

MEMOIRS OF A TEN YEAR OLD

by

Patrick McConville

CONTACT:

Jeff Portnoy

BELLEVUE PRODUCTIONS

[Jeff@bellevueprods.com](mailto:Jeff@bellevueprods.com)

(818) 207-8172

EARTH

Our big blue home as seen from the moon.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

This is the world and there are about six billion people in it. Well, according to the World Book Encyclopedia, that is. My teacher insists that I take my facts from print media rather than what's on the web.

The camera drives into the globe to make up time lost by Michael's babbling. The world comes into focus as we rush past the Pacific Ocean over the greenish landmass of North America.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

But after checking Google like any person under the age of 90, the population is more like 7,776,000,000 and climbing. But that's not the point.

We drift over the flatness of the Great Plains. Across the Mississippi River and drifting onto a middling town in Ohio.

Through the bedroom window of an old farmhouse.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

The point is that my name is Michael McHenry and of the nearly seven billion people on this planet, I'm the only one who has it figured out.

A ten year old boy sits at the keyboard, fingers pecking the keys at a remarkable pace. Hair black, eyes blue, intently focused on the task at hand. This is MICHAEL McHENRY.

A still image of Tom Cruise as Jerry Maguire serves as the boy's desktop wallpaper.

Michael stops typing. Breathes deeply. His index finger buries the period key.

MICHAEL

It is finished.

A grin spreads across Michael's face. Michael hits print.

The printer roars to life as the laser printer streaks a title into view.

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INT. KITCHEN TABLE - DAY

A 37 page manuscript plunks on the desk. Michael's father, KELLY McHENRY looks up from his bran muffin, black coffee and his newspaper. The same blue eyes he gave Michael light as he reads.

The headline reads: UPSTART MCHENRY CHALLENGES MAYOR DANIELS.

Beside Kelly sits a high chair with Michael's baby sister, SUSANNAH, a wide eyed toddler mashing Cheerios in her mouth.

KELLY

Whatcha got there, Mikey?

MICHAEL

Why did you name me Michael if you wanted to call me Mikey?

Kelly takes a sip of his coffee. Smiles to Susannah.

KELLY

It's fun to call someone by a shorter name.

MICHAEL

I'd prefer you treat me like an adult, Dad.

KELLY

OK, Michael. That looks a little thick for a class paper.

Kelly finally takes in the title page.

KELLY (CONT'D)

"Memoirs of a Ten Year Old"?

MICHAEL

Yes, having conquered five years of education, I've set my sights on getting published.

KELLY

That's great, Mikey.

MICHAEL

I'd love to get your feedback on this today.

Kelly flips the pages with a snicker.

KELLY

Have you showed it to your mother yet?

MICHAEL

No, she was too busy getting ready  
for work.

Kelly's smirk flattens.

KELLY

I've got a meet and greet at the  
Legion this morning, but I'll try  
to get to it this afternoon.

Michael slices a grapefruit in half and digs in.

MICHAEL

Wonderful. Just have your notes  
ready for me when I get home.

KELLY

What's the magic word, son?

The boy spoons a mouthful of grapefruit. His face  
contorts. Michael opens his mouth, but words fail.

KELLY (CONT'D)

Nevermind. Let that grapefruit be  
your punishment.

INT. MINIVAN - DAY

Brakes screech. A minivan squeaks to a halt.

White knuckles grasp the arm rest. They belong to  
Michael's mother, DELIA, in the passenger seat. A modest  
pantsuit tames her subtle beauty.

MEGHAN (15), Michael's older sister, drives the van. Her  
plain but pleasant face scrunches.

MEGHAN

You don't understand.

DELIA

I just think you're a little young  
to build your life around one boy.

Michael sits in the captain's chair opposite an empty car  
seat, reading on a kindle.

He clears his throat.

MEGHAN

How can you say that when you  
don't even know Bryson?

Delia looks in the rearview.

MICHAEL  
Could you not fight, please? I'm  
trying to read.

Delia puts a finger over her mouth towards Meghan.

DELIA  
I heard you wrote a book.

MICHAEL  
A manuscript.

DELIA  
What's it about?

MICHAEL  
My life story.

MEGHAN  
As if anyone cares.

Michael glances up from his kindle, offended.

DELIA  
Meghan, stop talking.

MICHAEL  
The rest of the world will benefit  
from it...unlike your driving.

DELIA  
Yes, they will, but why the need  
to chronicle the life and times of  
your ten year old self?

Michael laughs heartily. Delia laughs uncomfortably.

MICHAEL  
I need the world to acknowledge my  
greatness. We need the money.  
Bird 1. Bird 2. My Memoirs are the  
stone that will kill them both.

Delia turns back. The brakes slam, whipping her forward.  
Delia glares at her daughter.

MEGHAN  
(sheepish)  
Sorry.

DELIA  
(to Michael)  
Where'd you get an idea like that?

MICHAEL  
Dad's not working anymore and I hear  
you talking about making ends meet.

DELIA

Your father is running for mayor  
of Boardman. He's going to make  
this world a better place.

MICHAEL

So am I.

DELIA

It's not your job to worry about  
our money trouble.

MEGHAN

We have money trouble?

DELIA

No. We're fine.

The van rolls through a stop sign. Meghan brakes hard.

MICHAEL

Her car insurance bills alone will  
bankrupt us.

INT. BOARDMAN ELEMENTARY - DAY

Michael walks with a purpose, eyes fixed on his kindle.  
Kids swerve their paths away from Michael.

He marches against traffic, oblivious to his effect on  
the other students.

EXT. BOARDMAN ELEMENTARY - DAY

Kids wait at the carport for their rides. Students sign  
brightly colored paperback yearbooks.

Michael sits on a step. He writes a lengthy passage in a  
classmate's book as the classmate fidgets.

Michael signs and hands the kid the book.

MICHAEL

Enjoy your summer. Carpe Diem!

The classmate takes in Michael's inscription. It covers  
a quarter of the already full page. Michael has written  
atop many of the other inscriptions.

CLASSMATE

(confused)

Thanks Michael.

MICHAEL

Where's mine?

The classmate points across the room. Every kid has a book in their hands except for Michael. His rests abandoned on the floor.

Michael picks up the book and opens it. Only three signatures rest in the book. No words of encouragement.

Michael makes sure no one is looking. He closes the book sadly.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Kelly sits on the couch and flips open Michael's manuscript. He reads.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Yeah. You read the title. Your first instinct raises a legitimate question. Why would a ten year old boy write his memoirs?

Kelly's smart phone pings.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
"Save this family." That's what Grandmother last said to me before she left this earth. I was six. A tall order, but I knew it was one worth following.

Kelly reads on with a smile.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Shortly after Grandma passed on, the economy went to recess.

EXT. MC HENRY FRONT LAWN - TWO YEARS EARLIER

Michael and Kelly play catch in the front yard. The ball sails past Kelly as he runs to retrieve it.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Unfortunately, for everyone I know, the economy is much better when it's working, not swinging on the monkey bars.

He stops to watch a U-Haul chug down the street. Michael runs up to his Dad and stops alongside him.

MICHAEL (V.O.)  
Friends started moving. Their parents lost their jobs and left in search of a place with more opportunities.

A kid riding in the back waves goodbye. A sad Michael waves back. Kelly puts the glove over Michael's eyes. Michael laughs.

EXT. MC HENRY DRIVE WAY - TWO YEARS EARLIER

Kelly's ready for work in a tie and jacket. He tosses a water balloon offscreen and leaps into the front of his Chevy Malibu. Michael and Meghan chase the car with supersoakers as Kelly backs out.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

For the longest time, we were immune. My father was indispensable over at Efficico. And Efficico was the lifeblood of the town. It was owned and operated by Boardman's mayor, Jeff Daniels. But unlike the pleasant actor from TERMS OF ENDEARMENT, Mayor Daniels was not fun.

INT. EFFICICO OFFICES - ONE YEAR EARLIER

Kelly stands across the desk from Daniels. They share a heated exchange we cannot hear.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

My father discovered that Daniels wished to outsource more jobs, but that the company would remain the largest employer in Boardman for the sake of appearances. Shortly thereafter, my father was let go. Out of these ashes, rose a dream. My father was destined to save this town from Daniels.

INT. CITY HALL - SIX MONTHS EARLIER

Kelly presents a signed petition to be placed on the ballot for a Mayor of Boardman. Michael peeks over the counter as his father slides the petition to the clerk.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

But with my father saving the town, the task of saving the family charged by my dying grandma, fell upon me. As a lad of nine, just a few months shy of my tenth birthday, what was I to do?

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY - SIX MONTHS EARLIER

A slightly younger Michael holds his mother's hand. He gazes in awe at a copy of The Audacity of Hope by Barack Obama.

MICHAEL (V.O.)

Sometimes when you ask a question, the answer finds you. The President of the United States became famous off the success of an autobiography. As I perused the biography section, I realized that everyone the media considers important achieved that distinction by writing the story of their lives. The answer to all our problems was at my fingertips.

Michael lifts the book off the shelf. The glossy cover reflects his awestruck face.

LIVING ROOM - PRESENT DAY

Kelly turns the page. His phone rings. Kelly checks the caller ID and immediately picks up.

KELLY

How are we looking?

Listens. Kelly looks away from the unfinished manuscript.

KELLY (CONT'D)

C'mon, you know those polls lie.

The cover of the manuscript blows shut.

EXT. MC HENRY HOUSE - DAY

An old farmhouse that a town has grown around confined by a white picket fence and a wraparound porch replete with a swing.

Michael enters the unlocked front door.

INT. FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

Front door slams. Michael tosses his bookbag across the hallway. The thud shakes the foundation.

MICHAEL

DAD!?!?

DEN - DAY

The baby monitor lights softly with two green dots. Kelly sits at a desk with his pen over a legal pad, staring at the monitor.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
(distant)  
Daaad!

The dots spike on the monitor as the baby wails.

Kelly stands up. He notices Michael's manuscript and bites his lip before a cuss can slip out.

He flips through the pages.

Michael enters.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
Didn't you hear me?

Kelly closes the manuscript.

KELLY  
Of course, I heard you.

Susannah cries louder. Now, you can hear her cries from upstairs as the monitor speakers distort.

Michael gestures to the manuscript.

MICHAEL  
What'd you think?

Kelly smiles.

KELLY  
It's good, Michael, but you really take some liberties with the truth.

Michael approaches defensively.

MICHAEL  
What do you mean?

KELLY  
Michael, your grandmother didn't say anything for the last six months of her life. She never told you to "save the family" on her deathbed.

MICHAEL  
(denial)  
You must not have heard her.

KELLY  
And why are you making us look poor?

MICHAEL  
(confused)  
We're not?

KELLY  
No, Michael. We're middle class,  
middle Americans. You shouldn't  
embellish to make a story sound  
better. I'm disappointed that you  
weren't completely honest.

MICHAEL  
Isn't that what you do in your campaign?

Kelly sniffs. His nostrils flare.

KELLY  
No, Michael. You're allowed to  
sugarcoat in politics.

MICHAEL  
And I'm not? This is more than my  
story. It's my dream.

The baby emits a bowel tightening SHRIEK.

KELLY  
Let's talk about this later when  
Susannah's not crying.

Kelly hands Michael the manuscript as he passes, tousling  
his hair. Michael flips through the unmarked pages.

MICHAEL  
Is it good?

KELLY  
(winking)  
Of course it is. You wrote it.

Michael closes his manuscript. Validated.

CLOSE ON:

Michael's hands braid a manuscript.

INT. MICHAEL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Michael prints out a series of labels addressed to major  
publishers. Random House. Bantam. Little Brown.  
Prometheus Publishing.