly for the rest of my life. And it wasn't a nice, "You're too silly." Silly was defiantly a bad thing to be.

MR JACKSON: Yeah, that would suck.

EUGENIE: I am silly. But, he wrote me off. For the rest of my life. I don't like that. He's supposed to be there for me, isn't he? That's what I thought.

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MR JACKSON: You should show him. Show him he's wrong.

EUGENIE: You really hold a grudge don't you? *(she sighs)* Forget it. *(she wipes her eyes)* Ok. Let's drive.

MR JACKSON: Ah, Eugenie, I don't think you're in the best frame of mind –

EUGENIE: I want to drive. I want to do something right today.

MR JACKSON: I think the best thing to do would be for me to drive, and we go get a coffee somewhere.

EUGENIE: You said it yourself. We're not friends. You don't have to baby me.

MR JACKSON: Eugenie –

EUGENIE: Am I silly? Do you think I'm silly?

MR JACKSON: I –

EUGENIE: I'm asking. Come on, what do you think?

MR JACKSON: You do.....talk..... a lot.

EUGENIE: About silly things.

MR JACKSON: I didn't say that.

EUGENIE: But you're thinking it aren't you. Aren't you!

MR JACKSON: You don't have to get mad at me. I'm not your dad.

EUGENIE: Am I a good driver?

MR JACKSON: Eugenie, don't make me answer that.

EUGENIE: Am I a good driver?

MR JACKSON: You... talk... a lot.

EUGENIE: That makes me a bad driver?

MR JACKSON: It doesn't help.

EUGENIE: We should be on the same side here. Our dads suck. Don't coddle me. Help me! Tell me I'm a bad driver. Tell me!

MR JACKSON: Yes you're a bad driver! A terrible driver. You hardly look at the road, you're always looking out for your friends, you want loud music playing, you

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never brake properly and you never, never, never, hold your hands in the ten and two position. It drives me crazy! I hate the days when I have lessons with you because I'm never entirely sure the car is going to make it out alive! I'm waiting for the day you smash into a telephone poll because you want to hold the steering wheel with your feet!

There is a pause.

EUGENIE: Ok. Thank you.

MR JACKSON: I shouldn't have said that. I should never have said that.

EUGENIE: I asked you to.

MR JACKSON: It's not professional. I have officially thrown every shred of professionalism out the window. I do deserve to live in a rat hole and teach brain dead teenagers.

MR. JACKSON smushes his face into the clipboard.

EUGENIE: Mr Jackson?

MR JACKSON: *(still with his face in the clipboard)* What?

EUGENIE: Can I become a *better* driver?

MR JACKSON: Sure. *(lifting his head)* Sure you can. You practice, you learn and you –

EUGENIE: Don't talk.

MR JACKSON: It would help.

EUGENIE: Ok. Hands in the ten and two position. *(she does this)* Ready when you are. *(she turns and looks at MR. JACKSON who is staring at her)* What?

MR JACKSON: What are you going to do about your dad? I know, I said we're not friends, but if you don't mind me asking.

EUGENIE: Well, I'm going to take these driving lessons, become a better driver, pass my driving test with flying colours, and then I'm going to find my father and run him down in the street.

MR JACKSON: Eugenie!

EUGENIE: Maybe back over him a couple of times for good measure.

MR JACKSON: *(totally speechless)* Eugenie you - you can't – You –

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EUGENIE: *(with a grin)* Kidding!

MR JACKSON: You can't say things like that!

MR. JACKSON *fans his face with the clipboard.*

EUGENIE: I thought you'd like it. Being all revengy and grudgy and stuff.

MR JACKSON: Don't do that again! You almost gave me a heart attack.

EUGENIE: Sorry. *(she sighs)* I don't know what I'm going to do about my dad. I kinda liked who I was. Silly and everything. Now I don't know.

MR JACKSON: I....I don't know how to say this. This is sort of a friend thing. This is going to sound stupid coming from me but....don't you let him bring you down.

EUGENIE: Is this where you tell me to keep my chin up?

MR JACKSON: Seriously. I mean it.

EUGENIE: Seriously, I'll try. First step driving.

MR JACKSON: Hands in the ten and two position.

EUGENIE: Roger. Let's rock and roll!!!!!! *(she looks over at MR. JACKSON)*
Kidding!

She smiles at MR. JACKSON, who smiles back.

THE END