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## Television Joe

Everything Joe knew, he learned from a television show. Beverly Hills 90210 was his personal reference guide to high school dating. To him WWJD meant nothing. His personal mantra was WWBWD – What Would Brandon Walsh Do. If he had watched the unfolding melodrama of the show a little more closely he might have noticed Brandon's life was less like a peach, and more like a peach pit. But to Joe, Brandon was a hero; the perfect person to model your life after.

Joe's mild obsession with cheerleaders spawned from watching countless reruns of Saved by the Bell. The perky Kelly Kapowski was his dream girl, but even Joe's warped mind knew Kelly was only a TV character. The cheerleaders in his high school were real enough; the only problem was they barely knew he existed. He felt invisible in front of them, but they must have at least noticed him a little bit because they always called him hey you – as in “hey you, get the hell out of my way.”

Joe wasn't considered a dork, but nobody would exactly call him cool. Joe was somewhere in the middle of high school hierarchy; stuck in a state of mediocrity. Although Brandon was his idol and personal savior, he wanted to look like Zack Morris. Joe tried to pull off the Zach Morris look, but ended up looking more like a blonde version of Screech. Despite himself, Joe was still blessed with rugged good looks. His gel-caked blonde hair stood straight up like a bed of nails. His piercing green eyes seemed to be looking through you, rather than at you. He was socially awkward at best and socially retarded at worst. Joe never really had a problem getting a girlfriend, but they were never the girls he wanted. If she wasn't a cheerleader, then he wasn't interested. There was certainly one cheerleader that caught Joe's attention – Michelle.

Joe considered his best friends to be Joey, Phoebe, Chandler, Monica, Rachel, and Ross. Although the cast of Friends might have provided him with a better laugh, he did have real friends. His group of friends was small and selective, but they liked it that way. Most of the kids at school knew of them, but nobody really knew them. To everybody outside of their group, they were the roller hockey kids. They all loved to play roller hockey, but nobody, including themselves would consider them athletes. They were the goofy kids that would rather have fun with a pair of inline skates than receive a letterman's jacket for a real sport.

Joe's television personality fit well in their group; none of them were really concerned with reality. Bob and Mike would play computer games until their eyes bled and their fingers were a mound of blisters. Scott had watched Reservoir Dogs so many times he could quote the entire dialog along with the movie – something that annoyed the piss out of Joe. Kevin's obsession was the Internet. Anything involving the Internet was alright for Kevin. He would talk to people in chat rooms for hours on end, he would download hundreds of songs from Napster a day, and most importantly he would work on his personal web site. These guys really only had two things in common – roller hockey, and having to live in a reality they weren't a part of.

Although Joe was a central figure in their little group, he always stood out from the rest. He was the only one of them to receive good grades. He was just as sarcastic as the rest of them, but the teachers seemed to love him. Maybe his Walsh-esque work ethic shone through his feeble attempts for attention. Joe didn't care about high school; it just came easy for him. The one thing that never came easy for him was getting Michelle's attention.

Michelle looked more like Kelly Kapowski than any normal girl had the right to. Her silky almond hair always fell in front of her emerald green eyes. Other than her tight cheerleader's uniform, all you could see was milky white skin. Her legs seemed to be a never ending trail to her mini-skirt, which was just short enough to give Joe a hard time walking. Michelle wasn't interested in awkwardly good looking guys, she wanted the pretty boys. The more a guy looked

like he came straight from an Abercrombie catalog, the more interested she was. And only new cars would do for her. She needed the flashy rides that were able to race down the streets; something that was fast enough to get her excited. She hated living in a small town, so she craved excitement anywhere she could get it.

Joe ate, slept, and dreamt about ways to get Michelle's attention. After he found out she liked fast cars, he cashed all his savings bonds and bought the fastest car he could afford. His white and rust colored 1983 Nissan 280 ZX definitely caught Michelle's attention – she laughed at him as he pushed it through the intersection. Maybe if he had more than \$500 in savings bonds he could have upgraded to a car that actually ran.

He tried to pull off several schemes inspired from *Saved by the Bell*, but there just weren't enough opportunities to plant a listening device in Michelle's bedroom. In fact, there didn't seem to be any opportunities like there were in the show. Brandon was always cool enough to get the girls, so his hero couldn't provide him with any insight. Zack was the pretty boy, the type of guy Michelle wanted; short of plastic surgery Zack wouldn't be much help either. Television had seemingly let him down. His friends were even less help than television was. The only girl any of them had ever kissed was Mike's cousin – she drank too much tequila at a wedding and made out with all of them, including Mike. Michelle was all Joe could think about, he couldn't even concentrate enough to watch TV. His life would never be the same until he could get Michelle's attention.