

**"EFFED UP!"**

**A Family Saga**

By

Russ Woody

**FADE IN:**

EXT. STREET - DAY

A BMW cruises down a lower-income street on the outskirts of Sacramento...

*RUSSELL (V.O.)*

*This is a story about family.*

...where fences droop like dirty ocean waves and lawns have died tragic deaths.

*RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)*

*And, just so you know, I've made every conceivable effort to avoid mine.*

Faded paint cracks and curls beside broken windows.

*RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)*

*But my father called last night, asked me to talk to my brother and sister. By the way, this was before everything got so fucked up.*

The car comes to a stop in front of a house where a rusted Ford beater sits on a grease-stained driveway.

*RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)*

*My brother Lenny lives here. He lives here because, at 46, he's holding strong to his undying dream of rock 'n' roll stardom.*

INT. RUSSELL'S CAR - SAME TIME

RUSSELL NIRTH, early-to-mid thirties, average-to-good-looking, medium-to-very beleaguered. He turns the engine off and considers not getting out.

INT. LENNY'S BEDROOM - A MOMENT LATER

A thumb-tacked sheet covers a window. A "PINK LLOYD" POSTER clings to the wall, a corner of it sags limply.

RUSSELL (O.S.)  
(calling)  
Lenny?

On the bed, TWO BODIES SNORE beneath a tangled sheet.

RUSSELL (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(calling)  
Lenny!

The sheet comes down, we see the face of RUSSELL'S OLDER BROTHER, balding, long graying hair.

LENNY  
(to the ceiling)  
Aw, fuck.

Russell appears at the open doorway, sees his brother.

RUSSELL  
Lenny?  
(checks his watch)  
It's two o'clock.

LENNY  
What'd you want, dickhead?

Russell sees a SCHOOLGIRL'S UNIFORM on the floor.

RUSSELL  
Aw, fuck.

He picks up a PLAID SKIRT, holds it out for his brother.

LENNY  
Aw, fuck.

Lenny turns, flips the sheet back to reveal the open-mouthed SLEEPING "SCHOOLGIRL," who may have attended school once, but long ago.

LENNY/RUSSELL  
(recoiling)  
Aw, fuck.

Lenny flips the sheet back over her head, sits on the side of the bed and holds his face in his hands.

LENNY  
My fucking head.

RUSSELL  
(pulling up a chair)  
Boy, I'd never get tired of this.

LENNY  
I had a gig last night, asswipe.

RUSSELL  
(re: woman)  
Where, a nursing home?

LENNY  
Fuck you. And, in my defense, I have no idea who that woman is.

RUSSELL  
An incredible defense.

Lenny stands, naked, looks around for clothes. He reaches beneath his sagging belly to scratch his testicles.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
(cringes)  
Jesus, Lenny...

LENNY  
(scanning the floor)  
You know, the band might be a big fuckin' joke to you, but it's startin' to take off, for real. This could really be it, man!

Lenny sees a sock, bends over to pick it up, giving Russell a physician's view of his brother's naked ass.

RUSSELL  
Mother of God...  
(turns away)  
Could you just please...

LENNY  
We got some definite gigs comin' up that could very well pan out. Seriously.

RUSSELL  
(trying)  
That's great. Where you playing?

LENNY

Hey, I don't need the fuckin' third degree from some piss-ant lawyer!

RUSSELL

Lenny, I'm not a lawyer. I'm a claims adjuster.

LENNY

(jabbing a finger)

People love Pink Floyd, man! Pink Floyd's perennial. Pink Floyd speaks to the ages!

RUSSELL

Right. Anyway...

LENNY

Fuckin' ay, right! Pink Floyd is for-fucking-ever, man!

RUSSELL

Okay... but, Lenny...

(cautiously)

...you do realize you're not actually in Pink Floyd. You're in Pink *Lloyd*.

LENNY

Is there a reason you're here?

RUSSELL

Yeah. Dad called.

(beat)

I think Mom is dying.

LENNY

(takes it in)

Aw, shit...

(sits)

Shit.

RUSSELL

(surprised by this)

I'm sorry, I didn't think you'd be so--

LENNY

You fuckin' woke me up for that?

EXT. DARLINGTON HOUSE - FLASHBACK - DAY

A stunning two-story home in an nice section of Sacramento.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

*My sister Darlene, on the other hand,  
is very... well, I'll just say it:  
Christian.*

Dew sparkles on a well-manicured lawn, surrounded by a white picket fence that juts up like shark's teeth.

RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*I don't mean that in a derogatory  
way.*

*(then)*

*No, I do.*

RUSSELL'S BMW PULLS UP in front of the house. He turns off the engine and considers not getting out.

INT. DARLINGTON'S DINING ROOM/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jesus smiles down from a framed picture on the wall beside a breakfast table covered with plates that were, moments ago, brimming with scrambled eggs, bacon, toast, homemade jelly. DARLENE DARLINGTON -- Russell's older sister by a few years -- sits at one end of the table, opposite her HUSBAND DARRYL, early forties, white shirt, tie, newspaper in front of his face. They are flanked by DAUGHTER DEBBIE, 12, and SON DANNY, 10 -- two symmetrically perfect children.

DARLENE

Now remember, Deb, Bible study at 3:15, pep squad at 4:30 and then back here for piano, right?

DEBBIE

On it, Mom.

DARLENE

And, Danny...

**FREEZE FRAME on Danny:**

RUSSELL (V.O.)

*Okay, this kid, Danny... he was about  
to become the most important thing  
in my life.*

**RESUME SCENE:**

DANNY

I know, Mom, I know. Bible study,  
band practice, homework.

Husband Darryl checks his watch and folds the paper -- prompting a sudden flurry of plates/dishes being swept away by Darlene and the kids.

**SFX: DOORBELL**

INT. DARLINGTON ENTRY - SECONDS LATER

Darlene opens the door to see Russell.

DARLENE  
Russell? Oh, my gosh. What a surprise.

RUSSELL  
Hi, Darlene...

He steps in, they manage a perfunctory embrace and kiss.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
Listen, I just stopped by because--

Darryl has appeared in the entryway with his briefcase.

DARRYL  
Well, look who's here.

RUSSELL  
Hi, Darryl...

Darryl puts an avuncular hand on Russell's shoulder.

DARRYL  
So, have you given any thought to what we talked about last time?

RUSSELL  
Well, yes, I have...

DARRYL  
And?

RUSSELL  
(uncomfortable)  
And... I'll be sure to let you know when I decide to accept Jesus Christ as my personal savior.

DARRYL  
(a smile)  
All I ask.

Darryl turns to Darlene.

DARRYL (CONT'D)  
Listen, sweetheart, I've got the Carlyle account tonight, so I'm gonna be a little late.

DARLENE

Well, I'll just have to heat up something scrumptious for you.

She kisses him. Darryl exits as Danny and Debbie appear and pass through.

DEBBIE

Hi, Uncle Russell. Bye, Uncle Russell.  
Bye, Mom.  
(kisses her)  
Love you.

DARLENE

I love you too, honey.

DANNY

Hi, Uncle Russell.

RUSSELL

Hey, Danny.

DARLENE

Daniel, you have your lunch?

DANNY

(holding it up)  
Right here. Bye, Uncle Russell.

DARLENE

Kisses, kisses...

Danny kisses her, before he and his sister exit. Darlene closes the door, leans against the wall, runs a hand through her hair.

RUSSELL

Well, look, I just dropped by to let you know--

DARLENE

God, I want to tear my fucking skin off.

RUSSELL

Oh. Uh, okay, so I'm assuming you're off the meds again?

She ignores him, pushes off the wall, pads into the kitchen. Russell resigns himself to follow her.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She opens the cupboard beneath the sink, as Russell enters. She reaches to the back, pulls out a BOTTLE OF JACK, grabs a GLASS, pours herself a shot and downs it.

RUSSELL  
And the AA thing, not so great?

DARLENE  
Yuh.  
(pours another)  
You're here why?

RUSSELL  
Mom is sick.

Suddenly we hear a young man calling out from the back.

POOL BOY  
(sing-songy)  
Olly-olly-oxen-free. Where's my kitty?  
Justin's here to play with Darlene's  
little wet...

A MUSCULAR YOUNG MAN in shorts and a t-shirt, mid-20s, appears at the door, sees Russell, freezes.

POOL BOY (CONT'D)  
(weakly)  
...kitty.

**FREEZE FRAME on Pool Boy:**

RUSSELL (V.O.)  
*Wow. The pool boy... a classic. I  
might actually enjoy this visit.*

**RESUME SCENE:**

Russell sits, picks up a strip of bacon, leans back, while Darlene decides to be outraged by the pool boy.

DARLENE  
How dare you, you filthy pervert!  
You sick bastard! Get the fuck out  
of my house before I call the police!  
Out! Get out!

The Pool Boy, still wide-eyed, terrified, backs cautiously toward the exit.

POOL BOY  
I'm sorry, Darlene. I thought everyone  
was... I'm sorry.



He's gone, WE HEAR the back SCREEN DOOR SLAM SHUT. Darlene takes another slug of Jack, turns to Russell.

DARLENE  
So, Mom's sick you said?

RUSSELL  
(munching bacon)  
He seems nice... and a cat lover?

DARLENE  
You want a drink?

RUSSELL  
Gee... eight in the morning, thanks,  
no.

DARLENE  
(pouring another shot)  
God, you're a stump.

RUSSELL  
So, anyway, I think Mom might be  
really dying this time.

DARLENE  
Well...  
(downs the Jack)  
Lemme know when she's dead.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

On A rolling green hillside just outside of Sacramento.

PRIEST (V.O.)  
...and the mercy of the Lord is from  
everlasting to everlasting...

EXT. GRAVE SITE - SAME TIME

Beneath the twinkling shade of an old oak -- we see Darlene,  
beside her husband and kids, dabbing her eyes.

PRIEST  
...and His righteousness is given  
unto the children's children...

While the Priest continues, we see a few of the FIFTEEN OR  
TWENTY MOURNERS -- including Lenny, in an ill-fitting blue  
velour jacket. They are all standing beside an OPEN GRAVE  
and CASKET, wilting in the summer heat.

RUSSELL (V.O.)

*This was the start of all the trouble,  
this funeral. Kind of like the fuse  
that lit the bomb that would blow up  
in my face.*

ANGLE ON: Russell as he rubs his back to keep a drop of sweat from rolling to his butt. A NUN standing beside him notices, shares an awkward smile. He turns back.

NUN

I'm sorry for your loss, Mr. Nirth.

Jolted from his thoughts, he turns to the Nun.

RUSSELL

Huh, uh... thanks.

He turns back to the grave. But the nun continues.

NUN

I hope your family is of great comfort to you at this very difficult time.

RUSSELL

Oh. Uh, well... uh-huh.

NUN

My mother passed last year, so I know what you're going through.

RUSSELL

Uh-huh. Well, I'm sorry about that. About your dead mother's... death.

He'd clearly like to be left to his thoughts, but...

NUN

It's funny, isn't it... how you remember exactly what you were doing the moment you get bad news.

RUSSELL

Yes, it is. It's very funny.

NUN

I was replanting a section of asparagus in Father O'Connor's vegetable garden.

RUSSELL

Right. Well, I was fucking Becky.

On the nun, now wide-eyed and silent.

BECKY (V.O.)

Yes, yes! Oh god, yes! It's so fucking good!

INT. RUSSELL'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - EVENING

CAMERA TRACKS CLOSE ALONG THE FLOOR beside Russell's bed, as WE HEAR,

BECKY

Yes, fuck me, fuck me!

ALONG THE FLOOR, we see CLOTHES strewn haphazardly.

BECKY () (CONT'D)

Ooooooh God, yes!

CAMERA EMERGES OVER THE CREST OF THE BED, and we see the naked top half of BECKY, as she grinds and moans.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Oooo, fuck...

We see Russell beneath her, his hands and arms firmly DUCT-TAPED over his head to the headboard.

BECKY (CONT'D)

Do you like that, Rick? Do you like fucking me...

RUSSELL

Yes, but... my name's... yes, yeah, good. Russ... ell.

**SFX: PHONE RINGS**

They ignore it, Becky keeps grinding.

ANSWERING MACHINE

It's Russell. Leave a message.

PAUL'S VOICE

Yell-ow? Russell? It's your dad.  
Yell-ow? You there? It's important.

Becky slows, looks to Russell -- he shakes his head no, he's not going to answer it. She starts up again.

PAUL'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid your mom's pretty sick.

Becky looks again at Russell, he shakes his head no.

PAUL'S VOICE (CONT'D)  
 She's over at the hospital. 'Cause  
 we found something in her poop.

**FREEZE FRAME on Russell:**

RUSSELL (V.O.)  
*Okay, for the record, trying to have  
 sex, while picturing my mother and  
 father bent over a toilet inspecting  
 her shit... well, not optimal.*

**RESUME SCENE:**

PAUL'S VOICE  
 Doctors don't know what inna hell's  
 wrong with her.

Becky stops grinding altogether.

PAUL'S VOICE (CONT'D)  
 Course she's pretty sure she's dying.  
 And hell, I don't know... this time,  
 she could be right.

Becky looks incredulously at Russell.

RUSSELL  
 (to Becky)  
 I'll call him back. Seriously, it's  
 not a big deal.

BECKY  
 (stunned)  
 Un-fucking-believable. It's your  
 goddamn mother!

Becky dismounts, starts to reach for the phone.

RUSSELL  
 (struggling with tape)  
 No, don't! I care! I do! It's just...  
 complicated! Please don't!

BECKY  
 (picks up, into phone)  
 I'm sorry about your wife. Here's  
 your fucking SON!

Becky throws the phone at Russell's head, then quickly snaps  
 up her clothes to leave. Russell twists in order to speak  
 into the phone.

RUSSELL  
 (loudly)  
 Hi, Dad... So, Mom's sick, huh?

BECKY  
 (shouts)  
 And don't ever fucking call me!

She's out of there, slamming the door.

PAUL  
 Who's that?

RUSSELL  
 Oh, someone I met.

PAUL  
 Boy, she sounds mad.

RUSSELL  
 Yeah, mad and...  
 (realizing)  
 ...uh-oh.

He struggles to free his hands, can't.

PAUL  
 Well, look... do me a favor, will ya? Will you let your brother and sister know what's going on?

RUSSELL  
 Aw, no, Dad...  
 (struggling)  
 They're not really...  
 (then)  
 ...sure, okay.  
 (looks up at his hands)  
 As soon as... sure.

INT. CONDO ENTRANCE - NEXT DAY

Russell emerges and stops to drop envelopes in the outgoing mailbox of the complex. He turns to leave and nearly trips over a heavysset man in a wheelchair, CARMINE, 25, Drew Carey glasses, beaming up at Russell. Russell stifles his annoyance, plasters a smile.

RUSSELL  
 Carmine! Hi.

CARMINE  
 Hey, neighbor!

RUSSELL  
Listen, I'd love to talk, but my dad called last night, and I've gotta go visit my mom, so...

CARMINE  
Look what I made you!

He's proffering a RUMPLED GROCERY BAG.

RUSSELL  
Oh... great.

Russell takes the grocery bag.

**FREEZE FRAME on Carmine:**

*RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)*  
*Carmine Hightower is in love with me. He has been ever since I moved into the condos after Trish and I split up.*

**RESUME SCENE:**

Russell opens the bag, pulls out a Paisley shirt that unfolds between his pinched fingers. He forces a smile.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
Another shirt... great.

*RUSSELL (V.O.) (CONT'D)*  
*Because he's in love with me, he makes me shirts.*

CARMINE  
Try it on.

*RUSSELL (V.O.)*  
*He always makes me try it on.*

INT. CONDO ENTRANCE - A MOMENT LATER

Carmine looks at Russell, then puts a hand to his chest, welling with prideful tears.

CARMINE  
You look so handsome...

Russell tries to smile again. Now we see the shirt -- Paisley Western style, with one sleeve somewhat puffy, the other sleeve too short, the collar wildly uneven.

RUSSELL  
I think this one's... my favorite.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

An OLDER BRICK HOSPITAL in the tree-lined section of Sacramento. RUSSELL'S CAR pulls into the parking lot.

INT. RUSSELL'S CAR - A MOMENT LATER

Russell finishes changing back into his original shirt. He considers not getting out of the car.

INT. HOSPITAL FLOWER SHOP - FLASHBACK - DAY

Russell's buying FLOWERS. The CASHIER, a 20-something WOMAN, pierced like an ocean sponge, finishes bowing the flowers, as she watches something across the corridor.

CASHIER

Ughhh, I hate that crap.

Russell turns to look at what she's watching: WAITING AREA -- A YOUNG SURGEON, in sweat-soaked scrubs, is talking to AN AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY (Old Man, Old Woman, Young Woman, Three Little Kids). The Cashier turns back to Russell.

CASHIER (CONT'D)

Thirty-eight fifty.

RUSSELL

What?

(turns back to her)

Oh...

He hands her a CREDIT CARD, turns back to watch the unfolding scenario across the corridor, as the Surgeon gives the family bad news. They are stunned.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Must be nice... to be in a family like that.

CASHIER

You mean black? They got their problems.

RUSSELL

No, not black. It looks like they care about each other.

CASHIER

Yeah... that's gotta suck.

(re: receipt)

Sign here.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - A MOMENT LATER

ANGLE ON: THE BLACK FAMILY

The young black woman sits. The Surgeon says he's sorry, moves off. The kids move to the Young Woman's side, she draws them in, hugs them. The Old Woman puts a hand to her face. The Old Man closes his eyes, drops his head sadly.

**CAMERA PULLS BACK** to Russell, standing now in the Corridor with flowers, watching, tears in his eyes.

DANNY  
Uncle Russell?

Russell snaps out of it, wipes his tears away and sees his nephew approaching.

RUSSELL  
(covering)  
Oh, Danny... hey.

DANNY  
I thought that was you.  
(sees his tears)  
You okay?

RUSSELL  
Yeah, no, I just saw something.  
Nothing.  
(then)  
Where's your mom?

DANNY  
Upstairs with Grandma and Grandpa.  
She sent me down to get aspirin.

RUSSELL  
You'd think she'd have planned ahead.

DANNY  
Planned ahead?

RUSSELL  
A joke.

DANNY  
Oh yeah, 'cause Grandma always gives her a headache, I get it. I hate being around them. It's like there's all this shit...

**FREEZE FRAME on Danny:**

RUSSELL (V.O.)  
*That's the moment I realized this kid wasn't who I thought he was.*



**RESUME SCENE:**

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
 Yeah, lotta shit.  
 (then)  
 Come on, I'll go to the shop with  
 you.

They head down the corridor.

DANNY  
 Can I ask you something?

RUSSELL  
 Sure.

DANNY  
 Just... ya can't tell my mom 'cause...  
 it's not good.

RUSSELL  
 No, I won't say anything. What's  
 going on?

They stop.

DANNY  
 Wull, okay, I think she's...

A beat.

RUSSELL  
 ...drinking?

DANNY  
 Yeah, but there's this other thing...

RUSSELL (V.O.)  
*Good God, I hope it's not--*

DARLENE  
 Daniel!

They turn and see Darlene storming down the corridor.

DARLENE (CONT'D)  
 Where the hell've you been?

DANNY  
 You told me to get aspirin.

DARLENE  
 Twenty minutes ago!  
 (MORE)

DARLENE (CONT'D)

(approaching)

And I don't need a goddamn smart answer!

DANNY

It wasn't a smart answer.

She slaps him.

RUSSELL

Hey!

DARLENE

(whirls on him)

Stay out of this, Russell! I just spent half an hour with that goddamn bitch! I don't need shit from you too!

(then)

Daniel, let's go!

She turns and moves toward the exit. Danny exchanges a look with Russell, then dutifully follows after his mother. Russell watches them leave, as,

**SFX: HIS PHONE RINGS**

He snaps out of it and pulls the phone from his pocket, but drops it, sees it skitter across the floor and beneath a COFFEE VENDING MACHINE. He gets on all fours, to dig it out, grabs it, then sits on the floor.

RUSSELL

(into phone)

Hello, hello!

CARMINE

Guess what?

RUSSELL

Oh, Carmine...

CARMINE

Guess what?

RUSSELL

I can't.

CARMINE

No, guess.

RUSSELL

Honest to God, Carmine, I can't guess.

CARMINE  
My sister's coming to visit!

RUSSELL  
Well... great.

CARMINE  
I'm sending you a picture of her!

RUSSELL  
You don't have to--  
(off phone)  
Oh, okay. Uh...

FROM RUSSELL'S POV -- a picture of TWO WOMEN standing side by side. ONE IS GOOD-LOOKING, the OTHER DUMPY.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Right. And she's... which one?

CARMINE  
The cute one!

Russell looks again. The dumpy one could be considered "cute" by, say, her gay sibling.

RUSSELL  
Oh, right, yeah.

AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN approaches the coffee vending machine. Russell's standing beside it. She smiles at him, he smiles back.

P.A. SYSTEM  
Dr. DeSoto, line 2-1-6, please. Dr.  
DeSoto, line 2-1-6.

CARMINE  
Where are you?

RUSSELL  
(into phone)  
Hospital.

CARMINE  
Why?

RUSSELL  
My mother's here. She's dying of  
something.

The woman looks at Russell. He smiles again.

CARMINE  
Really? I'm sorry.

RUSSELL  
(into phone)  
Eh, it's no big deal.

He feels the woman's gaze, looks up, smiles again.

WOMAN  
Asshole.

She walks off, Russell sighs.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

A NURSE finishes hanging an IV DRIP beside HELEN NIRTH's bed. Helen's a diminutive, sweet-looking woman, mid-60s.

RUSSELL (V.O.)  
*There she is, the hub of the Nirth family, the glue that binds us... the way a tar pit binds a flock of egrets. Yeah, I know, she looks harmless...*

NURSE  
Now, Helen, you just let me know if you need anything else.

HELEN  
You are so dear. Thank you, sweetheart.

The Nurse starts to leave, sees Russell in the doorway with the flowers.

NURSE  
Well, hello... you must be the "rock-n-roll star."

RUSSELL  
Uh... no, no, I'm--

HELEN  
(calling out)  
No, Marla! That's just Russell!

NURSE  
Oh... Russell.  
(a low whisper)  
Lemme tell you something, mister. You have no idea what that woman has sacrificed for you!