Testing

Andrew Mister

*I. Our Next Performer Is…*

 Hello! How are we doing?

 Good!

 You read that right, my name really is Andrew Mister, which makes me Mr. Mister. That’s it, that’s the joke. My name is an inedible mahi-mahi with cous-cous.

Being Mr. Mister, You may wonder if my wife would be Mrs. Mister. And I ask, am I really THAT lame? You already care more about her? She’s not even real!

My mom kept her maiden name so she wouldn’t be Chris Mister (I hope you read that like Christmas-er, because that one is really more of an aural joke).

I’ve heard a lot of puns about my last name. “Do you have any Sister Misters?” “If you were a condiment, you would be Mustard Mister!” “You could have a daughter, name her Hailey, then nickname her Hey, so she can be Hey Mister.” The jokes don’t get better over time.

I’m asked if I’m related to the 80’s Band *Mr. Mister*. I am…

not…

but if you tell someone that your uncle is the bass player and that’s where they got the name of the band from, do you think anyone is REALLY going to fact check you?

*II. Chick-Fil-A Money*

I could just drop it into my bag. It’s not even really stealing, it’s compensation. I earned it! I spent two years running the sound and light board for this damn theater with no thanks. Well, with a little thanks. But I was out sick the day my high school handed out Chick-Fil-A gift cards, so my lousy replacements (who were also my friends) received MY thanks. And when I came back, my replacements had the gall to even tell me that the gift cards existed! They could have not told me, and I would have never known. But they had to rub it in. They had to tell me the school didn’t have an extra gift card. And I knew my replacements wouldn’t give me one of theirs out of respect for all my hard work. I snoozed (was sick) so I lose (didn’t get a Chick-Fil-A gift card). So as retribution, I’m going to ~~steal~~ gift myself a microphone. This theater had plenty of extra microphones, they wouldn’t even notice one was gone. I couldn’t afford a microphone, I barely had Chick-Fil-A money.

*III. Am I Cool Now?*

I didn’t consent to run my high school tech booth. The technology guy at my high school made me to do it. You know who the guy is. He has long hair and an unkept beard; He really loves flannels; You’re not quite sure if he’s on the school payroll, but you see him on campus all to time, so you’re sure he has to be; He always has a screwdriver in his hand, which makes the previous description a little more concerning; And he gives you a disapproving head shake before uninstalling all the malware you accidentally downloaded while you were looking for homework answers. That guy, he made me do it. He had a great tactic to convince me too. He inflated my ego, telling me how smart I was, which I am, and I’d do such a great job, which I did. He told me I could leave class early and arrive to class late because I was setting up and breaking down tech in the theater. I only heard leave class early and I was in. But there was one other reason that convinced me to accept the position. The catwalks of the theater were one of the few places students weren’t allowed to be and I thought it would make me cool if I had access. I could hold it over everyone that I was allowed up there. Then the cool kids would finally accept me. I also took the position because I had a deep passion for music production and technical experience operating a light and sound board would be valuable to my future, but seventeen-year-old girls don’t find that nearly as attractive as a bad boy who has access to the no-no part of the theater. I would have preferred to be on stage, getting all your attention, but here I am, sitting a little further away than the audience, but with all the power!

*IV. Front and Center*

 I’m so dumb, I let middle school plays convince me I could be a childhood actor. I thought two guys would come to my house after my breakout role as the ant’s thorax in the child classic: *Insects*. They were gonna be so blown away from my non-verbal role that they would take me to LA to be a star!

That’s stalking and kidnapping.

That’s how JonBenet Ramsey died.

 In eight grade I played the Mute King in *Once Upon A Mattress*, probably because the director knew no one wanted to hear my singing voice. And for all of you that don’t know that show, congratulations. In the show, the mute king mimes the sex talk to his son*.* Imagine my parents watching their thirteen-year-old son silently explaining sex, to an audience off people who are only eligible to attend the show because they successfully executed said talk.

*V. Music 101*

 I started playing piano when I was five, guitar when I was nine, drums when I was eleven, and saxophone when I was fourteen. I never liked playing songs out of a book, not when I could learn a song I actually liked or wanted to play. And when I got bored of other people’s work, I’d improvise my own parts. Eventually I started writing my own songs. I was fortunate to attend a high school that had a recording studio and a class on music production. I was in the studio any free moment I had, sometimes skipping lunch just for a few extra minutes. I loved the idea of writing songs that were going to be chart topping hit singles that everyone in my high school would be singing. It was a fun idea. Then I heard myself singing.

*VI. How To Talk To Children*

I wasn’t bullied in middle school, I was just misunderstood. I also skipped recess on the playground to play piano in the band room.

You know why middle school sucked? Because middle school teacherstalk to their students like Hillary Clinton talked to her voters.

One day during one of my misunderstanding sessions, my band teacher walked in on me playing *Demons* by Imagine Dragons, which is the worst thing to be walked in on doing. She hears the song and says: “Oh. I put my dog down to this song...Really makes you think.”

Think about what!?

That I skipped recess for an unprompted trauma dump? That you have gravely misinterpreted the meaning of Demons by Imagine Dragons? Or that you put your dog down *Good Fellas* style. I think she was confessing to a murder.

And the way she phrased it makes it sound like the vet lets you pick the playlist.

She saw a student in the band room and thought, “now is the time Jenny to connect with your kids…what do the youths like…oh I know, dogs…I have a dog…I HAD a dog…” but as she enters the room and hears *Demons*, it all comes together perfectly.

I stopped being misunderstood after this encounter.

*VII. A Brief Physics Lesson In The Middle Of An English Paper*

 I have a fear of heights. And my high school theater’s catwalks are made of the same cables that are used on aircraft carriers. For those of you who aren’t theater geeks or aware of the rigidity properties of materials used by the US government, allow me to man-splain to you aircraft carrier wires. They have some give. But they never break because that would be bad. So, when you walk on a mesh of them, you feel like you’re walking on a very tight trampoline. But because of how strong they are, you don’t need a lot of them to create a safe walking space, so there are plenty of spaces between the wires to see every possible plastic chair or metal railing you could impale yourself on. Now imagine walking on that kind of flexible floor three stories in the air over a bunch of theater chairs and having a fear of heights. Ironic that the place I picked to make me cool to the ladies was also a place I was deeply afraid. After enough trips across that material, you start to trust it a little more. I went from hugging the guard rails, to proving its safety to other people by jumping on it, to taking naps on it during breaks like a hammock. If that material worked for the US Government, I guess I could live with it too.

*VIII. A God-Fearing Group of Men*

I look like I don’t realize I went to private school.

I had to wear a tie and blazer to high school, and as a result, I hate long sleeves. After wearing a blazer, I will roll up anything, except a joint. It’s my form of protest.

It was an all boys catholic school. We were gentlemen of God, we respect everyone, and we follow the rules. So, I got hazed, and then I got shamed for being hazed. Classic victim blaming.

You would hope an all-boys school builds brotherhood and bondage, but instead you learn how to draw an extremely detailed penis. The secret is in the ball hair. You know you went to an all-guys school because when you leave you realize that genitalia isn’t a normal thing to stick in conversation, or anywhere.

I used to like my high school. And then one of our alumni got a new job that seemed to ruffle some feathers. His name is Brett Kavanaugh. I hate him. I remember hearing the news that this guy was going to be a supreme court justice and I was like “oh that’s cool,” and then he sat down in front of congress, and I was like: “NO! DAMNIT NO!”

I share this because I want to show you that not everyone who comes from that environment is an asshole, just most of them.

*IX. It’s The End Of The World As We Know It*

 I’m kind of an asshole. I like attention, and I like making jokes, and sometimes I will do it at other people’s expense. And when you run the audio and visuals for an all-boys high school, you like to work in a few jokes for attention, and to entertain them after a boring presentation. On Earth Day, the school had an assembly where some guy talked to us about climate change and its disastrous effects. And I agree that it’s terrible. But the way he delivered his speech to the youth about our own future made me want to talk into the ocean, which wouldn’t be that challenging because the rising tide would meet me at the theater entrance. And so, to encapsulate his message, as outro music while everyone left the theater, I played the chorus of R.E.M.’s “It’s The End Of The World As We Know It.” I saw some of the guys chuckling. Then I saw the dean of students. Oh no. I had erred on the side of asshole a little too much, and not focused enough on being funny. I was surely going to get in trouble for this one. But no. He stood there, hand over mouth, with his head tilted slightly down, which is the universal sign for this is funny, but I can’t be seen enjoying it. He came up to me afterwards, not to scold me, and not to tell me that he enjoyed it, just to say, “I heard what you did there.” Mission accomplished.

*X. The Choices We Make*

I dateda girl for two and a half years, and she broke up with me the first week of senior year. I don’t remember that happening in *Monsters University*.

It’s a liability to have someone walking around campus who’s seen my naked feet and train themed bedroom. I need to know where she is at all times, so I can avoid her. I call it “reverse-stalking.” And also “not confronting my emotions”

She dumped me because of a dream she had. I’m glad to know *Inception* works. Sad to know our relationship didn’t.

My phone knows I went through a breakup because I keep seeing inspirational crap on social media, and I appreciate that my phone is trying to help me. But when Instagram is telling me to follow your dreams, that’s how we ended up here.

So how did we end up here. How did a single dream convince someone to undo two and half years in a single night. Well apparently, after standing under a warm yellow light, we went our separate ways, hApPy, kNoWiNg wE wErE bEtTeR oFf! To translate, my life was going a different way than hers and she didn’t want to support me, but don’t worry, she knew I was destined for great things, so I’m basically set. I could choose to follow her and give up what I liked, or continue the path alone. Well, I present it like it was a choice. She already made it. Even if I wanted to follow her, she didn’t want me behind her. But that’s how it is in the entertainment industry: you lose true control over yourself.

*XI. America Loves a Chorus*

 I produced seven songs in high school and shared them with the world. Few people listened. But that’s how it goes in entertainment. You shoot for the stars, and land just a few inches next to the launch pad. To help keep you going, you find the people in life who are going to support you. Most people would call them friends. You don’t want to be surrounded by yes-men but you also don’t want to be surrounded by negative people. When I look back to high school and my “friends,” I don’t think they supported me or cared about my aspirations in entertainment. You would at least expect your friends to hype you up after pouring four years of work into an album. They did not. And they sang most of it! They discounted my desire to make entertainment my career. They told me I never had a chance. They told me I’d never make it in this word; They were just another example of the man keeping me down. Why couldn’t I have just been cliché? I bet you enjoyed those last few sentences more than anything else I’ve written. How dare I express myself and not just do what everyone else does! Why did I have to make something that I enjoyed? I’m not supposed to enjoy it, everyone else is. I’m making this for you, not me. How dare I believe people want to learn about me!

Soon the things that you thought would make you happy don’t. Because your friends don’t support you, or no one responds to you putting yourself out there, or because someone who “loved” you for two and a half years mentions in her parting remarks a certain H-word that she knows you’ve struggled with for a long time.

You start to lose your happiness.

*XII. Apology*

Sorry to get all serious and express my emotions. Don’t read that last section. You wouldn’t enjoy it.

*XIII. Take The Shot*

 I like Legos, so I became an engineer, but I’m a bad engineer because my only experience is with Legos.

 Phineas and Ferb gave me a false sense of how quickly things can be built. They built a roller coaster in a day. I cried on the floor for a week because I couldn’t turn on a heating pad. And Dr. Doofenshmirtz has the equivalent of a Phoenix University Degree, and in every episode, he’s bending spacetime. Maybe I’m more of a Beaufort than a Phineas.

 Finding the balance of engineering and comedy is hard. If I spend too much time writing jokes rather than checking my math, a bridge collapses. And if I spend too long checking my math…

…this gets kinda awkward.

 One time in an engineering class I was writing stand-up on my laptop instead of paying attention, and the professor noticed I wasn’t paying attention, so he shined his laser pointer on my forehead and says, “Andrew, you got a red dot on you,” and without even looking up I say, “Take the shot.”

 I stayed for a fifth year of college to complete my coursework because I’m changing my life path. I like to think of myself as an academic red shirt. My parents like to think of me as a monetary liability. Some student-athletes tear their ACL’s, I WX classes, we all have our reasons for coming back and extra year.

I don’t have a great gameplan for the future, I just know I want to hang out with people my age and have no responsibilities. I just described a retirement home.

*XIV. GP SM58 4*

 I used to get nervous before I would perform. And when I get nervous, I get nauseous and I’d feel like I’d REALLY have to poop, which is a very odd fight or flight mechanism. Those feelings would discourage me from performing. But then I discovered that the moment I would get on stage, all that would disappear. It was like grabbing the microphone was send a surge of energy purging all the anxiety. As I’ve performed more times and grabbed more microphones, the nerves have faded, but the electric rush of energy when I grip a mic and pull it off the stand, that has stayed.

I’ve used many mics, but there’s one I prefer. One that has seen many more performances. One that has a little more emotional meaning. It sits in a Johnson and Murphy’s shoe box under my bed with other equipment I’ve acquired through more acceptable methods. The label on it that says “GP SM58 4,” although slowly peeling, is the only thing that identifies where it really came from. See, my high school had at least three other microphones, as long as there wasn’t a microphone five, no one would wonder where four went. I don’t remember if there was a microphone five. Anyways, microphone four has been with me for more journey, and has yet to break up with me, so I’m hoping it doesn’t have any strange dreams soon. Microphone four has been the mic I hold when I practice stand up in the mirror. Microphone four has been how I recorded my voice for my highly autotuned, Tik Tok un-famous songs about LED lights, Pop Tarts, and the January 6th Insurrection.

*XV. Do You Even Like Me?*

I’ll admit it. I have an obsession with checking likes on Tik Tok. Whenever I post, I can’t stop checking the app to see if I have any new likes, even when I tell myself to wait longer, so there will be more likes. I know everyone tells you social media is fake, and you won’t get validation from it, I am aware that what I am doing is wrong. But I would argue that I’m just checking to see how many people I have positively affected with my entertainment. Everyone else uses social media wrong but me.

I feel like I watch other peoples’ friends celebrate their friend’s achievements on social media. I’ve never had that. Where are my cheerleaders? Is that because what I’m doing isn’t cool enough? Or is it because they don’t want to celebrate me? I’m sure it’s just because they’re jealous. That’s what my mom says to comfort me. But I don’t get it. My friends use social media too. They see how other people use it. They see other people celebrating their friends. Now it’s your turn!

I like to think I’m prepared to be in the entertainment industry. Everyone tells me how unforgiving it is. You have to have thick skin. It’s already gotta be pretty thick. I’ve dealt with enough negative energy. And I can tell everyone how much better it has made me. It’s shaped me. I was molded in the fires of anxiety, something cliché like that. That sounds great. It makes me seem strong (I’m not), and it excuse how other people treat me and make them feel like how they treat people is okay (like they even care at all).

*XVI. A Comedic Thesis*

 I have a theory about comedy. I call it “The Comedy Sliders.” One slider gauges the proximity to the topic. The other slider gauges the repercussion of talking about the topic. The two sliders are interconnected. As one moves in one direction, the other will respond. When writing comedy, you don’t want to perform something that you don’t really understand because a) you’ll sound like a moron, and b) it can have serious repercussions if you say something problematic. For example, I can talk about being Catholic because I’m catholic. I cannot talk about being a woman, black, gay, Jewish, European, old, doing drugs, humble, good at sex, or understand rugby.

 I want to amend the second slider. You need to not fear repercussions. I can make fun of the church because I’m Catholic. What are they gonna do, not let me go to church? I already don’t. Another example, I can joke about my ex-girlfriend because what is she gonna do about it, break up with me again? Well her friends may confront my friends and ask them why no one stopped me from telling jokes about her, but that’s because they are cowards. People joke about politics because it’s something they are close enough to understand, and they don’t care what the other side says.

 But here’s the thing: while you don’t want to joke about something too far away from you, you don’t want to joke about something to close to you. There’s a sweet spot. Because if you joke a little too close, it gets personal. You feel trapped. The only thing that’s funny is you. And at some point, you wonder if people are laughing with you, or at you. How often can I tell the jokes before I am the joke? People laugh at the Mr. Mister jokes the first time. But then they mock you for telling it all the time. I can’t even have my name anymore.

 You move one slider, and the other moves the direction you didn’t want it to. It’s like parents having octuplets. You’re desperately outmatched, but god you love every second of it, even if your mental state is kaput.

*XVII. …Attempts To Give You What He Cannot Give Himself*

I always wanted to be on the stage in front of people. I performed stand-up to make people laugh, and maybe to make them think. But I wanted to get better, so I took acting classes. The teachers wanted me to diversify my skills. But I hate playing roles where someone is upset or angry or in distress. I just want to play roles that make people happy. I want to play roles that are happy people. I always want to be happy.

We all deserve to be happy. We all deserve to do things that are worth our time. One day you might fall off a theater’s catwalk and that’s it. I REALLY want to be an entertainer, and I’ll be damned if my friends support me or don’t. Maybe my microphone wasn’t a parting gift from my high school, but rather an act of disobedience against my “friends.” A middle finger to say I don’t need you. I have my mind and a microphone and the whole damn internet. (I typed in “damn,” and Microsoft word told me, “This language may be offensive to some readers.” Well they’re gonna fuckin hate this!). To me, that stolen microphone is a promise to myself that I will never give up on my dream, otherwise I committed a crime for nothing. Ethically, the ends justify the means. I’m testing to see what I can get away with, and what I can endure to achieve my dreams.

*XVIII. In Conclusion*

Apparently, when you perform stand-up, you’re supposed to be funny. You’ll never hear me perform this on stage. But someone needs to hear this. So I’ll test out my material here, because maybe you will enjoy it. Maybe it’s not funny, but you connected with something. Maybe you didn’t get this far, and if you didn’t, then you suck. But if you did get this far, maybe you thought some of this was funny because it’s so messed up, but it’s so true. So, thanks for coming out tonight, you all have been amazing. Goodnight!