

## ***STEP MAMA DRAMA!***

By Allison Hetzel, Aug 3 – 10, Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2018  
United Solo Festival @ Theatre Row, Sunday 6:00PM November 1, 2019

### **PRESHOW MUSIC & PRESHOW LIGHT CUE 1**

#### **LIGHT CUE 2 – General Wash When I Sit in Chair**

Things just happen! One day you are living in a place that you never imagined, and you meet someone fall in love and get married. He just happens to have to kids. Before I became a step mom I was always intrigued by them—wow, she must really love him and the stepchildren to do that. Or, I would say to myself, she is really a smart and intelligent woman--I guess she knows what she is doing. I never thought that I would be a step mom or choose to be one and that is what happened it chose me. It was right and is good— and now I have been a step mom for over ten years. Wow, the things people say when they find out you are becoming a stepmother!

## **Suddenly, everybody has something to share.**

Things people say to a new stepmom: (explore transitions and movement between lines)

- Oh, you are going to be busy raising someone else's kids! I sure would not want to do that. Have fun.
- The thing about being a stepparent is you know that they are not your children and they know it.
- Were you married before this? Did you find out you could not have kids and your first husband left you because of it? WOW, that one really assumes a lot and it was from a colleague that I just met— she was looking very tired as a mother of an active toddler, she must have been in a daze not realizing her nosey rudeness.
- Are you sad that you did not have kids of your own?
- So, do you like it, the uh step mom thing?

How does your husband's ex treat you? I mean is she around? Yes, she is around it is a joint custody agreement and it is pretty good, very business-like on most days when things need to be arranged and worked out with kids events such as school and sports. Actually, the kids mom, or the birth mother as I often call her, has always been nice to me, and if

you think about it why would a birth parent be rude to a step parent?

Half of her kid's time will be spent with me and their dad at our home, and that is a big chunk of time. I met my step kids when there were just 4 and 6 years old and super cute too--that always helps. Now, one is still in high school, and one has started college and all four of their parents, me and their dad their mom and step dad, are surviving the teen years.

They are really bright kids and likeable teens, on most days, and I feel as step kids go—I did luck out bigtime, but the teen angst and hormonal changes can be bumpy. Plus, the heart pounding fear of driving, wow, that was much scarier for me than I ever imagined, witnessing a new driver take the wheel, being a passenger in the car while the new teen was learning to drive (non-verbal), and him successfully getting his driver's license after his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday then her also getting hers after turning 16 ---what a wild ride! At this current moment there have only

been minor accidents and car repairs thankfully. My step son is the oldest and will soon start his second year in college—he is into music and is a talented musician and also enjoys a little bit of video gaming.

My stepdaughter is two years younger; she is a very active outgoing seventeen year old. She is into sports, singing at talent shows, baking—boys, gossiping with her girlfriends, **together they create a boy-crazy-gossip-ridden-posse of early teen drama --** such fun, again a great kid.

There are so many stepparents or step monsters each situation is different and I know why as I have been living it the over past ten years.

This is what my friend Stephanie said about being a step mom.  
(Transition)

I am not a step mom, thankfully, but it would not be a deal breaker for me IF I met the right guy. My sister married a guy with kids, Terry, good guy. When I first met him I thought he was wonderful, he helped me move quickly as my house was flooding, there was bad flooding in

my area. I lost a lot in the flood and what was saved was really due to Terry's help. As he and my sister got much more serious she let me know that he had two kids from a prior marriage. When she told me they were getting married—I thought she was crazy he had kids! She is going to be taking on a lot with his two youngsters and he is a maintenance man so he is never going to be rich or anything. Then before they get married I ask if they want to have kids together and she drops another bomb on me—her future husband also had a vasectomy while he was married, ouch, so I told her now if she wants to try to have kids it will be a whole costly endeavor. They seem happy after their first few years of marriage and she loves those kids like her own. I called her last week to help me out with something pretty important and she could not because her stepson had a little league game—what, we are related by blood not marriage, she just does not get it!

That is one view from a friend that is set in her ways, and funny about it. (Transitional text)

This is what one of my students said about her step mom. (Transition)

My step mom is wonderful but I understand if she leaves my dad, he is a great dad but bad husband or partner. He has been sneaking around again—back to his old ways. Both my step mom and I know it we are just not discussing it. I know he had affairs behind my mother's back—that made me so mad when I was young and them divorcing was just awful. My parents split because of his infidelities, multiple, he never thought that he would get married again, then he met Jill and things were different. I really hope that things are different. Maybe it is just my imagination, I know that he has had lots of work stress lately but he has also had lots of tension with Jill lately as well as keeping odd hours. Whatever happens between them our relationship is a separate thing and I will make every effort to stay connected to her. I really hope it works out because I do not like keeping an eye on my father—that is not my job I am the kid here--not the parent. Now, as soon as I have a moment alone with my dad I am going to talk some sense into him—calmly, that is the only way to get through to him. First, I am going to enjoy the spa day gift my stepmom got me for graduation, she is just the best, and I love her.

I do hope that all worked out as it was supposed it to--I have not seen that student in some time. So I do not know. (Transitional Text)

What a family friend Molly said about becoming a step mom.  
(Transition)

My first husband and I tried to have kids for ten years, not ten full years as we stopped having sex during the last two years of the marriage.

Basically nothing was working in the marriage as nothing was left—it was the stress of all things: life, family, work, money—not just the infertility stuff, that did not help. I will never understand why people have a baby to save the marriage; looking back near the end if I had gotten pregnant by some miracle it would have been messy. As things were done long before they were actually done in my first marriage.

You see I met this great guy at work. He was creative, smart, funny, spoke various languages and played instruments; he was well paid, handsome in an artsy sort of way, and uh... married and had the sweetest little girl. He brought her in to work some afternoons for a couple of hours here and there she was not in school yet—just sweet and

inquisitive, such curls, and she said the cutest little smart things. Her father and I had a full-blown affair, and I adored Bailey, his daughter--I literally could not wait to be her stepmom. Something I would have never ever considered before—until I met her dad. So the next passion filled months were full of sneaking around and making up fake business trips to get away together. We both left our current spouses and dealt with all of the divorce drama. Mine was pretty bad my first husband heard about the affair and some of the gory details from someone else—I really meant to tell him but I just could not bring myself to do it, and like a dummy I had been giving my sister a full play by play--who told our cousin who told my husband just after I let my husband know that I was leaving him and had convinced him that there was no one else. Not pretty but we all survived—I married Preston just six months after my divorce was final, and I could not be happier, he is just wonderful. And, I love being a stepmom to my new part time daughter Bailey. We have a routine at our house that we follow rigorously, and special traditions at our house and we all just love spending time together—I love my new family. Preston and I have decided to try to have a child of our own, and



if it works this time it will be like having two kids of my own as I cannot imagine loving any child any more than I already love my stepdaughter. She has since had two children of her own and now she understands the bond of a birth child versus a stepchild. (Transitional text)

**Then there is Mother's Day!** (Transition back to me) Mother's Day when you are the step mom, I have to say is kind of a weird day to get used to if you happen to be new to your role as step mom. After my first year of marriage when the day rolled around--I knew the kids would be heading off to spend the day with their mom, makes sense that is what they should do, right? It is Mother's day. So I was full of guilty pleasure looking forward having a kid free day to spend alone with my husband. When the kids mom picked them up I wished her a Happy Mother's Day—it was her day after all, she seemed so uncomfortable with my greeting, I always try to take the higher road—even when I would rather not. As the kids were off and we had Sunday to spend together, I suddenly got pissed off! When is Stepmother's Day? The past year I had helped both kids with school projects, cooked tasty healthy meals, made sure that they had clean clothes, dropped off and picked them up along

with my husband's help—he is a good hands on dad, and he does a lot. We juggle and share kid things we both work full time, plus, and take it one day at a time during the hectic activity-packed school year. What I had realized during this first year of marriage is that kids are a lot of work, and I really did not want my own. I was too selfish, and I cherished my personal time, and having alone time with my husband was just a bit more of a mellow energy—I adored our family time with the kids, and I often planned things for us all to do together. Then after our coffee that Sunday morning, my husband asks “what I would like to do today”, he has always thanked me for being a good stepmom; I was insightful and honored boundaries well.

But I was pretty much steaming now; I snapped, “did anyone get me anything for mother's day?” He laughed and said “you are not my mom”, I fired back but I take care of your kids they live here every other week, half of their life. Now a bit too dramatically--I exclaimed “where is my card, gift, flowers—something?!” My husband a bit shocked now, said he meant to do something but did not get it together—OK, what I want to do

today is clean up and go out for brunch, I want to sip something that sparkles and have a decadent dish that one tends to only have at brunch. So this has become our tradition a romantic kid free brunch for mother's day—my choice. After my first mother's day little freak out—I started to get cards from him and the kids. Along with a text or call from the step kids—both teenagers now and I know that is good effort for a teen. My husband has started getting me a Mother's Day gift, and the brunch or lunch tradition has stuck, I love my yearly step mom treats. Some tips and words of wisdom that I got last year were also wonderful and I want to share them with any stepmothers in the audience.

(Place and carefully set step stool and remove email letter and read to audience.)

### **LIGHT CUE 3, Letter/Step Stool Special**

Hello Allison,

If you are reading this note and secretly stewing about your family's Mother's Day plans (or lack of), read on. Here are some stepmother pointers for Mother's Day.

1. If there is something you want to do, do it.

2. If you want your partner to plan something or get a specific gift, tell them. Don't play the "you should know" game. They don't. It's not personal. Their minds do not work the same as yours.
3. Bag the idea of "If I have to tell people what I want, it doesn't have the same meaning." That's not true. We just made that up.
4. Be careful of what you ask for. If you are fantasizing about a big Mother's Day acknowledgement, think about the peaceful day of silence and peace you are relinquishing.
5. The need for acknowledgement from others is a throwback to our anthropological roots when we had to be a part of the tribe to survive. Do we need it now?

If any of these resonate with you, keep repeating the thought over and over. If nothing helps, just delete this email. There's always alcohol.

Happy Mother's Day,  
Barb

It made my day! (Step off Stool and return)

#### **LIGHT CUE 4 Back to General Wash**

A family member of mine reflects on why things did not work out with her fiancé that had kids. (Transition)

I was madly in love with Fredrick, I really thought things would work out but they did not. When his kids came to stay with us on weekends it was always a little hectic and tense, and I tried, I really tried to be nice but I cannot always manage that, I had raised three kids of my own, one was in college and my two youngest were in High School so I know

about kids. I had my children early in life and Fredrick had his later in life. But his kids were naggy and nerdy and I just got tired of it and one day I just lost it, and I told my step daughter to shut the fuck up lard- ass. I know that was not nice I just blurted it out loudly and that was basically the beginning of the end of that relationship. Yikes.

Everything said by a stepparent or an outsider is always a bit different that a parent speaking those same words. However, that was really rude!  
(Transitional text)

I thought that I would have my own kids. Someday (Transition back to me)

I did want kids of my own; I always thought I would have them--you know? Working, traveling, grad school--more work and trying to establish my career along with dating plenty of Mr. Really Wrong Guy, kept me from ever considering having a baby. Marriage was not a priority for me. I think this has something to do with my parents' divorce and hearing my dad say over and over again, "I don't why on earth would anyone want to get married" – he remarried. Then one day I

did, fell in love, it happened and we tied the knot and he had kids--never imagined that I would be a step mom—I had only heard horror stories. The kids were great one girl and boy—just what I always wanted I thought. And my sweet husband was open to more we discussed it before we got married – wanted to put everything out on the table. I had never been married before and was only going to do it once unlike my parents. I really thought that we would try to have kids after our first anniversary (I am a bit of a planner) but the first anniversary arrived – and we managed to sneak off to Paris for a short celebration it was wonderful. I realized if we had kids or even if I was pregnant it would be hard to fly off to Paris. I loved our freedom when the kids were away. I often see my husband stress as his kids are getting older and I see the expenses of sports, braces, cars, insurance and college—exciting stuff but not my responsibility financially—thankfully. I help with making sure that we eat food on most days, and help drive and pick up anyone that needs it. I do enjoy attending the events the kids are involved in, I have stepped in on parent nights at school with my husband when the kid’s mom could not be around—I enjoy learning

about what they are working on in school and their interests. I do love them, and we have a good relationship and I think I lucked out with great step kids and it is usually smooth sailing. However, as a step mom there is that feeling that you never really belong. You are not their mom they have one. I feel like a co-pilot to my husband helping him navigate the turbulence of the teen years of his children which has been a adventure as they get older. Kids are a lot of work, and I am realizing that having my own, I would not be any less work, and if I had my own I would love them like my own and I would belong.

The blood bond somehow always pushes others out—even those of us connected to the family—we all live together so it is an odd balance.  
(Transitional text)

This is a Step Daughter's RANT! (Transition)

There are things a stepparent should do and things that a stepparent should not do and she has it all wrong! When I met my step mom she seemed normal and like a good stepparent but things have shifted, and I do not get it. She is depressed all of the time, she fights with my dad constantly does not really want to do much of anything at home or at

work. Not much of a functioning adult these days, it is sad and she is trying to get help with a therapist. But when she tells me to do something like my homework or to pick up my clothes on my bedroom floor—it is hard not to laugh in her face, I don't, but I have not seen her do much of anything at all lately, go to work, get out of bed, shower—it is pretty bad. The fighting is unbearable with lots of slamming doors and no one seems to talk about it. I try to ignore it, but that can be hard, I know that neither one of them are happy. The whole thing makes me NEVER want to get married. First, my parents divorced when I was very young, it was sad but looking back they really had nothing in common and people do not always stay together forever. If this marriage lasts another year, I will be shocked! That was a Stepdaughters Rant!

(Transition)

What a friend told me about her early step mom experiences (Transition)

I met my husband when I was in my twenties and he was in his forties, we fell in love and moved in together three months later. I knew he had two teenagers 17 and 19 when we met and I did not think about it too much. Until one day he told me that his oldest son Adam and his



girlfriend Libby would be moving in with us. We lived in a redesigned garage with a kitchen and dining space, living area and studio space with another artist—my husband is a painter and we shared this with his friend Charlie. So it was a cozy space, and we make them up a corner with a small bed. That was really my first taste of being a stepmother; I got to know his children later in life. The element of privacy was a bit to negotiate at first but I was used to living with others and I was pretty laid-back about it, and we all got along well. They stayed with us for a while before they moved out and we ended up moving out of the garage and got an apartment. A few years later, we had a child and when our son was still an infant, nine months old to be exact, my stepson and a different girlfriend, hmm I forgot her name, needed to move in with us again. This time I had a baby to care for and I knew it would have some different challenges. It did--things were strange this time even though we had more room for my stepson and his girlfriend. It was not space but things were odd, things were missing, broken, lots of unexplained messes and it made me angry--I had to confront my husband. I told him that I could not live this way and that I would move out with our baby if his son and girlfriend did not leave. I had to become mad to let my husband know how upset I was, something I did not do very often—they moved out. The desire to be with my own family was overwhelming and stressful. We later found out that both of them were addicts and were trying to quit cold turkey and clean up while they lived with us and it did

not work out well. Later, when my oldest stepson became sick as a result of his drug habits and was hospitalized, my husband spent a lot of time with him at the hospital and I stayed home caring for our baby, he was a toddler about three years old at this point; I was also in grad school—a hectic time. However, one day I had an incredible urge to go to the hospital, and I packed up our son and went and that was the day my stepson passed away, I am glad I went. His funeral was the following week and I had a class to teach in the morning, I had no one to cover it for me. So I knew I would be coming in a few minutes late, and I would have our child with me. When we got there it was so crowded, my stepson had been a talented musician and had tons of friends, and fans. I found a place to sit in the back and I felt so alone a strange feeling of exclusion, like an outsider—it was a low place and maybe if I had been able to be there on time, perhaps I would have been invited to sit in the front with the family. I do not know it did not work out that way. My only advice for this hard role to play: Treat each stepchild as a complete human being recognizing their humanness.

## Thoughts on meeting the ex-wife from Kenley (Transition)

I was nervous so nervous, I did not know why I was but I cleaned our place up really well and made eggplant parmesan for our dinner with Penny my husband's ex. My husband had planned to put her up in a hotel but then last minute he decided that it would be best if she stayed in our spare room so she could spend more time with her youngest son who was living with us at the time. This threw me a bit but I had to consider that she was the mother of my husband's children, and I went with it. She arrived, and we all had a nice visit that first night and the eggplant parmesan turned out well. The next day my husband asked me if Penny could borrow my car to visit some family and friends a couple towns away. "What" I said, "my car"—this is too much", I basically lost it, then I calmed myself down not really knowing why the car was much different than her staying in our home. I let her use my car and everything worked out—we got along very well together. About a year later she remarried, an old flame in the area, that she ran into the day she was borrowing my car.

We let them use our summer beach home for their honeymoon and they loved it so much that they bought a house three doors down. Years later

when my husband had a bad accident she was a great help, I was able to lean on her for all sorts of things even to watch my youngest child—you just never know.

**A few things that my students and friends have said about their stepmothers:** (Transition in between lines)

**I found out that my dad was getting remarried when we were in the middle of ordering pizza, so what toppings do you want and I am getting married next Saturday—it all seemed that fast.**

**My step mom and I have the same first name and when she married my dad we suddenly had the same last name too—so there are two Janice Kramers in our house, actually it may be weirder for my dad?!**

**My stepmom is a cunt—I know how bad that sounds but it is true!**

**My stepmom and I were never that close but recently I went through a bunch of through personal emotional stuff; and I lost so much weight that my clothes did not fit, my parents were still mad and hurt by the situation I had put myself in. My stepmom seemed to be the only person to understand and took me shopping for a bunch of new clothes that I needed—I really appreciated it.**

**My stepmother died unexpectedly, I was in high school—it was awful.**

**Things have always been tense with my stepmom, she was married to my dad before my mom was and then he got back together with**

**her after my parents split ... but there seems to be more to the story—we are closer now, it has been a journey.**

**My stepmom has always been really critical of me, I spent a lot of time with her alone when my dad would travel for work she had most of the responsibilities early on—it was hard because I was never good enough for her or thin enough for her, she often told me that I was worthless. It took me years of therapy to realize that she is critical of everyone and everything—so it was not just me.**

So why do we become stepmom and stepdads? We adopt pets but that is different. Noooooo one ever said that it would be easy. I would do anything to help my stepkids and I have helped out when their parents have been swamped with work and pulled in different directions—we all juggle things in life. I make sure that I try to help them with things that are important to them, and in many ways, my step kids have everything that they want, a bit spoiled actually...

(INTERUPTION from David at Light/Sound Table)

David. Come on, Allison! Don't be so hard on them they are good kids.

Allison. I know that they are good kids, you do not think that they are a little spoiled?

David. No, I think I that they are loved.

Allison: You interrupt me now! Near the end of the show??

David: Sorry

Yes, your kids are loved and have much more than I did growing up, and I am happy for them. You do not get it—your parents were not ever divorced, mine were so I am a little better than you are at this game. It is a lot to negotiate, and I think that I do a pretty good job at it and yes I know that I am nutty some days but that is life and we are all human. NO comments from the tech table! As a step parent you do give a lot of time and energy. It is not always about you—kids need structure; life and school events take priority. Have you survived a soccer season? Planned a graduation party? I have—I made a choice to love children that are not my own and that is a commitment.

(cross to put on wig)

I know in the audience there are some stressed-out and underappreciated stepparents. Maybe you are fearful about becoming a step-parent? This is all completely normal there will be times when you feel like the evil stepparent, are my horns showing? Only because you are trying to do the right thing or help the birth parent do the right thing. It is at these tense times of uncertainty that I feel like I am up on a tight-rope and I hear and feel the theme from Jaws in my mind and body DA DA DA DA DA (non-verbal and physical transition) yes waters can be rough but things do eventually calm down. I just keep breathing and let my ribs swing out as I inhale and enjoy my exhale and repeat the cycle...then I often pour myself a glass white or red...if it is a chilly winter night I pick a single

malt Scotch whiskey. Whatever it takes to get through the Step Mama Drama and still feel like a good person at the end of the day.

Song Light CUE # 5

**SONG - Step Mama—See Sheet Music Separately**

**Curtain Call after Song Light CUE #6**

**Post Show Light CUE # 7 if needed**

**The End**