**Friends Over on Weeknights**

**MICHAELA**

In the Kerin family, education is paramount. Don’t get me wrong: my parents aren’t the type to put the weight of the world on their children’s backs, expecting perfection and accepting nothing less. However, they do expect that Caelan, Andrew and I will always try our absolute best because as long as we are giving it our all, they can’t be disappointed. (Most of the time). Just to be clear, this article is not meant to make me sound unaware or ungrateful for the life and love provided by my amazing parents. I am beyond thankful that I have a mother and father who believe in me and love to see me prosper in everything that I do. On the other hand, I am not always thankful for what comes with this thirst to watch me succeed. Let me explain.

High school is an extremely strenuous time for teens. My two brothers, now in college, can definitely attest to that. I try REALLY hard to wake up at 5:45 a.m. to get ready for school, only to sit through hours upon hours of classes, and return home at around 3 p.m. This schedule does not include the multitude of extracurriculars which add to the stress and strain of a long academic day. As you can imagine, after these long, difficult days, some CWMH (Chilling With My Homies) time sounds great to me. Unfortunately, it never sounds so good to Pop, which is ironic considering he can’t hear too much these days. “Not on a school night Michaela,” begins his lecture to me on the plethora of reasons why having a friend over is not consistent with my goals and responsibilities: Friends will distract me; I won’t get my work done; I will be up too late; I won’t have time to study. And then he concludes his little pep talk with the “Father knows best” card: “I know you don’t understand this now, but I’m doing it for you. I just want you to be the best student that you can be.” Really Dad? You’re trying to pull a guilt trip on me? I am the queen of puppy dog eyes, but nice try. So, to all of you parents out there who might be thinking that his response is perfectly reasonable, l hope this changes your mind.

Thanks to one of those aforementioned extracurriculars, the debate team at Amity, I have discovered that every claim must have credible justification and/or evidence to be considered “valid.” So if my father’s support for his claim that my friends will distract me from my studies if they visit on school noghts, his argument is, in fact, invalid. I go to school every day with nearly 2,000 of my peers, at least 25 of whom are in each of my classes and according to my dad, that is 25 distractions. But how can that be true? If the very place where I learn is full of friends, then how can he claim that only one of them will derail my ability to focus on studies outside of school? This is especially true when you consider that by being together, my friends and I are capable of working with each other on the homework, which can only increase our understanding. Therefore, his supports are not credible. Boom.

My dad doesn’t seem to have a problem with after-school activities that he thinks look good on my resume. If it’s the debate team, or the justice program, or even track, he will find a way to tear himself away from the Red Sox game to transport me to the North Pole if necessary, which discredits his justification of “being up too late.” Hate to break it to ya Daddio, but whether it’s hanging out with the boy toy or mock trying a court case as part of my Yale Justice Program, the pre-calculus homework will still be waiting for me. The moral of the story is that all I ask is for is a little free time to do my “thang” with the people (besides my family) that I love. You’re cute dad, but sometimes I need a change of scenery.

**MICHAEL**

I’m not quite sure why Michaela feels so oppressed when I try to enforce our policy of no friends over on school nights. It’s really quite a simple rule: no friends over on weeknights. There, I’ve said it twice now. But anyone who knows Michaela well is aware she will not take no for an answer. The kid is like a jackhammer on steroids, chipping away at you in her relentless quest to change a “no” into a “yes”’ The excuses she comes up with to try to wheedle an exception out of me are as imaginative as they are endless. “Dad, Thursday really is the weekend because it ends with a Y just like Saturday and Sunday.” Or “Dad, James has to come over because I am going to cut his hair for our school pictures tomorrow,” like suddenly she has a barber’s license, and a pair of hedge clippers for this kid’s chia pet hairdo. Or “Can Caroline’s mom drop her off here after horseback riding because her parents have a meeting to go to,” even though I’m pretty sure Caroline’s mom was told it was my idea. One of her favorite ploys is telling me she has this massive project, such as annotating the US Constitution for AP Gov. which will be unyielding to her singular brain, and can only be comprehended if she assembles a gaggle of giggling girls to plumb the depths of such esoteric language as “We the people of the United States, in order to establish a more perfect union…” Whew! That’s impenetrable.

And even if her friends are not physically assembled, she can and most assuredly does summon their electronic presence while she sits at the bar in our kitchen with her laptop illuminated with text, and a box in the upper left-hand corner with a classmate’s live video-stream, a pair of buds wedged between her ears, her notebook and textbook open, a pen in hand as she “face-snatches” with one or more of her classmates. How can she have these “chatter-grams” while simultaneously trying to conjugate verbs in Spanish? Yikes, I’m not even sure if she is taking another year of Spanish, which I thought would look good on her resume and be useful in life, but I’ve learned that kids are like tillers on a sailboat: if you want to steer them to the right, you have to push the rudder to the left—you know, tell them the opposite of what you want them to do. She probably zigged with Spanish because I had suggested she zag. When I glare at her for breaking the spirit of our rule “no friends over on weeknights” she inevitably has an excellent excuse on hand for me—“we have a quiz tomorrow in marine biology, and me and MacKenzie want to divide up the material.” I tell her for the millionth time that it’s “MacKenzie and I” which elicits her annoying hand gesture in which she spreads open the five fingers of her left hand, with the exquisite precision of a conductor, then slowly draws them closed together, while softly shushing me.

Last night she told me that she had gotten back a grade in her AP Gov class in which she was able to use her annotations from the Constitution in an open book test. She explained that the class as a whole had under-performed and the several instructors were trying to determine whether to give a curve because of the atrocious grades. I sensed she was laying the foundation for what was coming next, and could feel the anger begin to darken the edges of my mood. “I got a 47, Dad.” As I let that sink home, hearing my molars clicking in my jaw, I noted that her naughty smile seemed out of place in light of the somber news.. Then she added: “Out of 50. A 94!” Boom indeed. Maybe the I should try twitter-graming with one of my buddies while I write my next brief.