

ROBOT FIGHT

Series Bible

When their daughters' failing middle-school robotics team forces childhood rivals MARK and DREW to co-coach, they must overcome their bitter resentment to build a functional robot and salvage their relationship with their kids.

Created by
IdeaM

Logline

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Series Overview

The Premise

Mark and Drew are divorced, bitter ex-husbands who maintain an almost combative civility around their daughters, Maya and Chloe. They fundamentally disagree on parenting styles, everything from college majors to acceptable levels of grime on a teenager's sneakers. The catalyst for this season's central conflict is the local Middle School Robotics League, a high-stakes, slightly over-the-top event that demands teamwork.

The Characters

MARK (40s)

Wealthy, highly competent, slightly uptight corporate engineer. He views the world, including parenting, as a solvable, logical system. His expertise is in CAD design and mechanical efficiency. He treats everything like a hostile corporate merger he needs to win. He secretly misses the easy, chaotic joy of being a kid.

DREW (40s)

Freelance, charismatic, slightly disorganized creative professional (perhaps a graphic designer or music tech guy). He views the world through the lens of artistic collaboration and emotional resonance. His expertise is in programming 'flair' and visual aesthetics, often at the expense of structural integrity. He struggles with routine.

MAYA (12)

The pragmatic, intense one. She is the natural leader of the robotics team. She values function over form and is deeply exasperated by both of her fathers' conflicting approaches. She is the audience surrogate rooting for a functional, simple solution.

CHLOE (12)

The emotionally volatile one. She is fascinated by the idea of robotics—the spectacle, the potential for drama—more than the engineering. She is the one who keeps accidentally sabotaging things with overly dramatic flair.

The Stakes

The immediate stakes are the upcoming Regional Robotics Competition. The long-term stakes are the emotional survival of the two fathers' relationship—or at least, the survival of their co-parenting façade. If the team fails, the fathers risk irreparable damage to their fragile peace.

The Competition Cycle

Every episode is structured around a specific, escalating phase of the robotics season. The season progresses through predetermined checkpoints that force the dads to confront a different facet of their incompatibility:

- Episode 1: The Initial Build/The Rules are Introduced. (Focus: Establishing conflict and division of labor.)
- Mid-Season Arc: The Mid-Season Regional Qualifier. (Focus: External failure forces reliance on the other dad's skillset.)
- Climax: The Championship Match. (Focus: The dads must finally synthesize their opposing skills—Logic + Flair—to achieve success.)

The Weekly Problem

Each episode introduces a new, specific technical obstacle or required feature for the robot (e.g., "It must navigate a slippery surface," "It must lift an asymmetrical load," or "It must survive an unexpected water hazard"). This forces Mark and Drew to argue over which of their specialized, flawed methodologies is correct, leading to a spectacular, comedic failure that requires them to grudgingly incorporate the other's idea. This built-in structure guarantees escalating conflict and mandated collaboration.

Tone and Touchstones

Tone

High-energy, rapid-fire comedic antagonism. Think *The Farce* meets *Mrs. Doubtfire*, but instead of embarrassing costumes, the humiliation comes from engineering failure and forced domestic cooperation. The comedy must derive equally from physical comedy (robots failing spectacularly) and sharp, witty dialogue (the dads sniping at each other).

Touchstones

- *The Odd Couple*: The foundational relationship dynamic of two incompatible people forced into proximity.
- *Modern Family*: The structure of juggling the kids' lives with external obligations (the competition).
- *Apollo 13*: The undercurrent of genuine, high-stakes problem-solving when the initial plan fails.

Main Characters

The Lead

Mark

Age: 40s. What he WANTS: To prove that his highly structured, logically perfect approach to engineering and parenting is superior and that he can rebuild a functional, orderly life post-divorce. What he NEEDS: To accept that messy, illogical emotion and creative spontaneity hold genuine value, even if it compromises efficiency. The flaw or secret in the way: He masks a deep-seated fear of chaos and obsolescence with meticulous control. He secretly misses the easy, chaotic joy of being a kid. His SEASON ARC: Starts in the pilot viewing the robot build as a hostile corporate merger requiring immediate hostile takeover. By the end of Season One, he must accept that the most robust solutions often come from the "illogical" side, using his engineering to support a moment of emotional or creative risk. How he talks: Crisp, jargon-laden, and overly precise. He speaks in bullet points, efficiency metrics, and declarative statements, often using corporate analogies ("This fails the ROI test," "We need to streamline the workflow").

The Opposing Force

Drew

Age: 40s. What he WANTS: To prove that art, emotion, and unexpected flair are more valuable and meaningful than quantifiable metrics or rigid systems. What he NEEDS: To understand that some structures, even the emotional ones, require foundational support and reliable scaffolding to actually function in the real world. The flaw or secret in the way: He equates genuine feeling with artistic output, often prioritizing "vibe" over structural integrity. He struggles profoundly with routine and predictable setbacks. His SEASON ARC: Starts in the pilot treating the robot's structural limitations as a "creative challenge" to overcome with aesthetic embellishment. By the end of Season One, he must learn that true artistic expression sometimes requires the disciplined, predictable support framework that Mark provides. How he talks: Flowery, meandering, and intensely passionate. He speaks in metaphors, anecdotes, and bursts of evocative imagery, often trails off mid-sentence as if chasing a perfect rhyme or feeling.

The Ensemble

Maya

Age: 12. What she WANTS: For her fathers to stop fighting and simply function as a cohesive, effective unit so she can focus on winning the competition. What she NEEDS: To be seen as an equal problem-solver, not just the caretaker referee between her fathers' bickering. The flaw or secret in the way: She intellectualizes emotional conflict, treating the relationship tension between her dads like a solvable mechanical problem that needs debugging. Her SEASON ARC: Starts in the pilot acting as the exasperated project manager, keeping the project on track by sheer force of will and exasperated suggestion. By the end of Season One, she must learn to articulate her needs emotionally, rather than only through project management directives. How she talks: Direct, exasperated, and highly efficient. Her dialogue is peppered with technical jargon she learned from overhearing them, delivered with the exhausted tone of a person dealing with chronic incompetence.

Chloe

Age: 12. What she WANTS: To make the robotics process feel epic, dramatic, and worthy of cinematic fanfare. What she NEEDS: To accept that the actual, gritty work of engineering—the tedious, unglamorous debugging—is just as important as the spectacular final reveal. The flaw or secret in the way: She uses melodrama and manufactured high-stakes scenarios to feel deeply invested in the process, often leading to unintended sabotage. Her SEASON ARC: Starts in the pilot treating the competition like a Broadway musical where every component failure is a dramatic plot twist. By the end of Season One, she must find genuine satisfaction in the quiet moment of a perfectly executed, simple function, without needing an accompanying spotlight. How she talks: Exaggerated, theatrical, and prone to dramatic pauses. She speaks as if narrating a movie trailer that hasn't been filmed yet.

The World

Setting and Era

The series takes place in the present day, within the context of suburban American life, specifically revolving around the extracurricular demands of middle-school athletics and technology. The aesthetic must balance the high-tech, slightly sterile environment of modern STEM education with the lived-in, slightly chaotic feel of two divorced people sharing custody of a home and a project. The era feels perpetually now—a blend of hyper-connectivity and profound emotional disarray.

Standing Sets

The Garage Workshop

This is the primary battleground. It is a semi-detached garage attached to the family home. It is perpetually cluttered, a monument to creative failure and half-finished mechanical ambition. One side must retain the clean, organized, highly functional look of Mark's corporate engineering mindset (labeled with precise tools, CAD blueprints rolled neatly, and designated "stress-test zones"). The other side must reflect Drew's artistic chaos—tools draped over easels, half-used spray paint cans, mood boards tacked haphazardly to pegboards, and cables snaking across the floor like colorful vines. The central work area must be a worn workbench littered with discarded circuit boards, motors, and crumpled junk mail representing failed concepts.

The Dining Table

The site of forced domestic truce. This is the kitchen table in the shared house. It rarely functions as a place of nourishment; instead, it serves as the impromptu meeting spot for "operational planning." It must be large enough to accommodate disassembled components, spilled soda, and an uncomfortable tension visible in the way the characters arrange their coffee mugs—always positioned in opposing quadrants of the table.

The School Lab/Workshop

This is the designated, temporary "neutral ground" for the robotics team. It is overly bright, smelling faintly of industrial cleaner and hot electronics. It is where the technical requirements of the League are presented, forcing the dads into a professional veneer that immediately cracks under pressure.

This room is impersonal, full of official league banners and pristine, unused competition mats.

Rules of This World

The Co-Parenting Contract

The functional reality of the fathers' relationship is defined by a highly detailed, emotionally brittle co-parenting agreement. This agreement dictates the physical exchange of the children and, crucially, the allocation of "Project Time." Any deviation from the established custody schedule or failure to show up for mandatory team meetings constitutes a violation, which the dads treat with the same performative seriousness as if it were a breach of a multi-million dollar contract.

The Robotics League Mandate

The League rules are the immutable law of this world. The robot must function within the parameters set by the league technical manuals. Any creative flourish (Drew) or over-engineered complexity (Mark) that fails to meet a quantifiable safety or performance metric results in immediate, visible failure. The stakes are not just winning; they are adhering to the system.

The Children's Authority

Maya and Chloe, despite their age, possess the authority of the Project Management Office. Their collective frustration is a physical force that can stall production more effectively than any technical malfunction. Their agreement to work together on the robot is the only thing keeping the dads tethered to a shared goal, making the robot itself a barometer for their emotional solvency.

Look and Sound

Visual Palette

The color grading should shift dramatically depending on which father's influence is dominant. When Mark is in control, the scene is dominated by cool, hard blues, grays, and fluorescent office lighting—everything is clean, sharp, and calculated. When Drew takes over, the palette warms immediately: saturated oranges, dusty reds, and the soft, nostalgic glow of practical lighting fixtures (like fairy lights strung over a circuit board). The moments of actual success, when both methods align, should feature a balanced, warm, golden light—the visual representation of functional harmony.

Auditory Landscape

The sound design is crucial for generating tension.

- **Dominant Sound:** The sharp, high-pitched whine of motors under strain, mixed with the constant, low-level hum of charging electronics.
- **Mark's Audio Signature:** Crisp, precise sound effects—the click of a calibrated wrench, the thwip of a laser pointer, the sharp tap of a stylus on a tablet.
- **Drew's Audio Signature:** Organic, resonant, and unpredictable—the thump of something falling over, the echo of inappropriate background music playing softly on a laptop, the scrape of paint on metal.
- **The Conflict Sound:** The soundscape heightens during arguments, characterized by overlapping

dialogue becoming a cacophony, punctuated by the unexpected clatter of dropped tools, which serves as a momentary, physical "reset" button for the tension.

Pilot Locations

The Garage Workshop

The initial meeting point. The physical manifestation of the forced merger.

The Dining Table

The location for the initial "divorce settlement" meeting regarding the robot's purpose and direction.

The School Lab/Workshop

The site of the League orientation, where the daunting technical schematics are revealed to the daughters.

The Pilot

A Story

Cold Open: The Diagnosis

The episode opens in the Garage Workshop. It is late afternoon; the golden hour light struggles to penetrate the grimy windows, illuminating floating dust motes over the central workbench. Maya is hunched over a disassembled section of the chassis, pencil flying across a grease-stained notepad, acting as both foreman and exasperated engineer. Mark is meticulously polishing a gear set with an unnervingly precise chamois cloth, treating the action like a quarterly earnings report review. Drew is sprawled on a beanbag chair, staring vaguely at a mood board tacked to the pegboard, humming a low, off-key melody. The initial problem is established: the robot, The Circuit Breakers, has failed a basic, League-mandated stability test—it tipped over during a simple weight shift. Mark immediately diagnoses the failure as insufficient center of gravity calculation. Drew suggests the failure was a "narrative moment" that needed more dramatic flair. Maya snaps a photo of the wreckage with her phone, capturing the tableau of their mutual ineptitude.

Act One: The Divide

The action shifts to the Dining Table for the "Co-Coaching Strategy Session." The table is littered with coffee cups and schematics, establishing the physical and emotional boundary between the men. Mark presents a comprehensive, binder-laden proposal outlining a new, mathematically derived weight distribution system, using terms like "optimized load carriage" and "stress tolerance indexing." He speaks in rapid-fire bullet points, visibly irritated when Drew interrupts him. Drew counters by pulling out a stack of glossy, abstract art magazines. He argues that the robot needs "soul" and that Mark's system is "a beautiful monument to beige mediocrity." The argument escalates over a shared component—a specific motor. Mark argues it must be rated for industrial torque (a quantifiable metric). Drew argues that its sound profile needs to be variable to convey emotional shifts (a subjective value). They reach an impasse: they cannot agree on the foundational principles of

the chassis's next module.

Act Two: The Compromise Failure

The scene moves to the School Lab/Workshop. The League coordinator (an unseen voice, or perhaps just a laminated poster of rules) has presented the next required obstacle: the team must pass a simulated "uneven terrain traverse." Mark designs an over-engineered, complex suspension system utilizing multiple articulated joints, boasting of its quantifiable adaptability. Drew, in a moment of forced cooperation, "decorates" the suspension system with custom-cut, brightly colored vinyl decals featuring inspirational quotes about resilience. During the test run, the mechanism works initially—the hydraulics are stable, the decals are vibrant—but when the robot encounters the slightest unexpected shift (maybe a rogue patch of duct tape on the floor), the system overcorrects. The complex hydraulics seize violently, sounding like a dying industrial machine, and the entire assembly locks up, leaving the robot paralyzed mid-traverse. The physical failure forces a moment of shared, visible panic from Maya and Chloe, who are forced to stop critiquing and simply stare at the inert metal heap.

Act Three: The Forced Synergy

Back in the Garage Workshop, the dads, defeated, are cleaning up the wreckage. Mark is frustrated by the visible failure of his "perfect" system; Drew is sullenly kicking a discarded piece of wiring. Chloe suggests they dismantle the primary lifting arm entirely and rebuild it, but only using the motor and basic framework. This forces a new design: something simple, requiring only the core mechanical function. Mark immediately reverts to jargon, suggesting a series of micro-actuators. Drew, against his better judgment, suggests they use a simple, aesthetically pleasing, but structurally questionable counterbalance system—a counterweight that looks like nothing more than a spray-painted sculpture. Mark scoffs, but Maya steps in, pointing out a structural weakness in the old design that only the counterweight could compensate for. Mark hesitates, then, with an audible, reluctant sigh, nods. He uses his calipers to measure the weight distribution of Drew's "sculpture," realizing its imbalance is precisely what the original system lacked. The final beats see them working in near silence, a rhythm established: Mark calculates, Drew applies the aesthetic/counterbalance, and they achieve a functional, if tacky, preliminary assembly.

Tag

The dads stand back from the freshly assembled, aesthetically questionable, but mechanically sound robot. They do not look at each other. Instead, they both look at the robot, and for a beat, they simultaneously look at their respective daughters—Maya and Chloe—and give the exact same, almost imperceptible nod. It is a shared acknowledgment of mutual, if temporary, respect for the object they built together.

B Story

The Custody Contract

The tension surrounding the "Project Time" within the shared house is the constant undercurrent. The dads are constantly checking the time, referencing the invisible rules of the co-parenting contract. In Act One, the argument over the motor isn't just technical; it's a proxy war over who "owns" the mechanical expertise and who gets the credit for the vision. When they argue over torque versus flare, they are actually arguing over whose lifestyle—Mark's stable 401k structure or Drew's sporadic

freelance income—is the superior model for raising their daughters. The entire sequence is framed by them subtly checking their watches or glancing at the kitchen calendar, using the rigid structure of their agreement to mask their actual emotional volatility.

C Story

The Lost Tool

A small, overlooked element that pays off with a laugh. During the initial chaos in the Garage Workshop (Cold Open), a crucial, specialized Allen wrench—the only one that fits the unique coupling mechanism—is accidentally knocked under a pile of old canvases and discarded mood board clippings by Chloe during an over-dramatic reenactment of the robot's failure. Mark is initially too focused on his schematics to notice it. Drew, in a moment of pure, unthinking childhood panic (the kind of child who loses something important), spots it first, treating the wrench like a lost treasure. The retrieval of the wrench is a physical comedy beat where both dads have to momentarily work together to move the heavy, aesthetically cluttered pile of junk, culminating in a shared, ridiculous grunt of effort.

What the Pilot Sets Up

The audience must want to see:

- The forced synergy: The dads' grudging realization that neither of them can succeed alone, but that the combination of their skills is necessary.
- The physical consequence of the compromise: They have built a Frankenstein-esque hybrid robot that, while theoretically sound, is highly vulnerable to the next specific, measurable, and challenging obstacle the League throws at them.
- Escalating domestic warfare: The established "Project Time" structure is clearly insufficient. Next week, the League will introduce a challenge so specific and bizarre that it will force them to confront a core value conflict (e.g., efficiency vs. art) in a way that cannot be solved by mere compromise.

Season One

The Pilot: Initial Collision

The season opens in the Garage Workshop during the mandatory League orientation. Mark attempts to impose a rigid, CAD-driven build schedule based solely on maximum torque and load-bearing capacity, viewing the robot like a faulty piece of commercial machinery. Drew counters by staging a "mood board session" at the Dining Table, insisting the robot must express "the struggle of modern adolescence" through customizable lighting and flowing aesthetic panels. Maya acts as the exhausted mediator, forcing them to agree on a preliminary chassis design that is a Frankenstein's monster of structural rigidity and questionable artistic appeal. The episode ends with the team failing a simple, pre-programmed obstacle course in the School Lab, demonstrating that neither of their individual approaches is sufficient on its own.

Mid-Season Turn: The Regional Qualifier

The team arrives at the Regional Qualifier, a larger, more complex venue than anticipated. The initial competition challenge forces a failure directly related to Mark's over-engineering—perhaps a subsystem designed to be perfectly efficient jams because the environment is too dirty, too unpredictable. In the resulting chaos, Drew's seemingly frivolous programming flair—a sequence designed to "embrace the glorious imperfection"—accidentally provides the needed, unexpected bypass or aesthetic distraction that allows the robot to move past the failure point, forcing Mark to grudgingly admit that pure logic isn't always the only path.

The Finale: Championship Synthesis

The final Championship Match requires the robot to perform a sequence that is inherently contradictory: it must execute a flawlessly precise mechanical task (Mark's domain) while simultaneously navigating an area requiring spontaneous, emotional reading of the "environment" (Drew's domain). In the climactic moment, the dads must finally abandon their deeply ingrained methodologies. Mark must allow a calculated deviation based on Drew's intuition, while Drew must use Mark's precise structural knowledge to make his grand, risky gesture physically possible. The success of the robot is directly proportional to the fathers' ability to communicate beyond their parental grievances, achieving a moment of functional, messy harmony.

Future Episodes

Episode 2 — The Component Crisis

The team must integrate a complex pneumatic lift system into the chassis, forcing Mark to argue for industrial-grade, over-engineered hydraulics while Drew argues for a beautifully scripted, but structurally questionable, counterweight system. This episode deepens the conflict by making the required hardware physically impossible to combine, pushing Maya to mediate a massive blowout in the Garage Workshop.

Episode 3 — The Aesthetic Overhaul

The league mandates that the robot must not only function but must also incorporate a distinct, themed "identity" for the competition. Drew takes creative control, insisting on excessive, distracting aesthetic elements (like blinking mood lights or overly dramatic decals) that Mark immediately decries as engineering dead weight, leading to a disastrous test run where the added weight causes catastrophic motor failure.

Episode 4 — The Logic Gap

A sudden rule change mid-season dictates that the robot must navigate a simulated "natural hazard" zone—specifically, a pool of colored, viscous liquid. Mark is confident in a waterproof sealant and mechanical solution, but the liquid has an unexpected, non-Newtonian quality that defeats his precise calculations, forcing Drew to realize that sometimes the solution requires understanding fluid dynamics through metaphor, not just schematics.

Episode 5 — The Legacy Piece

The fathers have to build a specialized manipulator arm capable of retrieving an object from a challenging, non-standard location (e.g., underneath a tilted platform). This challenge forces Mark to realize that his own childhood—the "easy, chaotic joy" he misses—was full of such unpredictable retrieval scenarios, leading him to momentarily abandon jargon and speak with a more vulnerable, nostalgic tone to Drew.

Episode 6 — The Mid-Season Review

The team faces a mandatory "technical review" with the league's notoriously cynical and high-achieving rival team. Mark tries to win by sheer technical superiority, only to be undermined by the rival's ability to anticipate flaws in Mark's overly complex system, forcing the fathers to communicate under the intense pressure of being professionally judged.

Episode 7 — The Emotional Debug

Chloe orchestrates a "dry run" where she pretends the robot is broken due to an emotional malfunction (e.g., "It's experiencing existential dread and refuses to move"). This bizarre scenario forces the fathers to stop treating the robot as hardware and start treating it like the object of their emotional conflict, leading to a breakthrough moment where they acknowledge the difficulty of working together, rather than just the failure of the machine.