

Man of the House

Cast

William T. (Thomas) Baker: 38 year old housedad. While there are other characters, they fall into the realm of sound cues. They may or may not be heard depending on the presentation.

Only Act, Only Scene

Monday April 25th 2011

Lights up on a kitchen. There are two doors, one that leads outside and another that goes into a hall of the house. There is a phone which is ringing, a sink, counter and stove with pots, one of them boiling, and perhaps refrigerator visible. A ceiling fan directly overhead, if not a desk fan somewhere on the counter.

All of this set can be as abstract as needed. The lights in the hall fade up as we hear a baby crying, a dog barking, a child screaming another laughing, and the banging of wooden spoon on pot. William enters the kitchen turns on the light and picks up the phone.

William: (He speaks quickly into the phone, then sets it aside) Just a moment please. (He opens the door, he closes the door. The dog stops barking. As if the dog is now outside. He reaches down below the counter out of the audience's sight, the pot stops banging, and he comes up with spoon in hand, we now hear a child scream.) Do you want ice cream? Do you want ice cream? Chocolate ice cream? (The screaming stops) If you want chocolate ice cream you have to eat dinner, and if you want to eat dinner I have to make it. Will you let me make dinner so I can give you chocolate ice cream? (he puts on an apron.) -Good, can you go find your brother?- Can you find him? (Giggling as the toddler runs off) Kaytlin! Please change your sister! (We hear an adolescent teenaged girl voice)

Kaytlin: But Dad-

William: Ten dollars! For changing one diaper! Sound fair? You'll be stinking rich. (The baby cries stop.) Okay, what was I doing? -The phone. (he goes back to the phone.) Hello, sorry to keep you waiting.- Daniel? Daniel. Hey there. How've you been buddy? - No. -No, not a bad time. I wasn't in the middle of anything, just my life. - (He goes to the fridge and pulls out pork chops and eggs, and prepares to fry the pork chops while he has this conversation) You could never be a pain. I always answer the phone like that, telemarketers give up, and my mother-in-law decides I'm busy and hangs up before I answer. So it usually works out well for me- How are you? Long time no- You're kidding! - Dan that's terrific! - No, man, really . congratulations-- Of course not. - If you don't you want me tell, my lips are sealed – Can I tell-you know I tell her everything. -Yeah, like we talk to anyone. -Where do we go? - Come on now, don't let that freak you out. - Marriage isn't the issue, you can still have fun after your married -Yeah, I'm sure they do, I've seen people do it. - In magazines, and movies. (William laughs, and looks down as his shirt tale is tugged.) - Okay honey, I've got to

cook dinner, can you just let me talk on the phone a minute? - Not yet honey. - Would you like some candy? (to the phone) Not you. - Okay, would you like to split a little candy bar with your brother? – (taking the candy bar from some hidden alcove in the kitchen) I know what mommy says, but this is a special occasion. -mommy's at work right now, do you want this? Or not? (Tosses it into the hall) Go get it! (Back to phone) Sorry, now what were you saying? - She's what? - When did this happen? -Oh - okay- that's more than I needed to know. - Dan, I know how a woman gets pregnant, now you're just bragging - you sure? - No, -really? - Really, it doesn't take long. -Dan! Get a hold of yourself! - Calm down. It's not the end of the world. - no its not, no not really. Trust me, its the start of a new one. -You will draw breath after parenthood. - Miracle. -You call it a miracle. That is truly what they are. Bundle of joy, blessing, all that crap. - Well I don't recommend having four of them if you want free time, one or two is reasonable. Miracles are meant for moderation, that's why Gods not a show off. Honestly, Dan I can't remember having sex four times, but I've got four kids. - No, no. -No, you won't be miserable. What makes you think that? - I'm not miserable. - I've never even claimed to be miserable. - What are you talking about? -I have a life -I have friends -Well, you. -We went out and shot pool, just the other night- what a month ago? -Really? Six months? -I guess that's right, it was the Saturday after my birthday. -Wow, time flies -I don't think fun has anything to do with it -Time just flies. -Really? That's great! -What are you talking about? It's a wonderful opportunity. -You can do it. If I can do it, you could do it, right? You're not a nanny if it's your kid. -Well, how much does she make? -That's more than you isn't it? -I'm just asking. Don't take the salary gap personal, with the cost of childcare it just makes sense- Don't! For god's sake, don't do that. - I'm telling you, In-laws are made to destroy holidays and birthdays, you don't want them living with you. -You're kidding me. -Yeah. (We hear a flute playing wildly in the background. Then a child begins to cry.) Hold on a sec- (William goes to look down the hall and into what is presumably the living room) Are you watching them? Or just playing on Facebook? (The flute noises have become two kids screaming with toots in between) Quit it! Stop it. Stop! Now young lady! Stop hitting your brother with the flute! Stop it! (He disappears for a moment, then reappears with a colorful plastic flute in hand) A flute is not a percussion instrument! Kaytlin please put that thing away and entertain your brother and sisters.

Kaytlin: But Dad-

William: Twenty bucks! (He turns and comes back into the kitchen, and picks up the phone.) Hello? - It's fine, later it'll be bath time, things get

hectic around here for bath time, then I put the kids to bed at nine, -If I'm lucky they get in the bed by ten and they sleep hopefully around eleven. -No, that's works for parents that drop the kids off at day care and go to work, -I don't want my them up at dawn. -The only time I get sleep is from midnight till eight, I don't want them up any earlier. -Sure you could call then but, the wife gets home around then, and I only have ten or fifteen minutes to talk to her before she falls asleep- No, I really mean talk, there's only time for that on the weekends, if the kids are asleep, and I'm not. - She is the boss at her practice- Doesn't matter, it's just more stress- she lost her assistant last week - no, married an actor, they had to go out to California for three months - yeah, making a movie - I don't remember something about pirates or the end of the world. Or pirates saving the world -The hell if I pay attention to the lives of my wife's co-workers. -not that exciting. I'm sure it's a bit part. Not to mention it's making my life more inconvenient than it already was (We hear howling and scratching at the door) I can understand you being nervous about marriage. I can't say I pictured my life this way. Still the only part I hate is the laundry. - Yes, and no matter how much I wash or fold, the hamper is waiting with more the next morning. I would become a nudist to avoid it if I wasn't always around these kids. I guess cooking is a close second hate, but I love the kids, they're kind of fun compared to the cooking and cleaning. - No, I do not wear an apron. (He removes his apron, opens the door, we hear the dog bark. (William talks to the dog) Okay, go on- (to the phone) -not you. -Huh? - Yeah, that's a dog- not our dog, some breeder got a puppy with a slight defect, the spots didn't come out the right shade of brown. They wanted it put down - yeah I know - what do you expect from a breeder? They make their living getting animals knocked up and selling off their kids, like some demented whorehouse run by Jack Hanna and communist China.- I'm exaggerating, their not all bad but the bad ones just make them all seem bad - Of course not, that's why we have a dog, she wasn't going to let that happen. -Yeah, she's looking - Hopefully soon -I hope not -the poor thing was better off being euthanized than living here - the kids have been skiing off his tail. -No, hasn't even tried to bite them yet, which is more than I can say for myself. I want to call him Fonzie because of that jumping the shark episode- No, he's not- She's looking or a home for him, but if she doesn't find one we aren't going to kick him out on the street- (Child screams) -Give me a minute (he runs to the living room entrance and stands in the hall) Stop! Don't do that! Cut it out! You're gonna break his arm off- It's not supposed to come off! (Screaming and random toddler noises continue) - What? - No! you do not want it off! Leave it on! Kaytlin, where were you for this? -You have to

actually watch them! I just want to have a fifteen minute phone conversation!

Kaytlin: But Dad-

William: I'm pretty sure inmates on death row are allowed fifteen minutes on the phone every week or so, can I just have that?

Kaytlin: But Dad-

William: Thirty dollars? Please? (Goes back to kitchen) But dad- (back to phone, as the kids quite down.) But dad - that's all she ever says to me, But dad, sometimes I feel like that's my name, I'm the world's lamest super hero, Butt Dad. -What? - What honey? - I don't have any cheeseburgers - What? Wait- what is this? -Oh, A bogger, where'd you get this?- Oh, your nose, thank-you, thanks honey, go on out and play with your sister. (He disposes of the bogger accordingly) -What? -Why because I'm livin' laveta loco? - Don't look at my life! -Because looking at my life is going to scare you. - it scares me sometimes.- Who are you kidding? I enjoy nightmares. - they rarely involve diapers. -Dan, get a hold of yourself, you've got one on the way, I've got four in the living room. -You never consider a kid a mistake - never -we didn't *plan* Eddy -Well, we didn't do anything to prevent that either- It's what you call a happy surprise - I'm sure I was happy while it was happening. (The pot on the stove begins smoking, heavily) Oh shit, the potatoes! (He grabs the pot off the stove and runs it to the sink, attempting to pour out its contents, if possible big bellows of steam should come up at him. A child tugs at his pant leg behind him) Sh-ugar bear. Sweetheart you need to get out of the kitchen right now, okay? -Yeah, this is pretty hot, and daddy needs you out so he can curse to himself. (to phone) - I just ruined mashed potatoes -it's possible. (Back to kid) Here, do you need more water? Okay. (he reaches down and comes up with a Sippy cup, refills it at the sink then gives it back) Now you play nice with Eddy and Kaytlin. (back to phone) -Huh? -Hell yes, you let potatoes get too soft and they are nasty- Unless you're making soup- It's possible to mess up cereal. My first month at home, I must've ordered out at least twenty times. -I'm not kidding you, I hate cooking - Don't judge by that, Donna Reed was a masochist, there's no way a human could smile at all this torcher. --(grabs a pack of microwave mashed potatoes out of the cupboard) One is not as hard as four, the important thing isn't getting everything right, it's covering up your mistakes, kind of like drywall. - You get used to it- anyone can learn, cooking doesn't require a vagina. (He turns on the fan to clear the smoke) - Less of a man? Why would I feel like less of a man? -Thats a surprisingly old fashion attitude- Do you think I'm less of a man? - I can't help that -You can't think of it as homemaking, that makes it sound girly. House-dad yeah, that's a

standard, but I prefer to think of myself as the man of the house. -I normally don't say it out loud- if you don't say it out loud it doesn't sound so stupid. - I'm not taking offense You're going to be one yourself. - Don't be dumb. - I have to admit, it's a little weird not getting a paycheck , but practically it just didn't make sense. I'd have to work overtime to cover the cost of day care. - Why not? Do you know what she makes? -That's exactly why I asked what she makes -it just makes sense to let the higher paycheck do the work. - Why? -She's already worth more than you are -Whose kidding who? - all women are more valuable than men. - They just are - They can bear children, and they have boobs. -No men with boobs don't count.- because no one likes to play with those. -money doesn't matter, not in the relationship like this. - so what you have that?- There are far too many of those in the world- Spend five minutes driving down the beltway and you'll see dicks are expendable. -What does money have to do with it? - Cash is really a fairly recent invention -God no it's not going to be enough. (he's having trouble with the pork chops and takes them off the burner over to the sink) - Don't think that's going to cover college for four kids. we are still paying off her student loans. You will have tax breaks you're not only taking care of a deduction, but you become a deduction. -When you consider it's fifty some thousand a year for a good day care in this area then I actually earn, two hundred twenty something a year, I'll just never see it because it's in the saving -What? - No, why would you worry about private school? -You have to have cash or religion to send them to private school. I'm not likely to have either anytime soon. -As far as I can tell public schools are funded by books and cookie sales, - I don't really know - I think they pay the teachers from soup lables. - just mark every dime you've got as spent and put it all in a savings account. - no, I learned that from my brother in law. They're still paying off the hundred and twenty-five thousand in loans for their kid to get a teaching degree that landed her a job making thirty-five thousand a year - I know, its not right, but they don't have to ask if you want fries -I know - Yes, I'm just being sarcastic. If Kaytlin wanted to be a teacher I wouldn't stop her. - She's got no idea -she's thirteen.- Is there a such thing as professional texting? (Crash is heard.) Oh God. (He puts the phone down and runs out to the other room, as he runs off he knocks the pork chops to the floor without realizing it.) Is everyone okay? (Crying begins, along with...)

Kaytlin: But dad-

William: Quiet! It's okay, I'll get it, no body touch it. (He disappears a moment and comes back in with pieces of a shattered vase.) Looks like it's all big pieces, no problem Can you please vacuum over there, just to be sure.

- Forty bucks! Okay? I'll give you forty bucks. (He goes back to the phone, with the pieces and digs through a drawer for some glue) You still there? - Don't be silly, my best friend who I haven't seen in six months calls me and wants to talk about his irrevocably changed life, I can make the time. (We hear the vacuum in the other room. He begins trying to glue the vase back together not looking towards the fallen pork chops) -I didn't say irrevocably changed was a bad thing.- That's not necessarily bad. -You're starting a family, how could that be a bad thing? - It's a family, not cancer. -Yeah, I guess it is sort of terminal - I'm joking. -What? -They just knocked over a vase. - that hundred twenty year old family heirloom my mother gave us at the wedding. -Yeah, at least my wife won't be mad at me, it was from my mother. -Then she shouldn't have given it to me. I know she knows what it's like to have kids. -I was actually a very good kid -Look, the scariest part is that first month - please dont bother- Forget the Books -If those so called experts actually had kids they wouldn't have the time or the energy to write the damn book. No It doesn't take a village. That's if you want to raise a barn, not a kid.- Asking your mother-in-law to move in to help you through it, is like-that's like inviting Dracula for a sleep over because you're afraid of the dark. -I know you like her, that's because you're not married to her daughter yet. - let her help the first month, but don't just give her a room. - Does she know about the baby? - we regretted telling our parents. -Not at all, I recommend sending the in-laws the we're expecting card in the same envelope as the high school graduation announcement. It would save a lot of headaches.- of course I'm kidding. - How far along is she? -So you've got time. -I'll expect the wedding's next month then? - You can do it. With every one of ours it was one month of sleepless nights, then they started going right through the night, and we were dumb enough to her mother move in to help -She had very good intentions, but too many cooks, you know. -Well, it's a bad thing to have too many cooks in a kitchen. -He was different, the only boy in this place -besides me and the dog but the dogs been neutered and I've been married for fifteen years so that's the human equivalent to being neutered. -I don't mean that...much - Why are you asking me? We haven't talked in six months and I thought it was last weekend- I think so, I know she loves you; this is still the same girl I met at my birthday, right? - (The vase falls apart) Damn it! (he decides to throw the vase away) -Just the stupid vase -It's an antique, who needs old junk in their house anyway? (Sees the pork chops, and the dog) Holy- git! Get away from! I can't believe!- how'd- ahhh! (We hear the pitter patter of feet and the dog lets out a quick bark, as he screams and pulls what's left of the pork chops back up) That wasn't cooked! Now we're going to have to have you de-wormed again -

The dog ate my damn pork chops! (Turns to see a kid) Darn! Darn pork chops - what do you need honey? -What? (he leans in to hear her) -No, this is not grandma, -no honey, -Come on, don't play in the grease- this is daddy's friend Dan- Please let me clean up the -honey-You'd really be helpful if you just went out in the living room with your sister. -I don't think—Dan, talk to my kid a minute (He gives the phone to the child as he pulls out a roll of paper towels to try to clean up the grease) - No, he's not coming over for dinner -I know you're hungry, daddy- oh great. Can you just let daddy regroup for a moment? Thank-you, can I have the phone back? Please? (We hear giggling) Give that back now young lady! (He runs out to the living room, chasing the child.) One – Two- Come on honey, please! Get her. Extra ice cream if you can get that phone from her! – Fine, Another twenty-bucks- Yes, Sixty, Fine. Thank-you. (He comes back in the kitchen and closes the door behind him) You still there? – What?- Oh, three, I don't know what happens at three, I never get to three.(he goes searching through the fridge) I can't ever get to three. – Because I don't know what the hell I'm going to do if I ever got to three. - I don't want to hit them, that's not exactly true, sometimes I want to, but I don't actually do it. Sometimes I want to chuck them out the window, but that doesn't mean I will. -Beef - No, I found some. -I've got the instant potatoes made, now all I do is brown some beef and poof, shepherd's pie. -Uh? - It's a casserole I make, with mashed potatoes, beef, corn and, Yes! (He grabs the block of cheese) Cheddar cheese. -What are you talking about? Casseroles are great. - Whoever invented casseroles should've gotten the Nobel prize, if they didn't already. - Are you kidding? - It's a whole dinner in one dish. - Homemade is always better for sodium. If you want you can make them up at breakfast and just stick them in the oven an hour before you want to eat. - Okay, I have to admit, there was a time that wouldn't have excited me, (the door from the hall opens) but I can't for the life of me enjoy cooking, I've tried, and I can't feed the kids pizza every night. -Wife won't let me. -Well they are her children too. -Yes, yes I take orders -(another tug at his shirt) Yes sweetie? - (to phone) -Not you. You what? I know you're hungry, it's going to be a little bit longer. Let me get you a snack. (He looks around, and winds up in front of the fridge) -What? - Okay, I can do that.- You're welcome - kid wants a dill pickle. (He pulls out a jar and hands her one, also taking one for himself) well that explains the cravings in the third trimester. Hey now, get that truck back in your toy box.- You don't want daddy to slip and get hurt do you? - Why not? Pickles are good for you, they start off as vegetables -(he's got his casserole ready) No, I'm not going to call and ask about it. There, now I just pop this in the oven at three fifty, and in thirty minutes- (he slips,

presumably on the toy truck dumping the casserole out- in some humorous way, I can think of three fast.) Oh truck. - I just threw my back out, trashed my casserole, and made myself some more laundry. -I guess I should wear that apron. - What? –I am not miserable - No not at all. -it's not, it's really not misery – It's frustrating, and messy but not miserable- Because at night, when their done asking for water and potty breaks and when you're done checking the closets and under the bed for monsters and finding all the right dolls and blankets -Yeah, they stall, but when it's over they hug me, then they tell me they love me, and you know, I actually get the impression they mean it. -Who knows, it's probably some genetic defense through evolution. - They have to be cute and cuddly so we don't eat them like polar bears. Speaking of which, I've gotta go get these kids some dinner. - I think we're just going out for pizza. I've gotta ask Kaytlin to buy, I just promised her all my cash, but you've got to believe me, don't think of it as the end of the world, just a temporary release from sanity. Before you know it, they'll be grown up and picking out your nursing home. -That's why you've gotta be nice to them, and why I never make it to three- Look, if it works out with you staying home let it. We can set up play dates -I have this time with my kids that my dad never had with me, and it's worth it. - Don't worry about stereotypes and sex- Yeah, you'll be married with children so just give up thinking about sex all together- I'm kidding- mostly- Just let me know about wedding in time to get a sitter. –you're going to be fine. If I can do it you can. - Bye. (He hangs up the phone, turns out the lights in the kitchen and heads towards the hall) Anybody want pizza? (Tiny cheers are heard) Okay let's get our shoes and jackets. Put that down! Katlyn can you pick that up? Is that wear shoes go? Okay is that what you're supposed to do? Honey! I'm not kidding! One! Two!...

(Curtain)

(Never make it to three.)