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# Make a short film of a pretend conversation between me and my son

When Elliott was a few months old he looked straight at me and made strange noises with his mouth. It's not the first time people have had this reaction to me. They were nothing more than wet raspy grunts and guttural primordial cries, but he moved his lips in the manner of speech nonetheless. I thought I could film him doing this and edit it with shots of me talking back to him to make it look like we were having a conversation. This fantasy conversation, I thought, could take the form of a series of lectures from father to son about what to expect in life and how to deal with it.

The first one was going to be a short lecture on embarrassment. I would tell him a few stories of floor-swallowing humiliation from my past. Like the time at primary school in Music class when the teacher was organising a song for us to sing and play our tambourines, glockenspiels and woodblocks to. She got us to name the different instruments and when we'd been through them all she asked: 'But what's the most important instrument of all?'

obviously meaning the voice. I had been waiting with my hand up all through the instrument-questioning, slowly having my answers stolen by my classmates, so when she finally picked me I blurted out: 'triangle'. Everyone laughed at me, including the teacher.

Then there's my classic Brotherhood of Man story. When I was about six, my older brother and sister and I were dropped off by our parents at an under-age Brotherhood of Man concert in Birmingham. Rock and roll! As far as I can remember, before the band came on there was a prize giveaway at the front of the stage and I stood there, for what seemed like hours, waiting for someone to give me something, but nothing ever came. My brother and sister eventually found me and dragged me back to our table. The Brotherhood of Man finally came on stage, dressed in their shiny white jumpsuits. Halfway through their performance they beckoned, 'Come on everybody!' to get people to sing along with them. I took it literally and didn't want to miss out on any more prizes, or whatever the hell it was they were dishing out, so I legged it on stage before anyone could stop me. There I was, spotlights on me, a thousand-strong audience watching me and four sets of beaming white teeth belonging to The Man turned round and smiling at me condescendingly. Someone took pity and ushered me over to the keyboard player who gave me a xylophone and let me plinkyplonk my way through one of their songs as I sat next to him.

It seems such a strange thing to have happened now. I don't know why I was by myself for so long at the front of the stage and I've no idea why the other children were being given gifts; for all I know it was a merchandise stall and kids were buying posters or badges. Stage security was obviously a lot less stringent in the late Seventies. It's almost like I've remembered

an elaborate dream but my siblings insist it happened. And I still remember the embarrassment of being patronised by the Brotherhood of Man. They let me keep the xylophone so at least I got something out of it.

And, of course, how could I forget the time I did a sneaky fart in class assembly and the teacher stopped what she was doing and said: ‘Do you need to go to the toilet, Simon?’ I looked down and saw brown coming from my grey flannel trousers. I cried. I only remember this episode in flashes now: Mrs Hampton’s look of sympathy mixed with disgust; the nurse rummaging through the bag of spare clothes; the roll of my mom’s eyes when she saw me run out of the school gates with purple trousers on.

I wanted to tell these stories to my son on film and explain that being embarrassed is part of growing up and that he could expect plenty of similar events, especially being a Parkin. At the end of the lecture I would break into song: ‘Save your kisses for me, save all you kisses for me.’

I didn’t do it though. Why on earth would I make public stories about me shitting myself?