

Swede Family Robinson

By Tom Moran

Tom Moran
2855 Mack Boulevard
Fairbanks, AK 99709
(907) 328-0994
moranplays@gmail.com
www.moran-plays.com

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Setting

The place: the Robinson family beach house, on a remote Maine island

The time: the present

Characters

MARTIN ROBINSON, late 30's - 40's. Enthusiastic and overbearing.

NATALIE ROBINSON, 15-17. MARTIN's daughter. Sardonic.

JAKE ROBINSON, 15-17. MARTIN's son and NATALIE's twin brother. Lumbering. Perhaps a bit slow-witted, but only on the outside.

Synopsis

Desperate to hold onto the affection of his children after his recent divorce, Martin Robinson tries to engross them in a fun, if ambitious project: a remake of *Star Wars*. But then his children discover he's deliberately stranded them at the Robinson beach house so they can finish the movie. The confrontation that follows leads to realization for Martin: showing his kids he cares means letting them lead the way.

Scene 1

(The interior of a spartan beach house. The set is sparsely arranged with simple furniture in a rough circle. Center right is an upside-down trash can crudely painted blue and white to resemble R2-D2 from Star Wars. At stage right, MARTIN ROBINSON stands near the ersatz droid, talking on a satellite phone. He wears a brown bathrobe and a fake beard [unless he has a real one.] He holds a stick painted green and black to look like a lightsaber. A smartphone is set up on a mini-tripod downstage center, aimed at the stage.)

MARTIN

(on phone)

Yes, Evelyn, I know, but there's nothing I can do - the ferry is broken down or something. They weren't clear. They told me two or three more days. (Pause.) Hey, I only get the kids four weeks a year, I think you can wait another 48 hours. (Pause.) As a matter of fact, they're having a great time. Great. They wish they could stay forever. (Pause.) Of course we are. You think I can't handle a family project? Wrong again you are! It's epic.

(He swings the stick for emphasis, even though he's on the phone. JAKE ROBINSON enters stage left. He's futzing with his costume, an improvised belted white tunic and pajama pants, and doesn't see or hear MARTIN. MARTIN spots him and hides in a corner.)

MARTIN(cont.)

(on phone)

I gotta go.

(MARTIN hits button on phone, then swiftly removes the batteries. He runs offstage right and returns sans phone, then looks around, realizes he still has batteries, and tosses them offstage. He approaches JAKE.)

MARTIN

Kickin' robe, young Padawan. You ready?

JAKE

Red-eye like a Jedi, Old man Kenobi.

MARTIN

Is Natalie good to go?

JAKE

(shrugs)

Dunno. We're twins, not telepaths. Just hit record.

(JAKE sits near the ersatz droid. Both he and MARTIN read from scripts hidden from the camera's view. MARTIN taps the phone then sits near JAKE. He claps his hands together in imitation of a movie director.)

MARTIN

And...action!

(They are now in character. MARTIN hands the stick to JAKE. JAKE inspects it.)

JAKE

What is it?

MARTIN

Your father's lightsaber. This is the weapon of a Jedi Knight. Not as clumsy or as random as a blaster.

(JAKE swings the stick around. MARTIN makes lightsaber noises.)

JAKE

How did my father die, Obi-Wan?

MARTIN

A young Jedi named Darth Vader helped the Empire hunt down and destroy the Jedi Knights. He betrayed and murdered your father. Vader was seduced by the dark side of the Force.

(JAKE has been swinging the lightsaber aggressively and nearly clocks MARTIN with it. MARTIN raises his hand in a 'halt' gesture.)

MARTIN

Not a toy, youngling.

JAKE

Oh. The Force. Um, what's that about?

MARTIN

The Force is an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together.

(Pause. They're waiting for a missed cue.)

JAKE

That sounds like you're talking crazyballs.

MARTIN

(looks offstage)

Indeed. (improvised line, loudly) What's going on with this droid of yours, then?

NATALIE (O.S.)

(lousy R2-D2 imitation)

Beep boop boop beep!

MARTIN

(turns attention to R2-D2)

Now, let's see if we can't figure out what you are, my little friend. And where you come from. (he pokes roughly at R2-D2) I seem to have found the recording. (Pause. Annoyed. Louder.) I seem to have found the recording.

(NATALIE rushes in from offstage. She wears a white sheet and a belt and two dark socks formed into rough circles on the sides of her head, held on haphazardly by a piece of plastic. She stands in front of R2-D2, gently sprinkles some glitter in the air, and speaks into him.)

NATALIE

(flat)

General Kenobi, years ago you served my father in the Clone Wars. Now he begs you to help him in his struggle against the Empire. I have placed information vital to the survival of the Rebellion into the memory systems of this R2 unit. You must see this droid safely delivered to Alderaan. Help me, Obi-Wan Kenobi, you're my only hope.

(She throws some more glitter, then pokes at R2.)

NATALIE (cont.)

(covers her mouth in poor ventriloquism)

Beep!

JAKE

Who is she? She's...I mean, I guess if you squint, she could be, like, a six.

MARTIN

And ... cut.

(MARTIN crosses to phone and taps it.)

MARTIN (cont.)

(to JAKE)

Okay. Jake. Crazyballs?

JAKE

It seems like something Luke would say.

MARTIN

It most certainly does not.

JAKE

He's a teenager. That's how teenagers talk.

MARTIN

Oh, like you'd know.

JAKE

I would, kinda, yeah.

NATALIE

I've never said that.

MARTIN

See? Exactly. And I don't care whether you would say it or not, because neither of you live long, long ago in a galaxy far, far away. Now do you?

JAKE

No, dad, we don't. We live right now in a galaxy - right, right here.

MARTIN

(holds up script)

Exactly. Words matter, young Padawan. And this script has done pretty darn well for itself.

NATALIE

If the script is so important, why are we only filming like 20 minutes of it?

MARTIN

Because we only have a week.

NATALIE

A week-*plus*, you mean.

MARTIN

I know, we're on bonus time! Which we'll need for some reshoots.

NATALIE

What? Why?

MARTIN

(mimics her)

This is our most desperate hour. What the H-E-double light sabers was that?

NATALIE

I got all my lines right.

MARTIN

Yeah, but you're less robotic when you're playing a droid. Where is your head?

JAKE

It's on the mainland with her boyfriend.

MARTIN

Wait, boyfriend?

NATALIE

For like six months, Dad. Geez, does Mom tell you anything?

MARTIN

Only when the court expressly orders her to. Do you tell me anything?

NATALIE

Not in this instance, no.

JAKE

His name is Andre. He wears trench coats and smokes clove cigarettes.

MARTIN

Really? (To Natalie) Really?

JAKE

He graduated like two years ago and washes dishes at Stuckey's.

NATALIE

How'd you even know that?

JAKE

I like Stuckey's.

NATALIE

Thanks, Jar Jar Snitch.

MARTIN

Well that's ... new. So have you and Andre ... well, have you, you know-

NATALIE

Hey, why don't we do another scene?

MARTIN

Oh. Sure. Great! I want to shoot a couple more today. Then when it gets dark we can grab the yoga ball and sparklers and take care of Alderaan.

NATALIE

Only you could be so bold. How many more scenes are there left to do in this thing?

MARTIN

Depends. Look, we can't call out of here, so we're not going anywhere until the boat comes by to check up on us. So how about we continue this fun family activity for as long as we can.

NATALIE

Are you sure the satellite phone is broken?

MARTIN

Dead as a lump of carbonite. We just have to wait.

(JAKE brandishes the stick.)

JAKE

Hey dad? Can I break this bad boy out soon?

MARTIN

(looks at script)

Let's see. I've got the Obi-Wan - Vader battle on the docket for today or tomorrow morning.

NATALIE

Unless the boat shows up.

MARTIN

Right, of course.

NATALIE

Is Leia in that scene?

MARTIN

No, but I've got you down to play 3P0 in a couple other scenes tomorrow.

NATALIE

Of course. Jake gets to be Luke Skywalker AND Han Solo. Meanwhile I play the ONE woman in this movie-

JAKE

What about that one boss at the rebel base?

NATALIE

-pretty much the ONE woman in this movie, and when I'm not doing that I get relegated to swishy droid duty.

MARTIN

If you tried a little harder, maybe you'd get better parts.

NATALIE

Mom would have let me play a guy.

JAKE

That'd be crazyballs!

MARTIN

Your mother perhaps would have been less concerned with the integrity of the text, yes.

NATALIE

Our Millennium Falcon is two Frisbees covered in duct tape!

(Meanwhile, JAKE is playing with the lightsaber, stabbing furniture and parrying with thin air.)

MARTIN

There aren't any good female roles in Shakespeare either.

NATALIE

And men played the women in his plays anyway! So why not just put these earmuffs on Jake and let him be the princess he's always dreamed of.

JAKE

Then maybe Andre would finally notice me.

MARTIN

I don't understand your resistance here. The beach house family fun project is a Robinson tradition! We've done something every year since you were old enough to walk.

NATALIE

Yeah, but usually we, like, paint pictures of lighthouses.

JAKE

Or sand down driftwood and glue shells to it.

NATALIE

Oh yeah, I forgot about that. Mom really has great craft ideas, huh?

MARTIN

There was one time you did a play. You remember that?

NATALIE

A *play*. Which we wrote with Mom. And which was like five minutes long. I played a teddy bear.

JAKE

I was a cantaloupe.

MARTIN

Nevertheless, we have dabbled in the performing arts, have we not. And Mom can't very well help us this time.

NATALIE

No, the court only gave her custody for a scant 48 weeks a year.

JAKE

Could I write a script? I came up with a pretty cool idea the other day when I was playing Call of Duty.

MARTIN

Stay on target! And where's the love for Star Wars anyway? You guys have both seen it at least ten times.

JAKE

That movie did have an actual budget, Dad.

MARTIN

No budget. That's the whole point of Sweding a movie. It's more fun that way. Right? Isn't this more fun?

NATALIE

I'm not sure people actually Swede movies anymore, dad. That was a thing for like 3 weeks.

MARTIN

Sure they do. Go look on YouTube.

NATALIE

I can't. The nearest cell tower is 61 miles away.

MARTIN

Hey, how about we do a good solid Leia scene?

NATALIE

Is there such a beast?

(MARTIN flips through script.)

MARTIN

Hmm. Page 17.

(They all flip their scripts to the right page and scan.)

NATALIE

This I can work with.

MARTIN

Okay, we need a Death Star corridor here. Jake, will you get into costume and go grab Chewbacca?

(NATALIE and MARTIN rearrange furniture into a couple of rows. JAKE runs off stage.)

MARTIN

So Andre. Does he, uh. Does he like Star Wars?

NATALIE

He owns the entire Francois Truffaut collection.

MARTIN

Oh. Truffaut. Didn't he make-

NATALIE

No.

(They continue in silence. JAKE returns with dark pants and a vest on, armed with a water gun. He carries a dressmaker's dummy with brown carpet draped over it and a half-assed cardboard bandolier. He stands the dummy up.)

JAKE

Get in here, you big hairy furball, I don't care what you smell.

NATALIE

You think Mom would approve of you using her dummy?

MARTIN

It's my family's beach house, not hers.

JAKE

(indicating blaster)

You remember the year we had that epic supersoaker fight? And then Mom made that slingshot that fired water balloons like half a mile?

MARTIN

Do we really need to wallow in nostalgia?

NATALIE

You're right, let's get back to the biggest hit of 1977.

MARTIN

(to JAKE)

You ready?

JAKE

Let's blow this thing and go home.

MARTIN

(to NATALIE)

We are home. Ready, princess?

NATALIE

This is not the daughter you're looking for.

(MARTIN taps phone and does the director clap.)

MARTIN(cont.)

And...action!

(JAKE and NATALIE pretend to move down a corridor. JAKE carries Chewbacca mannequin along.)

JAKE

If we can just avoid any more female advice, we ought to be able to get out of here.

NATALIE

Listen. I don't know who you are, or where you came from, but from now on, you do as I tell you. Okay?

JAKE

Look, Your Worshipfulness, let's get one thing straight! I take orders from one person! Me! Han Solo's gotta look out for Han Solo, you dig?

NATALIE

It's a wonder you're still alive. (looks at Chewbacca)
Will somebody get this big walking carpet out of my way?

JAKE

Hey, that carpet saved my butt at the battle of Omega-six. He rescued me when we were cast adrift by the ghost army off Nador. And he makes a fantastic linzer torte.

NATALIE

He does?

JAKE

Just get moving!

(NATALIE continues across stage.)

JAKE

(to Chewbacca dummy)

No reward is worth this.

MARTIN

Cut. (Taps camera.) The ghost army off Nador?!

NATALIE

(impressed despite herself)

Yeah, Jake, where'd that come from?

JAKE

Dunno. Just seemed like it added something to the character.

MARTIN

We're going to have to do that scene over.

NATALIE

Sounded great to me.

MARTIN

We're not extrapolating here, we're interpreting. Breathing new life into something a little stale.

JAKE

Didn't I just do that?

MARTIN

I find your lack of faith disturbing.

JAKE

Hey so. This idea I thought of, it starts in Iraq. And this colonel orders his platoon to fire on-

MARTIN

Let's do that scene again.

NATALIE

I think we should stick with that cut. I do like it when Leia sasses back.

MARTIN

You realize she's really just flirting with Han.

NATALIE

(looking at JAKE ruefully)

You know, we could still just pour colored sand in jars to make sunsets, and call it good.

JAKE

I could get behind that.

MARTIN

Fine. You know what? Fine. Moving on. Rising above it. Staying on target. Let's do Obi-Wan and Darth Vader. Jake, you get your light saber battle! Just one more costume switch, okay?

(JAKE reluctantly throws a black blanket around his shoulders and puts a piece of black plastic Tupperware with eyeholes on his face. He hands a blue

stick-cum-lightsaber to MARTIN and retrieves a red one.)

NATALIE

Does this mean we're ahead of schedule?

MARTIN

Two days and we'll be done.

NATALIE

We were already supposed to leave three days ago!

JAKE

My script's only like 15 minutes long. We could do that in two days.

NATALIE

Do we have enough food for two days?

JAKE

We could eat lembas.

NATALIE

Wrong fictional universe!

MARTIN

We have food, and water, and a generator and a roof over our heads. Which is all we need. And each other.

NATALIE

If there's a bright center of the universe, we're on the island that it's farthest from.

MARTIN

This way we don't go home empty-handed. I'll edit this together and we'll have a great family keepsake. You can show it to Andre. Jake, you can show it to your wrestling buds. And you should definitely show it to your mom. She'd be so proud.

NATALIE

You're not going to post this, are you?

MARTIN

Sure. Why not?

NATALIE

Is that what this is about? You want us to be internet famous.

MARTIN

More famous than you can imagine.

NATALIE

I don't know, I can imagine quite famous. Is this all about you and film school?

MARTIN

Me and what?

NATALIE

Forget it.

MARTIN

Fine. We don't need you for this scene, so you can go clamber up a headland and gaze forlornly into the mist. Or whatever.

NATALIE

We seem to be made to suffer. It's our lot in life.

MARTIN

Meanwhile, Jake and I will continue to have fun family activity family fun.

JAKE

I have a bad feeling about this.

MARTIN

(not listening)

Great. Great.

(MARTIN hits button on phone, exits stage and does "Action" clap.)

MARTIN (O.S.)

Action!

(MARTIN reenters, spies JAKE, and raises stick. MARTIN and JAKE circle each other, sticks drawn. Meanwhile, NATALIE sneaks offstage right.)

JAKE

I've been waiting for you, Obi-Wan. We meet again, at last.
The circle is now complete. Hakuna matata.

(They circle each other.)

JAKE (cont.)

When I left you, I was but the learner; now I am the
master. I'm here to snuggle some Ewoks and kick some ass,
and Ewoks are still two movies away.

MARTIN

I'll teach you to stick to the script!

(MARTIN attacks JAKE with the stick.
Awkward combat ensues. MARTIN makes
loud lightsaber noises. After a few
parries they lock sticks.)

JAKE

Your powers are weak and spindly, old man.

MARTIN

If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than
you can possibly imagine.

JAKE

Obi-Wan, you gonna be Obi-Zero.

(MARTIN lowers his stick and prepares
for JAKE to kill him, as in the film.
NATALIE enters, holding the satellite
phone.)

NATALIE

There is nothing wrong with this phone.

JAKE

What?!

NATALIE

The batteries were taken out. I found some more.

(JAKE growls. He begins to swing down
hard on MARTIN, who blocks at the last

second. JAKE removes the mask and tosses it aside.)

JAKE
I'm not Darth Vader here!

MARTIN
Scene's over, Jake.

(JAKE advances and swings again. MARTIN defends himself. NATALIE watches, stunned.)

JAKE
There's this soldier in Iraq and his colonel orders him to fire on unarmed civilians. He refuses and when he's on leave he learns he's going to be court-martialed.

MARTIN
Your words confuse me, Darth. Why do you not strike me down?

(They continue sparring, with MARTIN thoroughly on the defensive.)

JAKE
He's at the family beach house and it's just him and twin sister. And he needs her help to decide whether to turn himself in or go AWOL.

MARTIN
Your concept boils over with clichés, Vader.

JAKE
It's a thoughtful and charged family drama.

MARTIN
So is Star Wars.

(JAKE keeps sparring. MARTIN's getting more alarmed.)

JAKE
And then their dad arrives - he's an angry, violent Vietnam vet. Whose side is he on? Will he send everything spiraling out of control? Don't you want to find out?

MARTIN

Scene's over, Jake!

(JAKE knocks the stick out of MARTIN's hand. MARTIN hides behind Chewbacca.)

JAKE

You leave Chewie out of this, Kenobi.

(MARTIN runs out from behind Chewie and JAKE swings, hitting MARTIN in the hand. MARTIN cries out in pain and cradles it.)

NATALIE

Jake! What the hell!

(JAKE stops, stunned.)

JAKE

I'm sorry, I - I just got carried away.

(NATALIE walks to JAKE and places hands on stick.)

NATALIE

Wow, Jake, I never thought you'd be the one to snap.

JAKE

Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering. You know?

NATALIE

(To MARTIN) You okay, dad?

(Jake gives up the stick to NATALIE.)

MARTIN

I'll be fine. Thanks.

NATALIE

Good. Then you want to explain this?

(NATALIE displays the phone.)

MARTIN

(clearly lying)

I guess I never checked the batteries.

NATALIE

Dammit Dad, you are Darth Vader.

JAKE

Vader's too good for him. He's Darth Maul.

NATALIE

General Grievous.

JAKE

Count Dooku.

MARTIN

Let's keep it above the belt, kids.

JAKE

The truth, Dad.

MARTIN

I needed a few more days to finish principal photography.

NATALIE

Oh Jesus.

JAKE

So you stranded us here.

MARTIN

What are you complaining about? That was the best performance I've ever seen out of you.

JAKE

I wasn't acting!

NATALIE

Mom was right. You really are just using us to resurrect your film career.

MARTIN

You mother? What exactly did she tell you?

NATALIE

That you dropped out of film school when she got pregnant with us. That you've never gotten over it.

MARTIN

And you believed her.

JAKE

Well, it's the truth, isn't it?

MARTIN

No. I dropped out of business school.

JAKE

Oh.

MARTIN

Film was just a hobby.

NATALIE

Then why enlist your children in a mad quest to remake a classic space opera?

MARTIN

Hold on.

(MARTIN runs offstage and returns with some photos.)

MARTIN(cont.)

When your mom and I were splitting up the stuff, we found some old photos we had printed out.

(He hands one photo to NATALIE and the other to JAKE.)

MARTIN

(to NATALIE)

Halloween 2004. You made a very cute Leia.

NATALIE

I don't remember this at all.

MARTIN

Well, you were only three. But you demanded that costume.

JAKE

(indicating his own photo)

This is me?

MARTIN

And you, my son, were a very fetching Jabba the Hutt.

JAKE

Thanks?

MARTIN

And there's this.

(MARTIN shows them another photo. JAKE and NATALIE both start laughing.)

JAKE

Ha! Dad Solo. And Luke - is that...?

MARTIN

Your mom.

NATALIE

Told you she'd let me play a guy.

MARTIN

I wanted to celebrate something that we all shared. To make something to be really proud of. Kids, I ... I love you.

NATALIE and JAKE

We know.

NATALIE

We're not three anymore, dad.

MARTIN

I understand if you want to just go home.

NATALIE

No reward is worth this.

JAKE

Yeah.

NATALIE

What's the number for the ferry?

MARTIN

It's on my desk.

(NATALIE exits.)

MARTIN

So what were you jabbering about while you were breaking my hand?

JAKE

Hold on.

(JAKE runs offstage, runs back in with a handwritten script, hands it to MARTIN.)

JAKE(cont.)

I worked on this earlier this week when you were busy gluing stuff on the golf cart.

MARTIN

You mean the landspeeder.

JAKE

That.

MARTIN

Of course the bad guy in here is the dad.

JAKE

So is the bad guy in Star Wars!

MARTIN

Yeah, but we don't know that yet.

(NATALIE reenters and hands MARTIN the number.)

NATALIE

Here you go.

MARTIN

Evacuate? In our moment of triumph?

NATALIE

Oh now what?

(MARTIN hands NATALIE the script. She reads.)

JAKE

I set it in a beach house. And it's got just three characters and they're about our ages.

NATALIE

Hmh.

MARTIN

What's hmh?

(NATALIE flips a few more pages, reads.)

NATALIE

It's- it's terrific.

JAKE

Really?

NATALIE

I know, I'm a bit stunned myself.

MARTIN

I agree. But there's one thing wrong with it.

JAKE

What's that?

MARTIN

The lead should be a woman.

JAKE

Are you suggesting I play the sister?

NATALIE

The brother, Jake. You play the brother. I play the soldier. (pause.) The *female* soldier.

JAKE

Oh. Hey, that's clever. Don't see why not.

MARTIN

You guys up for two more days? Natalie?

JAKE

If you want we can film it in black-and-white. Andre would love it.

NATALIE

Eh. To be honest, Truffaut makes me kinda narcoleptic.

JAKE

You mean you're in? C'mon, family fun project, Natalie.
It's a Robinson tradition!

NATALIE

I want my own dressing room and a full seafood buffet.

MARTIN

How about the top bunk and some granola bars I found behind
the stove?

NATALIE

Sold.

MARTIN

Great! So, um, who's directing?

NATALIE

Don't look at me, I have a star turn to prep for.

JAKE

All you, dad.

MARTIN

You sure?

JAKE

Yeah.

MARTIN

Okay, let's start with a table read. Gather round,
everyone.

(They gather around the script.)

MARTIN(cont.)

Marching Orders. A screenplay by Jake Robinson. Starring
Natalie Robinson. (Beat.) And...action!

(Director clap. Blackout. End of play.)