

ALL TECH CUES ARE INDICATED WITHIN THE BODY OF THE SCRIPT, UNDERLINED AND DENOTED BY AN "*" – LX CUES ARE NOTATED IN THE RIGHT MARGIN IN ADDITION TO THE BODY OF THE SCRIPT. EXCEPT WHERE INDICATED, ALL LIGHTING CUES ARE 3-**SECOND FADES**. ALL AUDIO CUES START AT **FULL VOLUME** – NO FADE-INS – AND END AS INDICATED. ALL **PROJECTION** IS CONTROLLED BY PERFORMER. THE NOTATIONS (VIDEO PLAYS) AND (ON SCREEN) ARE IN THE SCRIPT FOR REFERENCE ONLY.

ME, MY STUFF AND I
(AKA "Barry Smith's Baby Book")
By Barry Smith
Draft 1/10

- * LX - PRESHOW WASH
- * MX - walk-in CD
- * MX - Walk-in CD fades
- * LX - house/stage out
- * MX - Audio #1
- * LX - stage to FULL (when song lyric is "Picture book...")
- Actor Enters
- * MX - Fade AUDIO #1 AS FIRST SLIDE ADVANCES

You know those school pictures that you get sheets and sheets of, and you're supposed to cut them into little individual rectangles and write something witty and sentimental on the back and trade them with your classmates? Well, I always had a hard time with that. Not that I don't want a picture of you, but why does having a picture of you mean that I have to give up a picture of me. I mean...it's a picture of me - doesn't it make more sense that I have it? You won't know who I am in 20 years. And sure, I may not know who I am in 20 years. But at least I'll know where my pictures are.

Look, here's one I got in high school. This cost me a picture of me. Who is this person? They wrote, "Your friendship means so much to me, etc..." This was over 20 years ago. I have no idea where Vierney is, or what she's doing. All I know is that I spell my name in the traditional way, Barry, whereas Vierney, even though we're supposed to remain friends

forever, seems to think that my name is spelled like this. For the last 4 years of high school, every time she says my name, she's thinking, "tiny fruit." And for this I had to part with one of these? No. This is a bad arrangement.

I'm not discounting friendship, I just don't think it should come at the cost of self-knowledge. And self-knowledge is my goal in life. That's why I still have my baby book. (*AUDIO #2)

You know, my baby book, that blank journal of your entire life that your mother is supposed to fill in. The hospital sent my mother home with this one, like giving birth wasn't quite enough work, now she has a homework assignment. And she does pretty well at first. She writes down all the essentials - the day and time, the hospital address, length and weight, doctors and nurses names. Insightful things my parents said about the birth of their first child - well, this is about where she loses steam. She's much better at the fill in the blanks than the essay questions. Her entries are so straightforward that it's more like she's keeping a maintenance record for a new car than capturing the growth of a baby.

Purchase date - Mechanic's names - Front grille - headlights - horn - emergency brake - transmission - Oil change receipts - You want to hang on to these to increase the trade in value. First words - nope. First birthday - no. Shots, diseases, yes. First picture - no. Trips, no. (*BUMP OUT AUDIO #2)

It's not totally devoid of personal information. Here we see that people say I look like Satch. One of these men is my Uncle Satch. All three of them are related to me, so if you think about it for a second, it really doesn't matter which one is Satch, does it? It's bad news either way. OK, there's Uncle Satch. This was taken when I was 13 at the VFW club in Mississippi, the local bar where my family hangs out. The reason I know this is because... I was there.

Blemishes - parts removed and broken, yes. First Christmas, no...I was born in March, so the fact that this page is empty tells me that within 9 months I was old news. But that's kinda what happens, right? The novelty of anything wears off, even your first child. And I'm not blaming my mother. Having a child is exhausting, right? I've heard - I don't have any of my own. Sure, the first few months are exciting and new and bubbly and goo goo, but it's not long before the whole height/weight honeymoon is over.

Haven't you ever started keeping a journal, really excited about it, only to find it 6 months later buried under a stack of magazines with exactly 3 entries in it, and two of them start with, "been a while since I last wrote."

And the thing is, the Baby Book knows this about us. It's even a little bit sarcastic about it. Look, right here, way in the back, page 51, the point in the book where the baby, me, is supposed to be married and recording information on my children. Here's the page for the first born, with all the categories there for you to fill in. Then, the very next page - "other children." There aren't even lines, like it's just daring you to get around to scribbling your other kid's nicknames in there before they're 25. Before the point when, like my father does with me, you just start referring to your offspring as "Son."

And even if you do manage to stick with it, it's laid out in some unattainable fairy tale life - school, college, grad school, job, marriage, kids, vacations, grandkids, stay married for 50 years and your final act right before dying at exactly age 80 is to weigh yourself and write it down. This book was published in Mississippi, which has the largest African American population of any state, and they're giving these out to everyone? You can't get much whiter than me, and I'm insulted by this picture. And the page for brothers, sisters, aunts uncles and cousins. Yeah? I don't see Uncles Satch anywhere in there. Nobody's

family looks like this. Nobody's life is like this. This baby book is fucked.

But they say that everyone has at least one book in them, and for all I know, this may be it for me. So tonight I'm going to accept its challenge. I'm going to complete my baby book, and my doing so will explain why it is that I have it to begin with.

Barry Smith - this is your life. Now, let's go to the zoo...

(*AUDIO #3)

When I'm 6 years old my mother takes me to the Memphis Zoo. It's cool, I see bears, and giraffes, and elephants, and I see this group of people acting really weird. They're all over the place, walking in strange ways, their arms moving around more than it seems like they need to, and they're loud. One guy is having an argument with a garbage can. There's a girl eating the food they give you to throw into the hippo pit.

I point to them and ask my mom what's going on.

She smacks my hand down and says, "They're retarded." She whispers, even though there's no way they can hear us, cause they're way over there, and one of them is yodeling. But she whispers like it's a secret that they're - what did she call it? Retarded? They're retarded, and they don't know it. I don't get this. How could they not know? I can see that they're different. Can't they just look in a mirror and see the same thing? If we have to keep it a secret from them, then I guess not. (*FADE AUDIO #3)

A week later I'm a few minutes late getting to my first grade class, so when I walk in Miss Bryson says, "Smith! You're tardy!"

I've never heard this word "tardy" before, but I just learned the word retarded. And tardy - retarded, that's the same word. That word's supposed to be a secret. The people who are tardy don't know it, and you're not supposed to tell them. Only somebody really mean would do something like that. Somebody really mean, like Miss Bryson.

This is my first grade class. There's me. Usually the teacher's picture is included, but you notice that there's no picture of Miss Bryson? That's because she's such pure evil that her image doesn't register on film.

She's a Meany Pants. If you're tardy, she'll announce it to you and the whole class. Which is exactly what she does on that day. She lets it be known that I am profoundly different, but different in a way that I can never, on my own, perceive, yet it's blindingly obvious to everyone else. But...how can I be tardy? I'm educated. I'm a kindergarten graduate. With a minor in Vacation Bible School. I'm normal, right? I'm exactly the way I think I am. Right? I don't talk to garbage cans. No, you are seriously different, and it's high time you knew it. You're tardy, Smith. Now sit down and start finger-painting.

(On screen: ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DIFFICULTIES)

It's funny that the baby book reminds you to include elementary school difficulties. That's what you want to remember about early life, right? Why not just have a pants wetting chart for you to fill in? Just because my difficulties never got written down doesn't mean I don't remember them. Miss Bryson certainly did her part. As a purely evil being she embraces red ink.

There's something just so beautifully random about scoring an 86 on your schoolwork when you can barely count to 86. Miss Bryson gave me a B in writing on my report card. What a bitch. Even at that early age I begin to suspect that real life can teach you more than any classroom or text book. 86 on my fish quiz? Yeah, whatever. I'll show you a thing or two about fishing. Mostly, though, I think she just didn't appreciate the illustrated manuscript. But no matter the grade, each day I bring my school papers home and put them in the trunk at the foot of my bed, because my trunk is the closest thing I have to one of these. My grandmother's antique desk full of "old stuff." Pictures of my dad as a baby, from when my

grandparents were young. And my favorite, all the old yellowed bits of paper from the 40s - war bond receipts - letters - I just can't get enough of this stuff. And I figure if I put my school papers in the trunk every day and wait long enough, then one day I'll have cool old stuff too. Only it'll be my cool old stuff.

One day I come home from school, open up the trunk to shove my handful of papers in and ...it's empty. I had it almost full, and now...I run to ask my mother where she put all my papers. She says, "We burned 'em."

Burned them?

Now, before you start to imagine my parents performing some weird Satanic ritual over my pile of burning papers, I need to remind you that this takes place in the deep south. The deep south is, well...look, this is the cover of my 8th grade yearbook, the Greenville Christian School crusader, Greenville Mississippi. See the mountains, the trees, the cascading streams. Beautiful, right? The Mississippi Delta looks nothing like this. And given the choices of pictures of Greenville Mississippi in 1980, I can see why they outsourced. This is a small Christian school, you can't have a picture of Ma Rene's BBQ and Do Drop Inn as the yearbook cover. The inside page is a little closer to reality, but it's still pretty whitewashed. The place I grew up is not without its charm, but it's a very specific sort of charm that can be a little bit authentic. And this authenticity is evident in the way we deal with our trash. Everybody in our neighborhood has a big metal trash barrel in their back yard. When your indoor garbage gets full, you take it out to the barrel. When the barrel gets full, you set it on fire.

[VIDEO PLAYS]

That's me pulling my cousin in the wagon while my brother pushes. In the background you can see a cluster of these trash barrels, and, you can even see some smoke coming from ours. If the burning of my school papers is the assassination of my innocence, then this is my own Zapruder

film. Back, and to the left. Back, and to the left. The school paper depository. A puff of smoke from the trashy knoll. I remember exactly where I was when I heard the news.

[VIDEO ENDS]

“We burned ‘em...”

And I’m devastated. I’ve never even lost a stuffed animal before, and now I’ve lost my embryonic time capsule. An entire wing of the future Barry Smith memorial library wiped out.

(*AUDIO #4) I’m shaken, and disoriented, and hungry, because I just got home from school, and it’s time for my snack.

In that moment I know what I have to do.

Never throw anything away again.

I know that I need to begin the documentation of my life through photographs and artifacts and physical reminders of places and times, and to see to it that these items remain safely in my care. I will build a grand mosaic of Barry-ness - pictures of me, pictures by me, stuff made by me, stuff made for me, pictures of stuff made by me for someone else - a Mobius strip of self - and then and only then will I know intimately each aspect of the complicated mechanism that is me. Losing my school papers has left me fragmented, so saving everything from this point forward will make me whole again. According to the Hindus there are 3 great mysteries, air to the bird, water to the fish, and man to himself. Well, I will solve that mystery of man to himself through the power of stuff. This is my manifesto. (*BUMP OUT AUDIO #4)

OK, well, that’s not my manifesto. I’m not quite up to manifesto-writing level yet, but I know that’s what I decided, because, well...here I am.

(On Screen: FIRST PICTURE)

And here I am. Actually, here I’m not. Even though it never got stapled in the baby book, I’m pretty sure this is the first

picture of me. 5 days old. Looking pretty happy and satisfied, like maybe I've just finished a good meal.

Although in a way you could say that this is the first picture ever taken of me, at my mother's baby shower a few weeks earlier. Or you could even say that my parents wedding is where the pictures of me began. But if you open that door then you have to go back to when my parents were dating. And then to my parents as kids. And their parents. And their parents. And further still. I was true to my manifesto. I have loads of these old family pictures, going all the way back to when there were no pictures, then all the way forward again, and then all the way up to me, and all the way to the present moment. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's get back to the baby book.

(On Screen: HOBBIES AND SPORTS)

Hobbies and sports. I have to wonder just how hastily this thing was thrown together. I mean, ducks? Hobby or sport? Should I be hunting them, or playing checkers with them? I'm not sure.

I'm also not sure whether this is a hobby or a sport, but apparently there's this "trick" that I do. I don't know if I actually do a somersault or if my trick is just touching my head to the ground, but given some old 8mm footage of me from around the same time, I kinda have to wonder. **[VIDEO PLAYS]** This is me learning to walk without sticking my tongue out. My mother is helping me out by smacking me in the mouth whenever my tongue pops out. I told you, we do things a little different down south. I'm even having a hard time standing still without the tongue sticking out. Clearly I'm no prodigy at this whole walking thing, so I think it would be unfair to call this a sport. **[VIDEO ENDS]** We'll have to go with hobby. However, according to this picture, I am somewhat advanced when it comes to "showing my snuff." Snuff is ground up tobacco that you pack into your upper lip, making it poke out. I'm just using my tongue to make it look like snuff, but still - basically I'm

being primed to use tobacco products at age 1 and a half. This makes me look at other scenes from my childhood in a new light. I mean, I don't know for sure that this isn't mine. That would help explain that satisfied, post-meal-cigarette look on my face. And if this is my cigarette, it's not my first. It surely started during the baby shower. And, using that theory, it started way back with my mother, and her mother, and her cigarette, there for all the kids to enjoy.

These people would never smoke cigarettes. Even their exhaust fumes are whimsical.

You'd think that all this early exposure would cause me to eventually develop a smoking habit. I'm happy to say that's not true - I did smoke for about 20 years, but I always thought of it as a hobby.

Here I am next to an empty ashtray. I'm sure it's only empty because the cigarette is being held by the person taking the picture. But here the ashtray kinda takes a back seat to the gun.

I know I've said this already - but it's worth repeating that my early life took place in the deep south. Sorry, the deep south - a culture that loves its guns. But this is my culture, so I do have respect for it, but I look at some of my early pictures and I think it's just irresponsible. I mean, what kind of parents would let a child this young have a drum set?

(On screen: THE FASHIONS WERE)

The fashions were.... See, this is more evidence of the Baby Book being kind of a dick. This is such a set-up. Usually a buffer of time creates healing, but not when it comes to fashion. It's just not very often that you look back on what you used to wear and think, man, I looked good.

This picture of my Uncle Herschel isn't so much memorabilia as it is a warning. The titled of this picture is: "Un unh."

When your family is as well-photographed as mine is, there are going to be some fashion don't examples in the pile. (*AUDIO #5)

My Dad. My aunt, my mom, this couch. The wood paneling. My uncle. My brother. Santa. Me and my brother. Again. Me. And me. And me. (*BUMP OUT AUDIO #5 AT "Barry gets handed an award" PICTURE) Here I'm all dressed up to accept an award from the School Principal. I think it was for outstanding achievement in the field of having a belt buckle larger than your bicep.

And speaking of awards, my grandfather easily wins the fashion prize. Actually, Papa, as the grandkids call him, deserves lots of awards.

I know he's not what the baby book had in mind by important personalities, given the autograph book, but Papa was easily the coolest guy I've ever known. He was fun, and fun loving, and funny, and at times, just plain silly. So for that he gets a pardon for all fashion crimes.

Papa's all dressed up because this is the day he retires from his job at the Shelby Mississippi Sunburst bank. They make him a cake - we'll miss you, Mr. Brownie. Brownie being his nickname. Most people in my family go by nicknames. His full name is Hebert Browning Smith, born in the year of 19 hundred and almost got around to finishing writing it in. My dad is a junior, so he also goes by Brownie. My mother, Wanda Faye, goes by her nickname, Mousey. See, it's right here on the back of one of those school pictures from her friends, Mousey, let's always be friends, etc etc. I'm sure this picture cost my mother a picture of herself, but she was probably OK with that, like most normal people are. So, Brownie and Mousey. My parents are cartoon characters. So, anyway, Papa retires, he gets all spiffed up for the occasion. This is by no means his first fashion assault, no, it's taken years of training to get to this point. And it really is too bad that 30 years of employment

have to be immortalized like this, where the bank president is going for the grip and grin, while Papa is going for the gimmie the goddam check. Luckily nobody really notices, because between the suit and the wallpaper no one's eyes are able to focus.

As a banker, most of his small town knows him like this, whereas the Papa I know is a bit more, well...casual. He kinda sets the standard for casual. In fact, at times, he just flat out throws down the gauntlet for casual. What's happening here is that my grandmother, Nannie, is about to give Papa his insulin shot. The grandkids are all gathered around to watch, just like we do each night, and if you look closely you can see genuine glee on their faces, that's because there's no internet. Imagine the good times we kids could have had if Papa'd had a colostomy bag.

Papa makes off with a few dozen of the bank's souvenir give-a-way T-shirts. Bright yellow shirts with "Keep Fiscally Fit" written on the front, so his post-retirement wardrobe is pretty much handled, and he lived a good 'nother 20 years. **(LAST PIC - TALL BARRY WITH HAND ON GRANDFATHER'S SHOULDER)**

(Text on screen: THIRD, FOURTH, FIFTH GRADE Page)
Back to the Baby Book. **(*AUDIO #6)** The baby book and I are still in synch in the third grade. I break my wrist falling off a trampoline - typical kid stuff. By fourth grade my wrist has healed up enough so that I can run really fast, blindfolded, while carrying an egg in a spoon, meaning I totally kick ass on field day.

But in the fifth grade the book and I start to part ways. I get glasses. We find an optometrist who specializes in frames that accentuate facial features while still managing to crush self-esteem. **(*FADE OUT AUDIO #6)** Still, it's nice to be able to see. Not that you'd need glasses to see my parent's divorce coming, which also happened in the fifth grade. As I

sort through my vast library of family pictures, I realize that I have exactly 5 pictures of my parents together, not counting their wedding pictures, of course. And in those 5 pictures you can see the arc of their relationship. Here we all are at my aunt's wedding, big smiles all around. On Nannie's couch, smiles a little more forced. In our back yard - not technically together, their lawn chairs just happened to be in the same frame. On the couch again, closed eyes and not even an attempt at a smile. And the only reason they're on the same couch in this picture is because Nannie only has one ashtray. And that's it. In a family that takes so many pictures, there's something telling about only having that many pictures together. And this the lack of pictures isn't because there was no one around to take them. I was pretty handy with a camera. Here's some of my early work. Even after years together my grandparents still have their picture taken together.

It's tempting to blame my parent's divorce on my Dad's well, demeanor. But that's unfair. Sure, he could be serious, but he wasn't without his playful moments, even if they had to be forced on him. And, well...macramé seemed to make him happy. But sometimes things just don't work out. So they divorce, and not long after that my Dad gets promoted and transferred to California.

We see our dad twice a year when he comes back to Mississippi on business. We engage in the traditional post-divorce sitting together awkwardly on the couch ritual. And every visit, just as Dad's about to leave, like, the car's runnin', gotta go catch a plane, Nannie always insists on a quick picture.

I have no doubts that my dad loved us. And sometimes love means not having to put your cigarette down.

(On screen: EARLY TEENS)

The early teens...with little flowers. What the fuck? (***AUDIO #7**) Evolution has designed the early teens to be a dense concentration of awkwardness. I'm tempted to just rip this page out, but I'm afraid it may damage some of the more important surrounding pages, like the one with "most advanced appliances" on it. And besides, once you start tearing out pages, where do you stop? I went to a community college for about 20 minutes, but the baby book devotes page after fuckin' page to my glorious college years. It's one thing to not have gotten around to filling pages in, but it's another when you just don't have anything to put there, leaving you with all these empty lines pointing out exactly what you missed out on. Oh, and according to the baby book, in addition to 4 full pages worth of college, you'll also need to do some post-graduate schooling, get a shitload of honors and awards, and look like these assholes while doing it. They should score these pages so you can tear them out with no trace. But no, there'll be no deviation or perforation from that path.

So, OK, outstanding events in my early teens. Sure, why not... (***FADE AUDIO #7**)(***LX - DIM MASTER, ADD BLUE**)

A month before I turn 14 I'm standing in the laundry room having a conversation with my mother. It's a Friday afternoon and we're talking about my science project, which is due on Monday morning, and I've done exactly this much work on it - two rough sketches. One for a telegraph machine, the other for a still. I'm panicked. And my brother and I are going to Nannie and Papa's for the weekend. My mom says she'll help me figure something out on Sunday night, when we get home. And that's it. No great significance, except that it's the last conversation we ever have. She pulls out of the gravel

LX - DIM MASTER, ADD BLUE 5 -SECOND
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driveway, and I wave goodbye, just a casual wave. And she waves back, a see you Sunday wave.

Later that night, at the VFW club, her and a bunch of people hop in a friend's new pick-up for a test ride, but they make a left without stopping at the stop sign, and there's a car coming really fast, and well, the next thing I know Nannie and Papa are waking me up to tell me that my mother's dead.

My brother and I move in with our grandparents, it's always been a second home to us anyway. After the funeral, everyone gathers at our old house, and in the midst of all the hugs and tears I sneak away and into my mom's room. I close the door and I sit on her bed, confused by my own numbness - I know I should be crying, but even after a week I'm still in shock. I do the only thing I know how to do - I open up the drawer where she keeps all her pictures and start to dig through them, grabbing all the ones of her. Nannie comes in and tells me to stop - this is all yours. All your Mama's stuff, it's all yours. Nobody's gonna take it. Now come on back and get something to eat. Miss Burton just brought some greens and cornbread. I close the drawer and go with her, but as I do I slip the handful of pictures into my back pocket.

A few days later my estranged stepfather pulls up with a U-Haul. He packs up everything from the house - furniture, TV, beds, silverware - everything that's not our toys and clothes, including all the pictures, and drives away, leaving me with a blurry and abstract record of the last few years of my mother's life. I'm kinda hoping that one of you in the crowd is him, and that you've come to this show with a box of my mother's photos. If you've been wondering how to break this to me, well, from a dramatic standpoint, right now would be the perfect moment. No? OK...

(*LX - RESTORE MASTER)

Well, there you go. Thanks, baby book. Thanks for bringing everyone down. Why not just come out and

LX - RESTORE MASTER

say it? (On screen: MOTHER DIES - FILL IN YOUR OWN
GODDAM BABY BOOK)

(*LX- Beat - TAKE OUT BLUE)

OK, sorry. Let's face it, the early teens were a long time ago, and with some perspective, I realize that there are some upsides to your mother dying when you're 13.

BEAT LX - TAKE OUT BLUE

Like when I go back to school, if I get a test question wrong, or even just leave it blank, it's the equivalent of writing "My mother just died," and the teacher won't mark it wrong, even if it's an algebra test. Solve for x, where y equals my mother just died. Not only do they not mark it wrong, they'll write really nice letters on the back of my test telling me how everything happens for a reason.

And "mother just died" are the only circumstances under which you can be forgiven for writing bad poetry - sing songie rhymes of angst and grief. Like this one - Middle o Nowhere, USA, is where I'd like to go, and stay. Oh, it's bad - it's Shatner bad - but I dare you to criticize it. And it's beautifully illustrated. So there, Miss Bryson.

When Papa retired from the bank they made him a cake, but I bet he didn't get to design it. Well, since my mother just died, I get to design the ultimate going away cake. I have no way of proving this of course, but I'm willing to bet that my going away cake is the only going away cake in the history of going away cakes that features both the Ayatollah Khomeini and Mr. Bill.

And you get voted class favorite. Sure, it's only a class of 24 people, but 15 of those are boys, so there was some fierce competition. Otis Spurgeon was an early frontrunner. Brian Provis, no slouch. Judd Cotton tested high in exit polls. But of course, after all 24 votes are counted, no matter what the tally, you have to give it to the kid whose mother just died. And you know what? I'll take it. And I'll keep it. And I still have it. (*AUDIO #8)

And my baby book, cassette tapes, home movies, my yearbook, valentines day cards, notes from teachers, tiny little baskets. My grandmother buys a funeral book to keep track of everything, all the friends and relatives who were there, who sent flowers, who brought food and what kind of food they brought. Miss Burton did bring greens and cornbread. Dot Thrash brought cake and butterbeans. I didn't even know books like this existed. This is like a baby book for when you die. So of course, there's a blank page. What, did it get boring writing things down? Obviously I was not in charge of this project. But I was busy saving all the other stuff, church bulletins, newspaper announcements, receipts from newspaper announcements, oh, because for a chronicler, death is a keepsake cornucopia. Cause if you have to not have a mother, at least you get all this cool stuff, which is the next best thing, right? Right.

If losing my see spot run papers makes me feel like life is out of control, well, losing my mother puts me at a whole new level. Now preserving moments is crucial, because you never know when the moment will change. One minute you're waving goodbye, the next you wish you'd taken just one last picture.
(*AUDIO #8 OUT - SLOW FADE)

ACT 2

(On screen: MEANWHILE)

Meanwhile, my Dad has been living in Southern California for 3 years and has totally gone native. My brother and I are going out to live with him. We're all in for a shock. My grandparents drive us out there that summer - 5 days on the road. The baby book wants some photos and mementos of my travels. And in this case, I'm happy to oblige. I take lots and lots of pictures during this trip, and every one looks exactly like

this. And, just in case I miss anything, I also shoot home movie footage as well as keeping a written and an audio journal. Because I know that this trip signifies the beginning of a new phase in my life, and I capture it in every possible medium except oil painting, and only because that takes too long to dry.

And of course, I still have the tape that I recorded during that trip. What an amazing glimpse into my thoughts and moods and hopes and fears at this pivotal time in my life. Or at least, it would have been, except that someone gave me a watch as a going away present. **(VIDEO PLAYS)**

(VIDEO ENDS) Just a little bit too insightful. The day I arrive in California I take an index card and write down the date, then I fold it in half and write Day I Came on it - no sexual connotations, that's something I'd be keeping track of later - but already in the past tense, already paving the way to reminisce. Like every day is a reason to create a new a time capsule, because to savor a moment, you have to first define it, to fix that moment in the moment. And, just in case you're too busy saving to savor, that's OK, you can come back to it later. That's why you went to all that trouble to save it begin with.

LX - VIDEO
LX - RESTORE TO
FULL AFTER
VIDEO LINE "WE
MADE IT!"

(On screen: HIGH SCHOOL)

OK, so I guess I'm going to start high school in California, even though the baby book still thinks I'm in Mississippi. There's nothing on this page to indicate that I'm about to show up in a place like this, looking like this, and sounding like this. No matter how much you attempt to blend in physically, when you open your mouth and this comes out, you may as well look like this.

I do manage to iron out my accent as high school progresses. But a Mississippi accent is kinda like the herpes of

accents - you never really get rid of it, you just learn to cope and suffer through the occasional flare-up. Even as I speak, I'm thinking in a southern accent.

(On screen: IMPORTANT ADVANCEMENTS)

The baby book was published before the moon landing, so this was a very bold prediction, up there with Nostradamus. A man did land on the moon, it was a white man, and he did have an electric razor. But the most important advancement in my time wasn't moon-based, it was this. The video camera. Auto focus would come later, and would be a very close second.

My dad buys a video camera back when they're big and expensive, and for that I owe him my eternal gratitude, and an apology. Because this is a documentor's dream toy, and before it's even out of the box I snap it up and start to annoy people with it. **(VIDEO)**

The early version had to be tethered to the TV, so you can see yourself being filmed. See, like the baby book, there's still some fun novelty to the documentation. But then, a few months later. **(END VIDEO)**

There's my aunt doing the classic taking a picture of me taking a picture, or in this case a picture of me video taping. You'd think if I were as into this as I claim to be that I'd have the picture she just took. But that was 25 years ago. And it's not even my picture, it's my aunt's. What sort of person would have such a thing? And know where it is?

When you've got a body like that, you have to show it off. This is what I look like for about 4 years. And not only do I document, but I start to think that with a bit of off-camera direction, maybe I can shape my family in the way that I want it to be. Cute babies, affectionate fathers, grandfathers singing campfire songs. And it works. Sometimes. Sorta. **(VIDEO)**

Like I always knew, in the end, documenting yourself is the only thing you can count on. **(END VIDEO)**

(On screen: HIGH SCHOOL)

Back to the baby book. I wish for my sake, and the sake of the baby book, that I could say that I finished strong in high school. Clubs and societies. No. Athletic interests and awards. No. Ah, but I did have very specific future plans and ambitions.

There's a mandatory guidance counselor session for all seniors. I go to mine, and the counselor asks me what I plan to do after I graduate. I say, well, here's what I'm thinking (*AUDIO #9) - I'll probably go to a community college, fuck around, take lots of drugs, a few art classes, maybe a philosophy class, eventually drop out, go to England and live in penniless squalor for a year, come back home, live in my van, drift around aimlessly, move to Colorado and work a series of menial jobs before joining a weird religious cult, leave the cult after a few years and go back to working menial jobs, all the while taking pictures when I can afford the film and basically continue to obsessively save scraps from my daily life because that's really the only thing I do well. (*BUMP OUT AUDIO #9)

She scribbled a note on my transcript and said, OK, interesting, any plans for the senior prom?

Oh yeah, I've got big plans...

(On screen: RELIGIOUS TRAINING)

I think it's fair to count joining a cult as the highlight of my religious training. I hear about a guy in Montana who claims to be the return of Jesus, so I do what anyone would - I go to Montana, meet the guy, accept him as my personal lord and savior and move into his basement. Many years later, after I'm long gone from the cult, it sometimes comes up in conversation, like, back when I was in the cult, we used to... and people would say, "What?"

I assumed everyone spent most of their 20s hitchhiking around spreading the word of the return of Jesus and the impending apocalypse. But I guess some people actually had jobs.

(On screen: RECORD OF EMPLOYMENT)

I've yet to have a full time job, and I've had way too many non-full time jobs to fit in the baby book's allotted space. Rather than go through each of them, I'll see you back here in about a year with my new show, "Every Job I've Ever Had." Seriously.

One of the jobs is worth mentioning - for many years I was a videographer, getting paid to document things other than myself, which, not surprisingly, is pretty boring. I spent many years video taping these incredibly dry medical conferences, sitting through tedious powerpoint presentations, where the guy talks and talks and talks and shows lots of pictures with arrows pointing at the parts of the picture you're supposed to look at...

(On screen: FIRST PLAY)

Oh look, the baby book offers a hint of things to come. The first play I ever go to, I also star in.

It's my kindergarten production of The Four Seasons. I'm in the first season, Autumn - the one that sets the tone and pace for the rest of the seasons, so there's some pressure. I'm in the 10 little Indians number, which I've heard is now taught as Ten Little Soldiers, more politically correct. Obviously PC language isn't a hot topic in Mississippi in the early 70s. If it had been, my mother would have told me that the people at the zoo are developmentally disabled, and then miss Bryson could have called me tardy all she wanted and I would have skated through life free and light and unburdened, and we'd all be doing something else right now.

After my breakout performance as little Indian #7, my very next stage role is in a community theater production of The King and I, where I play a cloud. Oh yeah...I'm 32.

(VIDEO)

Once you've had a taste of this kind of glory, there's no turning back.

(On screen: DIVERSIONS)

It's a little depressing to realize that I haven't progressed much further than this page, intended for my toddler years - playing and diverting myself. I never stopped writing silly poems, taking pictures, drawing bad cartoons, making little movies, reading comic books.

And then just a few years ago it all sorta comes together. I have this idea to tell the story of my cult experience using powerpoint, with pictures, and video, and poems, and stuff. I've tried to trace this idea back, and the best I can figure is that after Papa retired he picked up a paint brush for the first time and started painting pictures of the Mississippi Delta, the real Mississippi Delta, the cotton fields and shotgun shacks that he grew up around. So maybe I figured that I'd take the stuff I know and make art out of it, too. And although it's a totally different topic, I'm sure my grandmother's macramé business has a lot to do with why I'm into bondage.

So I put all my pictures into my computer, write a script, set up a screen, and I start talking. And it seems to work. My friends like it. People in my little home town like it. I apply to the New York International Fringe Theatre Festival, a juried festival, and I get accepted. And I get written up in the NY Times, with my picture on the cover of the arts section. I win the Solo Show Award. Holy shit. This is good. I tour the show across Canada. It goes well. Sold out shows, great reviews. I win more awards. People come up to me afterwards, point to my screen and say, "I can't believe you have all that stuff."

I write another show about living in squalor in England, with more than twice as many pictures. I take it on tour. People see my show and say, "Who saves this stuff?" And I'm thinking, doesn't everyone? I was just using my pictures and stuff to help tell my funny stories, like a live comic book, words and pictures. I didn't know there was anything weird about having all this stuff until I start reading headlines like this. You mean

there's something weird about me, and I don't know it? You mean Miss Bryson was right?

I'm still mystified by the fact that most adults don't have their tonsils. I don't mean have their tonsils. I mean, you know, have their tonsils. (*AUDIO #10) (*LX - ADD RED)

Suddenly, my obsession is my job. Which LX - ADD RED causes me to start obsessing about all the things I HAVEN'T saved. All this crap that I never really thought about is now my artistic raw material. Sure, I have my tonsils, but what about the cast from when I broke my wrist. How did I let that go? That would be the perfect picture to put here. A complete circle, the tonsils, the cast, the baby book's mention of both. But like an idiot I threw it away. How could an 8-year-old be so short-sighted? Every bit of flotsam and jetsam in my life that I let slip through my fingers is a punchline that I'll never get to make.

And yeah, I've got a clip of hair from my first haircut, and a clip from my most recent haircut, but what about all those haircuts in between? And where's my birth certificate? How can I not have that? That's so remedial. And my little inky baby footprints? Who doesn't have their little inky baby footprints? Homeless people have their little inky baby footprints! And look - birthmarks. Dark spot under left eye, gone, replaced by dark circles under both. Spot the size of a half dollar on my back. Gone. And they don't mint half dollars any more. And speaking of spots, what about Spot? My first stuffed animal, the only one that got logged in the baby book. This is the only picture I have of Spot, and it's not a good one. I remember Spot wasn't a stuffed animal so much as a pillowcase with picture of a dog on it. and if I'd kept it I could pull it out of a bag right now and show it to you how hilariously low budget it is. Or I could take out the pillow and replace it with all of my hair clippings that I'd saved from over the years and it would be fucking awesome!

The non-existent possibilities ARE ENDLESS! (*BUMP OUT AUDIO #10) (*LX REDS OUT)

OK, so mistakes were made. I let a few things slip past me. But not again. My stuff is more precious than ever. And I have to preserve it. I have to gather it together for real.

LX - REDS OUT

I go to my dad's house in California and turn his spare room into a scanning factory, much to his dismay, capturing all the family photos that he has. I fly to my Aunt's house, my mother's sister, in Alabama, and make her pull out all her old pictures. She's got pictures of my mother that I've never seen, newspaper clips of her in high school, her yearbook - my mother was in the drama club, she was in a play, I never knew this ...I bring it all home with me and I put it in the pile with the rest of my stuff, and I vow to scan it all, everything. All the little scraps and clippings and doodles and sketches and photos and, all of it. I need to have it all in a nice, manageable format, something I can reference easily, so that if I need any bit of my past it's right there, catalogued, organized, categorized, chronological, alphabetical, color coded, keyword searchable. Just like the last page of the baby book is actually an index page, which is the smartest fucking thing it's done so far. If the unexamined life is not worth living, then the undocumented life must be even worse.

I lock myself in my room for weeks, I don't wash, I barely eat or sleep. I go a little bit mad. And this was not that long ago. (*LX - Video)

(VIDEO PLAYS/ENDS - LAST LINE IN VIDEO IS "This is where I'll be for the next month or so - right here, doing this...")

(*LX - RESTORE TO FULL AND ADD RED)

LX - VIDEO
LX - RESTORE TO
FULL AND ADD
RED AFTER
VIDEO ENDS

As the days and nights wear on I have crazy thoughts of new projects, like to gather

up every image ever taken of me. Ever. Contact all my friends from all my life and see if they have any pictures of me, and if so, could they send them to me?

Each new pile of photos and stack of stuff is full of memories, and it's intense, and bottomless. No matter how much I work the unscanned pile doesn't seem to get any smaller. But I'm determined. This is what I need to do to preserve my stuff, and to preserve myself. One night I'm up late, scanning and sifting and sorting and I pick up a picture that I've never seen before. (*AUDIO #11)

(*LX - REDS OUT)

LX - REDS OUT

It's Papa. I have lots of pictures of Papa, I even have one of him with his pants down, but this one's as recognizable as any of them. Even though he's barely in the shot I can feel his presence as if he's standing in front of me. And by feeling so much with so little, I know that I can have the same feeling if this is all there is. Or even this. If I never see another picture of Papa, I can still feel this. My wallowing in the past has suddenly made me very present. It's a feeling that doesn't need a picture as a reminder, or boxes full of stuff to store my emotions in. Even if you're tardy, you're still on time for the present. (*AUDIO #11 - SLOW FADE OUT)

MEMORANDA

Time to take a little break. I sit down and grab my old yearbook and start to flip through it. Look, there in the corner, it's Judd Cotton. He was my best friend in 8th grade. We were actually pretty inseparable. I wonder if I ever gave him a picture of me, or if I was all weird about it. And as I'm sitting there on the floor, surrounded by mountains of stuff, something catches my eye. It's this poem.

It's like my whole life is summed up right here in this cheesy little poem. Life is gonna give you stuff, all kinds of stuff, and you get to decide how much of it you keep, and where you keep it, and how you arrange it, and how you present it, and you might even have a say in whether it causes you melancholy or mirth. You know who would have really appreciated this page? Papa. Not that he was into poetry, or even philosophy, he wasn't. But he was always good at choosing mirth over melancholy. Even after my mother died he could always say something silly that would make me laugh. And I think that's why he would have liked this page, and this moment, because right there, nestled in with all these profound musings ... is my ass. THANK YOU.

(*LX BLACKOUT AFTER "THANK YOU")

(*WAIT A BEAT, THEN PLAY AUDIO CUE #12)

(*LX - CURTAIN CALL)

(*LX - HOUSE UP)

(*LET REMAINING CD TRACKS PLAY WHILE AUDIENCE EXITS)

LX - BLACK OUT
(AFTER "THANK
YOU")

LX - CURTAIN
CALL

LX - HOUSE
UP

-

END

ME, MY STUFF AND I - AUDIO CUE SHEET

CUE NUMBERS CORRESPOND TO CD TRACK NUMBERS.

All audio cues start at full volume. No fade-ins. Cues are faded or snapped/bumped out by tech, as indicated in script.

(NOTE - SOME AUDIO CUES ARE TRIGGERED FROM THE COMPUTER - THESE ARE CONTROLLED BY PERFORMER AND ARE NOTED IN THE SCRIPT ONLY FOR REFERENCE)

CUE/track #	PAGE #	
1	1	
2	2	
3	4	
4	7	
5	10	
6	11	
7	13	
8	15	
9	19	
10	22	
11	24	
12-15	25	

ME, MY STUFF AND I - LIGHTING CUE SHEET

LIGHT CUES ARE NOT NUMBERED. ALL CUES ARE 3-SECOND FADES, EXCEPT WHERE INDICATED. SHOW CONSISTS OF 6 LOOKS:

- “**FULL**” - THIS IS A GENERAL STAGE WASH, WITH SLIGHT SPOTS ON STANDING MIC, ALL FOCUSED OFF THE PROJECTION SCREEN
- “**VIDEO**” THIS IS THE “FULL” LOOK AT APPROX 50% - USED WHILE VIDEO IS PLAYING
- “**ADD RED**” - THIS IS “FULL” WITH THE ADDITION OF A RED WASH
- “**ADD BLUE**” - THIS IS “FULL” WITH THE ADDITION A BLUE WASH
- “**BLACKOUT**” - THIS IS A “SNAP” TO BLACK, NOT A FADE.
- “**CURTAIN CALL**” - THIS IS “FULL” PLUS ADDITIONAL STAGE WASH, STILL FOCUSED MOSTLY OFF SCREEN

Lighting Cue	PAGE #	
PRESHOW	1	VIDEO, BLACKOUT, FULL
FULL	1	
DIM MASTER	13	TAKE “FULL” LOOK TO 30%
ADD BLUE	13	
FULL	14	RESTORE “FULL”
TAKE OUT BLUE	15	
VIDEO	17	
FULL	17	
ADD RED	22	
FULL	23	(RED OUT)
VIDEO	23	
FULL/RED	23	RESTORE TO FULL AND ADD RED
FULL	24	(RED OUT)
BLACKOUT	25	
CURTAIN CALL	25	