

Couch Potato

By Daniel Mitzimberg
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Stage design: Front room of a house – couch in center stage aimed to stage left looking at a Television set. An older style video game is needed. On stage right is a kitchen looking area with a kitchen table and four chairs and refrigerator. Stage entrance is just slightly stage right between the couch and the kitchen table. A door is need at stage left. Needs answering machine and phone on table near front door

Characters:

Family of 4 The Beaver's

Mother: June – 36 years of age

Father: Ward – 40 years of age

Son: Harry (?) Harold – 17 years of age

Daughter: Cyndy – 16 years of age

Best friend of Harold: Eddie Castle

Boy friend of Cyndy: Claude Cooper

Premise: Harold never leaves the couch or stops playing the video game. Volume must be up a little on the TV so the audience can hear the game playing – or recorded background noise of a video game being played constantly. No matter what happens his attention is never taken away. When he is answering questions he still has his full attention on the game.

Scene: Harold is sitting on the couch playing his game as the day begins.

It is a weekday so everyone is getting ready for work.

WARD: (walks form the door - bedroom are- stage left across to the rear door, opens it and picks up the newspaper, closes door and heads to kitchen area) Morning son.

HAROLD: Dad

JUNE: (Ward opens paper and sits at table – June enters shortly after and crosses to kitchen)
Have you been up all night, again?

HAROLD: Yes mother.

JUNE: Go wash up and I will make you some breakfast.

(She begins to make something for breakfast)

HAROLD: Yes mother

WARD: *(reading the paper)* It says the little store on the corner was robbed yesterday.
(Speaks up) Did ya hear about it son.

HAROLD: No father

JUNE: Dear me, it's not safe anymore. *(beat)* Harold will you go get your sister.

HAROLD: *(never looks up from game)* Yes Mother

(She walks in from stage right and crosses to kitchen and sits at table)

CYNDY: *(Looking at Harold as she crosses)* Looser

HAROLD: Yes sister

JUNE: *(turns and see Cyndy at the table)* Thanks Harold.

HAROLD: Any time.

WARD: Did you hear where that little store on the corner was robbed?

CYNDY: Why not, they have been robbing us for years

JUNE: How would you like your eggs dear

WARD: Over easy

JUNE: *(sarcastically)* How would you like your cereal?

CYNDY: *(sarcastically)* With milk.

JUNE: *(continues to be a busy bee in the kitchen getting everything ready for breakfast)*
Harold dear, can you run your sister to school?

(pours coffee for Ward)

HAROLD: No problem

CYNDY: No need. Claude is coming by to pick me up

WARD: I thought we talked about him.

CYNDY: *(sassy)* Talked about what? He's just giving me a ride to school

WARD: Just the same - you are too young to have a boy friend.

(Buries his head in the paper)

CYNDY: He is not my boyfriend, *(quieter)* he is just some guy I sleep with.

JUNE: *(Drops a spatula with a clink and looks at Cyndy – mouth open)* That's what we talked about.

WARD: About what dear?

JUNE: Have a talk with your daughter!

WARD: About what dear?

JUNE: Oh my God, didn't you hear her?

(looks back at Cyndy)

WARD: *(quietly)* You know that upsets her when you say things like that.

CYNDY: It should, I'm sixteen now and I'm hot. Every guy in school wants me.

WARD: Just the same, cool it.

JUNE: *(takes plate of food over to couch and sets it on the seat next to Harold up stage)*
Here you are dear.

(Mom kisses Harold on the head)

HAROLD: Thanks mom.
(he begins to eat with one free hand and plays the game with the other)

(Knock at the door)

JUNE: Can you get that Harold?

(she puts food down for Ward and then Cyndy)

HAROLD: Sure mom. *(loud – never looks up from game)* Come in.

EDDIE: *(Opens the door)* Hi Mrs. Beaver *(looks to Ward)* Mr. Beaver *(looks to Cyndy)*
Little Beaver

CYNDY: Bite me.

(he takes food from couch and sits next to Harold and eats his food)

EDDIE: You wish. Wanna head to the Mall today. *(beat)* There's a new Sega game coming out at Game World.

HAROLD: Sure

JUNE: Cyndy you're going to be late. Harold, dear, please take your sister to school.

HAROLD: Sure mom.

EDDIE: I am heading that way. I can take her.

HAROLD: Thanks man

EDDIE: *(gets up and puts plate down heads to the door)* Come on squirt. *(looks at Harold)*
I'll be back - we can head to the mall. *(Points or gestures to family- like it was his signature gesture)*

HAROLD: Later

EDDIE: Later everyone.

WARD: Bye, now

WARD: *(after taking just a couple of bites sips his coffee)* I have to head in early today.

JUNE: You hardly touched your breakfast

WARD: *(gets up and puts coat on)* It was wonderful thank you my love

JUNE: *(Leans in and gets a kiss on the cheek from Ward)* Drive safely

(Knock at the door)

JUNE: Harold, dear, please get that

HAROLD: Right away mom

WARD: *(already walking to the door - opens it)*

CLAUDE: *(nervous)* Hello Mr. Beaver, is Cyndy here? *(gulp)* I was gonna drive her to school.

WARD: You just missed her. She left with Eddie.

CLAUDE: *(very nervous)* Can I ax you sumpin' Mr. Beaver?

WARD: *(steps back and crosses arms)* Sure, **ax** away.

CLAUDE: It's about your daughter

WARD: What about my daughter?

CLAUDE: Well, we have been hangin' for a few weeks now.

WARD: Yes.

CLAUDE: And she likes me and I like her

WARD: *(getting concerned)* Go on.

CLAUDE: *(very nervous)* I was wonderin', you know? If I could, uhh

WARD: If you could what Claude?

CLAUDE: Well there is that new movie playing at the drive-in this Friday.

WARD: What new movie?

CLAUDE: You know - that one they have been advertising.

WARD: No, I do not.

CLAUDE: Trust me, it has been all over the TV.

WARD: It has, has it. What's the name?

(June is cleaning kitchen and being busy)

CLAUDE: I forgot exactly, but I was wantin' to take Cyn. . .

HAROLD: *(throws arms in air and screams – referring to game)* Got her.

WARD: That's what I am afraid of.

CLAUDE: You afraid? Mr. B? Naa.

WARD: Yes, Claude, I'm afraid. I'm afraid you can't take my daughter to any drive-in.

CLAUDE: Don't be afraid. She said you'd say no. *(beat)* You know. *(bravely)* She ain't child no more.

WARD: *(staring him down)* I am painfully aware of that.

CLAUDE: I'll take real good care of her.

WARD: That's what I am afraid of

CALUDE: Aww Mr. B – It ain't nuttin' like dat. Honest.

WARD: Let me think about it.

CLAUDE: Cool, thanks.

(he leaves and closes door)

WARD: *(looks back at Claude)* I thought about it. *(beat)* NO! *(looks over at Harold)* What do you think of all this?

(opens the door)

HAROLD: *(referring to game)* The Chieftain Warrior has got her in his clutches.

(He turns his head slightly towards his Dad – as Dad is leaving)

WARD: That's what I was afraid of.

(he leaves)

JUNE: Did you clean your room dear.

HAROLD: Yes Mother.

JUNE: *(she passes and heads to the bedroom)* You're such a good boy.

HAROLD: I love you mom.

(the phone rings)

JUNE: *(on the third ring - yelling form off stage)* Can you get that Harold?

HAROLD: *(yelling)* Yes mother.

(phone stops ringing on the fourth one and the answering machine picks up – you can hear the machine as the person leaves the message)

ANSWERING MACHINE:

(WARD) You have reached the home of *(each voice)* *(normal)* WARD / *(upbeat)* JUNE / *(upset)* CYNDY / *(sleepy)* and Harry. *(Ward)* We are the Beavers. Please tell us what you want after the tone. *(June in background - nagging)* I told you to be more . . . (BEEP)

VOICE ON PHONE:

Hey Ward this is Burt. I gotta pick up Evelyn after her canasta game. I won't be able to make the poker game tonight. Call me later. *(Click)*

JUNE: *(enters form bedroom)* Who was that dear?

HAROLD: It was Uncle Burt, he can't make poker night.

JUNE: Too bad, I know your father was looking forward to this weeks' game. Oh well.

HAROLD: Too bad

JUNE: I have to run next door for a few, will you be OK?

HAROLD: Sure mom

JUNE: *(she opens the door pops her head to talk)* Honey, will be able to run a couple of errands this afternoon?

HAROLD: Sure mom. *(She leaves and closes door)* *(excited)* All right – level 14 *(plays for a few minutes)(knock at door)* Come in.

EDDIE: *(opens door and jumps onto couch)* Hey bro

HAROLD: Hey

EDDIE: Wanna head to the mall – check out the new game

HAROLD: I gotta do some errands for mom.

EDDIE: That's cool

HAROLD: Hey - check this out. I found a glitch.

EDDIE: In this game?

HAROLD: Watch when I get to the end of this screen.

(plays for a minute – Eddie watches closely)

EDDIE: I keep telling you to call these guys. *(beat)* You could get a job playing games.
(watching) Wouldn't that be a kick?

HAROLD: Here – see.

EDDIE: What?

HAROLD: It's as plain as your face.

EDDIE: *(points at nose)* Nose on my face. - - Nose, dumb shit.

HAROLD: I got it right the first time.

(phone rings)

(Eddie jumps up to answer)

EDDIE: *(on the phone – bringing phone to Harold)* The Beavers game house – a non Beaver Speaking.

HAROLD: (taking phone – never once looking away from game) Give me that!
(puts phone on shoulder and continues to play) Sure. (pause) When? (pause) not my problem.
(pause) never was. (reacting to game) oh crap – (to phone) not you. Now it's my problem.
(reacting to game) Damn! – (to phone) Not you. (pause) there's not much I can do.
(throws phone towards Eddie) Hang that up.

EDDIE: Sure. Who was that?

HAROLD: Wrong number.

EDDIE: Right. You wanna go or not.

HAROLD: Gonna wait to see what mom wants.

EDDIE: I can wait with ya. (walks to kitchen) Got any grub?

HAROLD: Help yourself.

EDDIE: I always do (gets into fridge) All right, pudding. (leaves the fridge door open)

(door opens - Cyndy and Claude enter - skipping school)
(they stop and look at Harold and then at Eddie)

HAROLD: Aren't you supposed to be at school?

CLAUDE: We have home room.

HAROLD: They don't mean come home - room, Cyndy. Dad is gonna kill ya

CYNDY: Well you aren't gonna tell him. Are you?

HAROLD: What are you gonna do for me?

CLAUDE: Come on Cyndy lets go to my house.

CYNDY: No way, your house sucks.

HAROLD: Moms just next door, she will be back any second.

CYNDY: *(Cyndy grabs Claude and pulls him towards the side door to the bedrooms)*
Come on – let's go to my room *(They leave - - Cyndy pops her head back in)*
You won't tell will you? *(Harold doesn't pay attention to her)* Thanks.
(she closes the door just as mom opens the front door)

JUNE: Eddie – get out of my fridge. At least close the door.

EDDIE: Sorry Mrs. B

(closes door)

JUNE: I am going to run downtown with Marylyn. Here's a list of things that need to be done before your father gets home. *(goes to kitchen – gets list and hands it to Harold)*

HAROLD: Sure mom.

JUNE: Make sure you get to this. You've been playing that damn video game for weeks now. 'bout time you got out of the house. *(beat)* You're going to get saddle sores.

HAROLD: Ok mom.

(June leaves)

(Eddie jumps over couch to land sitting next to Harold)

EDDIE: Well? *(beat)* ready?

HAROLD: Almost got to the end of this level. Hang on.

EDDIE: I'm hangin'

(picks up magazine on end table and thumbs through it)

HAROLD: Crap.

EDDIE: What crap?

(Cyndy and Claude come out of the door)

CYNDY: Mom gone?

HAROLD: That was quick

CYNDY: Claude is afraid of daddy.

HAROLD: Smart boy.

CLAUDE: *(nervous)* Let's get out of here before we're caught.

HAROLD: *(holds up list of things to do)* Here.

CYNDY: *(takes list and looks it over)* Come-on. This is your job. *(exasperated)*
You know I've had it. All you do is sit around playing that stupid video game.
We haven't watched TV for weeks. *(Louder)* You're lazy and I'm about ready to kick your ass.
(stands in front of Harold – he looks around her to play) I've had it, jerk. Why don't you get off
your ass and do something? *(Harold has to move back and forth to see around Cyndy)*
Huh? Why? Is this crappy little game so important? Is it!?!?
You need to go find a job you lazy good for nothing. *(She throws the list back at him)*
Do it yourself. I'm not gonna to be your slave.

HAROLD: *(smug)* I'll tell dad about you and Claude and skipping school.

CLAUDE: *(grabs the list and then grabs Cyndy)* Let's go. *(they head out the door)*

HAROLD: *(yelling)* Gotta be done before dad gets home.

CYNDY: *(yelling from the yard)* Ass hole

EDDIE: Ya asshole. Let's go.

HAROLD: I think I am gonna finish this game - then have some lunch.

EDDIE: We could eat at the mall. I'm buyin'.

HAROLD: Hang out here - we can do two player.

EDDIE: *(heads back to kitchen)* OK. What do you want for lunch? *(beat)* I'm cookin'

HAROLD: A sandwich is fine. There should still be some salami left.

EDDIE: *(digs through fridge)* Salami it is. What else?

HAROLD: That's plenty. *(Reacting to game)* There is that glitch again.

EDDIE: I'm telling you call them. I bet they'd give you a job in a minute.
Think about it. *(beat)* Playing video games all day long and getting paid for it.
Get Cyndy off your back. *(pause)* She's kinda pissed.

HAROLD: She'll get over it.

EDDIE: Ya, right. *(beat)* She's trouble. She's been all her life.

(Eddie brings over sandwich and sets it on the couch)
(he goes back and gets his sandwich – sits on the arm)

HAROLD: That's ok. She's cool.

EDDIE: *(with a mouth full)* Oh ya, what makes you so sure?

HAROLD: I know something she doesn't know I know, you know.

EDDIE: No – I don't

HAROLD: Promise not to tell.

EDDIE: Ya sure, you know me.

HAROLD: *(thinks for a minute)* Never mind

EDDIE: Aw you gotta tell me now.

HAROLD: *(under his breath)* She's pregnant

EDDIE: Oh Crap *(beat)* Mr. B is gonna kill Claude

HAROLD: It's not Claude's.

EDDIE: Double crap.

WARD: *(Ward opens the door)* Hi guys, thought I'd come home for lunch today. Where's mom?

HAROLD: She went downtown.

EDDIE: That's OK Mr. B I'm making sandwiches.

WARD: Ok Eddie, lots of mustard. *(pause – to Harold)* So what have you been doing all day.

EDDIE: Oh nothing much. Just running around.

(making a sandwich)

WARD: *(looks at Eddie like he is crazy)* Son. Had a chance to look through the job listings?

HAROLD: Not yet. I'll get to 'em.

WARD: Your mother and I were talking. It really is about time you let us have our TV and couch back and – well - just about everything.

HAROLD: Sure dad.

WARD: There's got to be something you can do.

EDDIE: I told him to get a job at that game company. He could play videos and get paid for it.

WARD: There you go. I'm sure there isn't a sole alive who has carpel thumb as bad as you do.

HAROLD: Sounds good

EDDIE: *(hands sandwich)* Here you are. Is there anything else I can get for you?

WARD: No. No thank you Eddie.

EDDIE: Always a pleasure to serve you at *(French accent – waggles head)* Che' Eddie.

WARD: *(looks back at Eddie – Eddie backs away)* Please think about it son, you can't sit here all of your life.

HAROLD: I will dad.

CYNDY: *(Cyndy comes through the door – alone)* Here *(She tosses the list to Harold)*

WARD: Shouldn't you be in school?

CYNDY: I just came home for lunch

HAROLD: You didn't do those errands.

CYNDY: No I didn't

HAROLD: I think you should get your **boy friend** and take care of them.

CYNDY: Sorry, you'll have to do it for yourself.

HAROLD: *(motions for her to come closer - whispers)* Actually you need to do them right away.
(pause) I know your little secret

CYNDY: I have no secrets

HAROLD: Yes you do - in a few months you won't be able to hide it.

CYNDY: *(looks startled)* (She slowly takes the list back) *(Slowly)* I'll get Claude right away.

WARD: About that Crazy Claude character

CYNDY: I wish you wouldn't call him that.

WARD: I'm not so sure you should be running around with him. *(pause)* You should set your sites on someone who at least has a job.

CYNDY: *(proudly)* He just got a job. He starts tomorrow. *(beat – snotty)* At least he's not sitting on his ass and playing video games like my **dear sweet brother**.

WARD: Really? Where?

CYNDY: At Karl's Clock Closet

WARD: oh, doing what?

CYNDY: First - he learns to set the **clasps**

WARD: The clasps?

CYNDY: Ya, they're **copper**. Karl gave him one to practice on.

WARD: Really.

CYNDY: Oh ya - then he has to check the **crystal covers**.

WARD: For what?

CYNDY: **Cracks**, what else?

WARD: And he starts tomorrow?

CYNDY: Isn't it great.

WARD: *(with straight face)* So you are telling me, tomorrow *(beat)*
**Crazy Claude Cooper will connect copper clasps and
check crystal covers for cracks at Karl's Clock Closet.**

CYNDY: Ya, isn't that wonderful? *(everyone laughs – but trying to
(clueless) What's so funny? (beat) (making it sound important)*
That's not all he'll be doing. He'll be **cleaning the cupboards and checking the crates and
cases.** *(laughs harder)* You guys always make fun of me. *(she storms out towards the bedrooms
stage left) (yelling as she leaves)*
It's not that funny.

WARD: *(still laughing)* She's right Harold, you've got to get up and get to work.

HAROLD: I know yur right. Maybe I should check that video game company.

WARD: Yes, please.

EDDIE: I know where they are. We can head over there, if ya want

HAROLD: That'd be great. I'll be ready in a few. As soon as I break this level.

(scene ends – lights fade)

SCENE 2

Scene: Lights come up to an empty room. June walks through the front door with groceries (or a bag of items), looks around, drops her groceries. And turns to the phone, she dials.

JUNE: *(talking in the phone)* Ward Beaver please. *(pause)* Hi Honey, guess what?
(pause) You already knew. *(pause)* When did this happen? *(pause)*
The video game company. *(beat)* Who knows more about sittin' on a couch and playing video
games than our son? *(Pause)* That is great. Let's celebrate. *(beat)* Getting our couch back and
our TV. *(pause)* Oh course I can come and get you. *(pause)* How long will it be in the shop?
(beat) I can head your way right now. Bye.

(she hangs up the phone and dances around the room)

We got our couch back. *(she bounces on the couch) (she feels around)*
He has worn a hole in the cushion. *(she grabs the remote and turns on the TV)*
The TV still gets stations. I was begging to wonder. *(she gets up and dances a round while getting the groceries and putting them away)*
(singing)

We get our front room back – we get to watch a movie
We get our front room back – we get to watch a movie

(she grabs her keys and leaves to pick up Ward)

(Scene ends – lights fade)

SCENE 3

Scene: lights come up with Harold playing video games on the couch – alone.
June and Ward burst into the house hoping to see an empty couch.

WARD: *(they stop and look surprised)* I thought you'd got the job? *(pause)* Didn't you start today?

HAROLD: Hang on dad.

JUNE: You didn't get fired already?

HAROLD: No mother. This is my job.

WARD: Sitting on my couch playing video games is not your job.

HAROLD: Yes it is. I'm a game evaluator.

JUNE: Don't they have a place for you to evaluate your work, at work?

HAROLD: This is where we evaluate. More realistic if you do it where you're comfortable.

WARD: Can't you be comfortable at work?

HAROLD: I thought you wanted me to get a job.

WARD: We did but we thought you would have a job to go to - not our couch to go to.

HAROLD: This is it. What d'ya think. I can play games, stay home with the two best parents in the whole wide world (*flippant*) and get paid. It's the best of both worlds.

JUNE: I hate to burst your view on the world, but you can't sit on the couch all day and night. It's been weeks since you've moved from that location.

HAROLD: Whatcha' sayin'?

JUNE: (*raised voice*) MOVE!!!! Get off that damn couch!!! I wanna watch a movie once in a while!

WARD: Son, we're gonna to get a TV for your room and you can sit there **all day long** and make money.

HAROLD: But dad I will miss our conversations, and mom you'll miss me if I wasn't here.

JUNE: (*placating*) I'll just have to make some concessions when it comes to your new career.

HAROLD: (*sadly*) What about those nice long talks we have?

WARD: (*Sarcastically – shaking head*) I, too, will have to makes some sacrifices.

HAROLD: Sure, OK.

JUNE: You can have this TV - your father and I are gonna head down to TV Towne and pick out a BIG new flat screen for the family to watch.

HAROLD: Can I get a flat screen?

WARD: You can get one with your first check.
Until then, head up and get your room ready. I'll move your TV up when we get back.

HAROLD: Could I use the new flat screen until I can afford one of my own?

JUNE: No! You need to find a place in your room to put this set.
Come on now. We'll be back in just a little while.

(June and Ward head out the front door to get a TV)

HAROLD: *(just finishing a game turns the machine off and grabs the remote. He turns off the TV. And wraps up the cables to the video console)*

*(He pulls himself over to the rear stage of the couch where he has his crutches –
He pulls himself up on the crutches - grabs his video console and heads to the bedroom)*

(mutters to himself)

I don't see why I can't use the (mocking) BIG screen TV.

(Curtin)