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MOMologues 3: The Final Push

by Lisa Rafferty,
Stefanie Cloutier
and Sheila Eppolito

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION

**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
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MOMOLOGUES 3: THE FINAL PUSH premiered at the Company Theatre in Norwell, Massachusetts in a benefit performance for Operation: Military Kids on May 16, 2012. It was directed by Lisa Rafferty and featured cast members Paula Markowicz, Erica McDermott, Melissa McMeekin and Ilyse Robbins.

CHARACTERS

ANN

JANE

TINA

WENDY

*MOMologues 3 is dedicated to our children:
without them, there would be no comedy.*

ACT ONE

TINA. Middle school and high school are payback time. It's when your kids do to *you* what *you* did to your mom and dad. Sweet vindication for grandparents. Think about it. Of course we were never *bad*, never talked to *our parents that way*, right? Right.

JANE. Between being peri-menopausal and my daughters being PMSy, and my son's whatevers kicking in, big time, wow - it's like Grand Central Hormones at my house. The Hormone Super Bowl. Hormones R Us. The World Series of Hormones. Ready for our own reality show and it's not going to be pretty.

WEN. Some people say that today's kids have an exaggerated sense of entitlement and a ridiculous level of self-involvement...I would be one of those people and I would be talking about my own children.

ANN. I am so done with elementary school. My oldest is in high school, my youngest still has a year to go till he reaches middle school, but I am totally over the elementary school experience. I'm done with the Cookie Walk, the Spelling Bee, the Carnival Fundraiser. I've lost interest in the Hobby Fair, the Ice Cream Social and the Turkey Trot. Family Fun Night? I don't think so. And when I do show up, the parents all look so much younger: they're bouncing babies on their hips, pulling sippy cups out of purses, handing baggies of goldfish to tiny people. I'm ready to put it all behind me, I can't begin to tell you.

TINA. My daughter comes home after her first club meeting at the High School - Math Club, God help me. We're chatting about her day and the club and I'm actually thinking - this is great - we're communicating.

Excellent. Then she says: “Do you know about bases? Matt’s friend was telling me about bases.” Oh shit. Who is Matt’s friend? The little pervert. I’ll wring his neck. She’s 14 for God’s sake. Here we go. And then she says, “I can’t really describe it to you, so let me draw it.” Whoa. Drawing it??? What is going on here? What the hell is going on in Math Club?? So she looks down at the paper and says ‘So you take the number 65, and there is a difference between numbers and numerals, and everything is not a base of ten...’ and it dawns on me – the bases she is talking about - binary numbers. That’s it. What the hell?

JANE. My daughter is in high school. *High. School.* That cannot be. I mean, I’m just barely out of high school myself...Okay, barely three decades ago, but still! I simply cannot be *that old* and neither can she. She’s my little girl. She’s not high school age. High school age means boyfriends and a drivers license and the young adult section at the library and babysitting little kids. And navigating stereotypes and gender issues, and trying new and possibly illegal things, and field trips to other states or countries without me. (*Big breath.*) She CAN’T be that old. *I* can’t be that old. And yet... here we both are. And the way I know this is she is wearing my same shoe size. We are interchangeable with shoes. That has to be the unofficial milestone of your daughter coming of age. When you and she are both size 8’s.

WEN. I already started with ‘The Last’ everything. Just had my last elementary Back to School night – my third kid, my *twentieth* Back to School night, we whipped through in about 12 minutes flat. ‘So nice to meet you, what a great room, oh is this your desk, Buddy? Here are the room responsibilities, excellent – I see you are the paper passer out this week. Your desk looks great. Okay, let’s go through and meet your other teachers and we’re done! SO nice to meet you. Isn’t this all exciting? Well gotta go. Bye bye!’ And now

that my oldest is in high school we are doing all The Lasts there too – her last time getting on a bus, her last time first day of school, my last time making lunch for her, never mind what’s going to happen senior year – no, no NOT READY. Not ready for all those firsts – you know, the firsts that we all did when we were teenagers. NOT READY!

ANN. Okay, when did Halloween costumes become Hoochy Mama porn get ups?

TINA. I know, seriously. My daughter is nine. Wants to be a witch. But the witches all look like Elvira, Mistress of Foreplay. Black satin bustier, thong-sized little pants. What’s next, a free dildo-shaped flashlight for safe trick or treating?

ANN. And the COST of the kiddie porn...they’re made in Malaysia of material that’d go up in flames in a MINUTE...and yet we’re supposed to cough up \$30.

TINA. When I was a kid, we’d wear our dads’ old suits, use a burned wine cork to mess up our faces, and call ourselves “Bums.” Imagine the PC police if you showed up for a Halloween party as a bum!

ANN. What happened to a cut up sheet and you’re a ghost? When did disposable income become involved? And what’s the cut-off, age-wise? My neighbor’s rich little pothead 17 year old rang my bell last year. No costume, just glazed eyes and a big case of the munchies. I took pity and gave him some Skittles and three Reese’s cups.

TINA. Last year, three kids ring my bell, dressed as Ninjas or Al Qaeda operatives or something. So I feign interest, and give them individual microwave popcorn bags. And one little shit puts up a fuss! “What’s this? We’re supposed to get CANDY!” he says.

ANN. What’d you say?

TINA. I launched into a lecture about how it’s trick or TREAT. And popcorn is a TREAT. And, P.S., he

should say thank you, no matter WHAT he gets. I'm sure I sounded like an 80 year old bitch, but seriously. Who's raising these little turds?

ANN. I remember when my youngest daughter was in kindergarten. She went as Spongebob. Cute as hell. Anyhow, there's a celebration of Halloween at school.

TINA. Sure, an acceptable holiday to celebrate in school.

ANN. And so I drag my butt there. But I'm a little late. I get there, and another mom asks me which kid is mine. I tell her she's Mr. Squarepants. She says, "Oh! I was wondering who her mom was!" So I figure it's because she's so cute....

TINA. Oh no...

ANN. But she tells me that before I came, the teacher was describing the various stations set up for the big celebration, you know, the paper-bag-scarecrow stuffing center, the decorate-a-gourd-with sprinkly-shit-station, and my daughter pipes up, AS the teacher is talking, and says, "Blah, blah, blah."

TINA. Kid after my own heart.

ANN. Yeah, proud mother I am – my kid is the wiseass in class. Where does she get that do you think?

TINA. Well...

ANN. Don't answer that...

JANE. Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday in some ways. No pressure on presents to buy, we usually stay local, we don't have to cram in some social or religious event into the day, the week, it's all about food, football, family and friends. What could be wrong with that? Wonderful. After all, it's a day to give thanks. Count our blessings. And who better – *who better?* – to do that than three teenage children. I ask you. *Is there any group on God's green earth that is more thankful, more filled with gratitude and love than teenagers?* I think not... Think about it. These are kids who know how to say, 'please, mom, can you drive me to my friend's

house – at your convenience? ‘Thanks, for the ride, Mom, you are the best.’ ‘How was my day at school? How thoughtful of you to ask. Let me tell you all about it.’ Aren’t all kids just like this? Mine are. Oh wait. I went to the alternative universe for a minute there. SO NOT my reality. In fact, over the door of MY house it says, ‘Welcome to the Land of Surly, Grumpy and Secretive.’ It’s like 3 of the Dwarfs. The others are Sulky, Moody, Fresh, and Spoiled. It’s all part of the ever-continuing learning curve of being a parent. There is *What You Dreamed It Would Be Like* and *What Is*. Waaaaaaay Apart. It’s like when you thought you would never drive a minivan, and yet, there you were, three car seats in the back, Barney on a CD, goldfish crumbs everywhere, ready to scream. Or you envisioned your children as being fabulous, healthy eaters and instead you’re undermining your most sacred ethics by being a short order cook for three different kids each night. Having three kids between the ages of 13 – 16 is like Field of Hopes and Dreams Crushed. You know it will pass – everyone tells you it will get better – but you just know: This is What Being a Parent Is. This is what separates the men from the boys. Where the rubber hits the road. Where the tough get going. Accept each new reality of your family life and try hard not to get bitter... So, yeah, I love Thanksgiving. I truly will be giving thanks and counting my blessings and I try *not to do it in an ironic way*. Promise. And I know that deep, deep, DEEP down, my kids will be grateful too. Bless their hearts.

ANN. The holiday season is a time when the whole mom thing kicks up a notch. The list just goes on and on.

WEN. Shopping, shopping, shopping – without having to re-mortgage the house.

TINA. Buying cards

ANN. Taking the Christmas photo.

JANE. Yeah, the attempt to capture the happy family photo for the holiday cards... C'mon stay still, STAY STILL, look at the camera, LOOK AT THE CAMERA, smile, smile, SMILE DAMMIT. STOP FOOLING AROUND YOU GUYS! SAY CHEESE, HEY NO RABBIT EARS BEHIND YOUR BROTHER'S HEAD! Hide that bra strap! Candy all around for those who cooperate. For those who don't, just hand over the cell phone now. Okay, two more. Pretend you're happy.

TINA. Writing the cards.

JANE. Mailing the cards.

ANN. Helping out at church.

WEN. Helping out at school.

JANE. Mall purgatory.

ANN. Black Friday.

WEN. Cyber Monday.

ANN. Arguing over which tree.

TINA. Hauling out the decorations.

JANE. Untangling the clusterfuck of outside lights.

ANN. Whoa – hostility there!

JANE. Tis the season.

TINA. Forced family fun.

ANN. Booking flights.

WEN. Pre-flight laundry.

ANN. Preparing for houseguests.

TINA. Making Christmas dinner.

WEN. Eating Chinese.

TINA. Wait... What?

WEN. On Christmas. For some of us. Then a movie.

JANE. Hosting parties.

ANN. Potluck holiday brunch.

WEN. Avoiding Santa.

TINA. Secret Santa.

JANE. Fake Santas.

ANN. Endless, nonstop holiday song assault.

JANE. Yankee fucking swap.

TINA. Last minute panic.

WEN. You know what we really need to do is...

ANN. Yes, absolutely!

ALL. "LET IT GO, LET IT GO, LET IT GO..." (*to the tune of "Let It Snow"*)*

TINA. The madness needs to stop.

ANN. Even if some of it is actually great and wonderful.

JANE. Shopping online has been helpful and life changing.

ANN. The decorations are still magical. Love driving around with the kids – even at this age – to see them.

JANE. And Christmas morning is still...mostly...awesome. Except for the ingratitude and attitude.

ANN. No – come back to the light! Don't stay in the dark side.

WEN. And speaking of lights – Hanukkah can be fun. Except for the latkes. And the scale the next day.

JANE. Okay, let's just leave it at that. Just don't get me started on things like the annual year in review Holiday card...

TINA. So the thing that drives me insane at Christmas is the family update form letter. Who are these people? They can't be the same flawed, grumpy, overworked and overwhelmed friends I know the rest of the year. And I really could give a crap about their family's accomplishments. I mean that with love, of course. I sit there and as I read the letter in my head I'm writing the subtext: "...and Jake was accepted on the pinochle team for gifted children in our homeschooling socialization circle! We couldn't be more proud!" They're like a fucking cult. A gifted fucking cult. "...meanwhile, Sue and Ned have expanded their career

*Please see Music Use Note on page 3

horizons to better align with their personal growth goals.” Shorthand for FI-RED. Loving the third person reference. “Sue and Ned have expanded”.... Did they hire a ghostwriter on this project? Not a chance! Who makes a personal growth goal anyhow for shit’s sake. The homeschooling gifted pinochle enthusiast careerseekers, apparently. But who cares? I mean, who the fuck CARES? Why do people send these letters? To tell us how fucking busy they are? How fulfilling their scrapbooking weekend was? Who are these freaks?

“...Sally began menstruating” “Tyler began masturbating...Trevor enjoyed his first scotch after turning 21 on a foxhunting trip with his stepdad!” ... This the same kid who barfed the Crème de Menthe through the screen door at his sister’s Red Tent womanhood celebration? Yup ...one in the same. What’s next? An update on their colorectal performance? “Carolyn’s colon has never been cleaner, thanks to her devotion to a high-fiber vegan diet.” I swear I’d welcome one that said, “We’re doing the best we can. Our kids are finding their way, and we’re trying to survive the bumps along the way. A little holiday humility, you know? Ho Ho Ho and a happy holidays to all!

JANE. You know how bullying is such a big issue? Well, what no one tells you is: American teenagers are capable of being the biggest bullies of all – to their parents.

ANN. You’re not kidding. I consider myself to be a strong, independent woman. But my kids can reduce me to tears in a heartbeat.

WEN. I cower in my bedroom, afraid to come out sometimes.

JANE. How about when you brace yourself to ask something of the little ungrateful wretches?

ANN. Remind them to pick their crap up, for instance?

WEN. Let you know more than 5 minutes ahead of time if they need a ride?

JANE. How about the inevitable all-caps text: 'WHERE ARE YOU? I'M WAITING!'

ANN. It's like being a personal assistant to a big star. I DEMAND GREEN M&M'S AND FIJI WATER – AND PICK UP MY DRY CLEANING.

WEN. And why is every request you make of them considered 'yelling?'

JANE. (*in a nice voice*) Can you please empty the dishwasher?

ANN. WHY ARE YOU YELLING AT ME LIKE THAT?

WEN. Yeah, exactly.

JANE. Oh, you'll KNOW when I'm yelling. BECAUSE IT WILL SOUND LIKE THIS!

ANN. And I love when I do laundry, and I've done all the sorting and folding and I bring it up for them to put away, and I get the big sigh...

WEN. Yeah, like it's SO HARD to put it away in the drawer.

JANE. Well, if your son is anything like mine, there's no difference between clean and dirty laundry – it just all goes into the hamper to be washed over and over.

ANN. I know but the way my son's clothes smell, they need to be washed over and over...

JANE. Right? Sometimes I hold my breath when I walk into his room...

WEN. That's how my daughter 'cleans' her room – just takes everything, whether it's dirty or not, and dumps it into the laundry basket. I can't tell you how often I wash clean clothes.

ANN. Everything you ask is a huge imposition.

WEN. I don't even bother. I'd rather be a martyr. It helps with the guilt.

JANE. They are seemingly incapable of the most basic things. At eight my daughter was helping me cook, now it's like "Mom, can you make me my cereal?" Seriously?

ANN. I know the whole “I can do it by MYSELF” thing on the one hand, on the other, “What medicine should I take?”

WEN. How are they going to live on their own at college? Oy.

JANE. I don’t know but will I make it to then? It’s all you can do sometimes to last until they go to school. It’s like dreading snow days – oh no, THE HORROR!

WEN. My kids wake up to the sound of me cursing and swearing. I’m watching the TV crawl, praying and praying that my superintendent manned up and kept the damn schools open.

ANN. Scrambling for kid coverage so I can get to work, or worse, calling work to say I can’t come in. Kids assaulting me to find their snow boots, gloves, make hot chocolate, pull down the sleds from the top of the garage...yeah, relaxing.

JANE. It’s just a huge relief to go to work sometimes – who knew a job could be such an escape?

WEN. It’s like I love being with my hypothetical kids. The kids I know and love in my mind. My reality kids – not so much right now.

JANE. Thank God for my dog. No parent of teenagers should be without a dog. On some days – many days – she is the only one that loves me, for me. And she’s a good listener.

WEN. True, and it works both ways. The kids go to our dog too, when they need love and can’t – or won’t – get it from me.

ANN. Yes, the only benign presence in our house. On all sides. It’s like pets are the Switzerland of creatures.

WEN. Three teenagers, 1 dog – I need to find another pet...

TINA. For New Year’s resolutions, other people vow to quit smoking, or lose 10 pounds or pay bills on time. But I’m a mom, a flawed, imperfect, inconsistent, over thinking mess – and that’s on the good days. So my

New Year's resolutions are like: *Nag less, hug more.* Improve the kids eating habits – healthy snacks! Go with the flow more – lighten up, Francis! You know, all the same resolve you start off with every morning, but by nightfall it's all gone to hell - gone is the patience, the nurturing, the modeling the good behavior. It's like you start out all “yes, sweetheart, what is it?” and by 6:00 p.m. it's “I'll give you something to cry about.” So, yeah, suffice to say, my New Year's resolution is to be Morning Mom all day. Like that's ever going to happen...

WEN. I'm such a stickler for table manners. It's upbringing, it's genetic, it's my control freak thing going full throttle – who knows? Trying to get my kids to absorb and remember good manners at the table is the same mind numbing, brain hurting, daily grind that is so much of parenting, over and over and fucking over again. Sit up straight. Yes please or no thank you. Chew with your mouth closed. Don't talk with your mouth full!! Why does it have to be all of those every day? Every day! Three meals a day for weeks, months, years. It's getting so I can't get through a meal without being the *Horror Nag Mom from Hell...* So, it's dessert time and my daughter is maniacally slurping her ice cream in the bowl, like some possessed mad lunatic – and I hit the breaking point and I just lose it. STOP PLAYING WITH YOUR FOOD! JUST STOP IT! YOU ARE GOING INTO 5TH GRADE! YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER! STOP PLAYING WITH YOUR FOOD! ANY FOOD! EVER! AAAAAAGHHH!... And she is staring at me – spoon frozen mid air above the ice cream – looking shocked and hurt at my outburst. And now I'm thinking God, what has happened to me! I'm taking all the fun out of food!! I mean she is 10 years old – 10! And I'm so over the edge I can even let her slurp a little ice cream. What has happened to me? Do I not have a single shred of fun, of spontaneity, left? Must I annihilate my children's spontaneity too?

And then my next thought is, okay, I am fucking losing it. Extrapolating out my entire existence as a mother over one moment of parental anger over manners. Like no one has ever done that before. And sometimes it needs to be said... And then I just go to the sink and start doing dishes...

JANE. I've had bosses, college roommates and have known politicians that are manipulative, sneaky and calculating. But none, none compare to my daughter, who is a master of twisting my words and gaming the system. Cutting out the middle of brownies so she gets all the good part, taking the last bit of cereal, always wanting control of the clicker, bossing everyone around to get her own way, throwing my words back in my face with unceasing regularity. Using tactics to make the most jaded of lawyers would appreciate: the relentless cross examination, the evasive non answer, the power of tears, the insistent misdirection. It takes every ounce of strength I have to hold my own in these tug of wars. And you don't dare show weakness or you will be crushed. So you buck up, and assault her with the vast array of parenting techniques, using positive and negative reinforcement strategies like nobody's business. And somewhere down inside you are a little bit proud, a little bit glad, because she has what it takes to get by in the cold, cruel world. She'll have the wherewithal to hold her own against people who behave not unlike she behaved toward her parents. And, no question, she'll make a great attorney...

ANN. Do you remember birthday parties?? The eighteen screaming children, the piñata filled with candy, the craft activity designed for maximum mess, the party favors full of sugar. And lots of crying. The birthday kid, the birthday guests, the birthday parents... The utter exhaustion at the end of the two hour ordeal. Well, here's the good news. I just threw one for my 14 year old, and it was the exact opposite experience. My daughter planned almost the whole thing, from the

invitations to the activity to the food. I was only necessary as the bank account and food server; otherwise, I was virtually invisible, and oh so superfluous, as far as the guests were concerned. I overheard everything they said, but realized my comments were of absolutely no interest to them. They didn't want my opinions on the latest teen movie, or my expertise on getting through high school. They completely entertained themselves, then decorated their own cupcakes. Even the present opening did not require my presence: no keeping track of who gave what for the future thank you card, and certainly no oohing and aching over the gifts: they only wanted to hear from their own bad selves. They ate every morsel of food I put in front of them, and then some. I actually sat in the other room and read, when I wasn't required to bring out more food. So, it doesn't all get harder as they get older. Some things, just some things, get easier!

JANE. So, I know we can all be good moms at times. But there are certain areas where I have *failed as a mother*. For instance, food. You know, vegetables. Three kids, no vegetables among them. *And my daughter is a vegetarian*. Or a pastaterian as we call her. C'mon help me out here, other failure areas?

ANN. Sleeping. They sleep fine, it's the going to bed part that is an excruciating exercise for both parties. The endless negotiation, the bargaining, or just plain ignoring. Brutal.

WEN. Chores. My kids don't do any.

TINA. I've got the chores thing down. They hate me for it, but too bad. Healthy eating? It's not terrible, I guess, but it's not great either.

TINA. We are all too hard on ourselves.

WEN. We all have those things that we are good at and the things we will never, ever be. I will never, ever be the kind of mom who never yells. Always wanted to be that mom, know those moms, SO NOT that mom. I'm a

yeller. Sometimes it seems the only way to get through. But then I get mad at them when they yell at me – or at each other.

JANE. Do as I say, not as I do. I have been more or less living in fear of when my kids start to ask my husband and me about our own sordid teenage and college years. Good Lord, I've read all the articles and advice books there are on this subject and my gut reaction is LIE. LIE, LIE, LIE. There's just no way to not sound completely two faced – oh no, honey, it was different in our day – when we were doing bong hits and guzzling beer in fraternity basements – DIFFERENT.

TINA. I am a friggin hounddog. Sniff test the hands for pot...check breath for booze. And I get right into their faces, checking for fear or paranoia. If they're minty fresh and hungry, be very afraid.

ANN. Well, my parenting fail is in the listening department. I KNOW we're supposed to just drop everything and be all ears WHENEVER our teens choose to talk to us, but why does it always have to be right as I want to drop exhausted into bed? I mean, I THINK I'm just popping my head in to say goodnight, and right then is when she wants to talk about the exam she wished she'd prepared better for, or why her friend is avoiding her in the halls... I mean, really, couldn't we have this conversation when my brain hasn't already shut down for the night?

WEN. Oh, and can I just say something about the teen tantrums? Man the terrible twos have got NOTHIN on them! At least when they're small you can either pick them up and move them, or walk around them. But at this age, they follow you around, or stomp those size 10 feet all the way to their rooms...pretty damn ugly.

ANN. Look, it's just damned if you do, damned if you don't. Like being the President but without the perks.

TINA. If you accept that you can't win, it's better. Try to be noble in your failure. There is good in all our parenting... Somewhere.

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