

6-28-2010

Identifying Comedy: The Linguistic Properties of Humor

Aaron Frale

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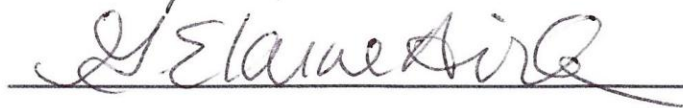
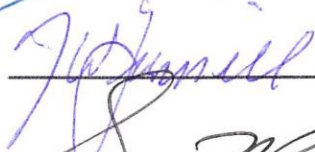
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, Chairperson



**IDENTIFYING COMEDY
THE LINGUISTIC PROPERTIES OF HUMOR**

BY

AARON FRALE

B.A., Theatre, University of New Mexico, 2004

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Master of Fine Arts
Dramatic Writing**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May 2010

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DEDICATION

To Jim Linnell, Elaine Avila, Brian Herrera, Matt McDuffie, and Digby Wolfe for guidance.

To Friends and Family for being there.

To Felicia, for companionship.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a method to label comedy with a linguistic model. Comedy is defined via an audience's laughter. The first part presents anecdotal evidence and certain factors of comedy. Time and Cultural awareness play into the understanding of comedy. Time can situate the humor in a piece of writing. Cultural understanding can unlock the laughter in a joke. The second section breaks down comedy into a linguistic model. Expression, meaning, and context are the different parts of comedy. Each part has impact on humor. An audience understanding theses three parts is critical to the concept of "comedy equals a laughing audience."

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Identifying Comedy: The Linguistic Properties of Humor

According to Jan Walsh Hokenson, who specializes in French and comparative literature at University of California at Santa Cruz, “the theory of comedy has received surprisingly little critical attention” (13). This essay is in part a way to devise a way to talk scholarly about comedy and also a way for me to describe what happens when I create comedy. In a sense, I am putting forth terms to speak about the “transaction of comedy.” Simply, I want to describe the moment when a comedy idea makes people laugh. A laughing audience is like a math equation, Comic Idea A equals Audience Laughing B. However Comic Idea A and Audience B is a fairly complex system. Comic Idea A is the result of an even more complex equation that results from the agency of the comedy writer. I am choosing to use linguistic terms to describe the Comic Idea A, as there are already functional terms to describe Audience B according to Jim Holt, a long time contributor to the *The New Yorker*, in Stop Me If You’ve Heard This.

The reason comedy attracts me as a writer goes beyond making the audience laugh. Comedy is a form of communication that can cross and fail to cross social and cultural boundaries in the same piece of writing. Two moments clearly defined this concept for me. The first was an audience’s reaction to my play, turned movie, Hamlet: The Vampire Slayer and a Japanese comedy television program *Janguru wa itsumo hare nochi Guu*.

When Hamlet: The Vampire Slayer first debuted as a play, the turnout was a bit larger than we had expected. The show played at the upstairs small theatre space of the now defunct Gorilla Tango designed in the comedy club fashion with chairs and tables. To the dismay of the Fire Marshal but celebration of us, the show more than sold out. The house was extremely packed every night near the end of the run. We had to bring out more and more chairs. Normally

the house seated fifty people and we were getting audiences of one hundred and twenty or so. The small tables of comedy club fashion were packed with strangers. I shared one such table with two black women.

While we did include Othello as a maverick vampire hunter in the play, the play was about as white as you can get. Two white writers parodied a dead white writer with white male lead. In order to make Hamlet comic we fused elements of *Buffy: The Vampire Slayer* (another fairly white show) into the story of Hamlet. Hamlet wanted to be a male cheerleader and not the slayer. Since a comedy writer is always curious about how others receive their craft, I was excited to see what these two ladies would think of the show. Not that a person needs to be of a particular color to enjoy a show. I do like “black” shows like *The Chappelle Show* or *The Boondocks*. The viewpoint of the writer does determine who will be more likely to enjoy the comedy. In marketing terms the blackness, whiteness, or “anyness” of a show is the group most likely to think the show is funny. If I could afford one and only one commercial on television (and each show had the same amount of viewers) to promote Hamlet: The Vampire Slayer, I would buy a commercial slot during *Family Guy* over *The Boondocks*.

I was naturally curious to see what the two ladies thought of the show. They loved the show and laugh heartily at all the slaying shenanigans. I noticed however they didn’t laugh at the direct Hamlet references. The more physical references played well with them, especially the male cheerleading dance-off at the end. They roared with approval as the Laertes and Hamlet faced off in a dance to the death.

Much later when Hamlet: The Vampire Slayer was turned into a film, I had the pleasure of screening the film in New York with an audience unlike the New Mexico audience. When the

film played in New Mexico, people laughed at much of the same material that made them laugh at the one on stage. The screening in New York would now truly test the film with an audience that had different sensibilities. To my credit, I was writing comedy in Albuquerque for two years before Hamlet: The Vampire Slayer so Albuquerque was tested and well-navigated waters. New York was uncharted. An older white couple sat near me during the screening of the film. I later found out that the male was a professor of Shakespeare at the local university. Needless to say, they laughed at all the Shakespeare references. Hamlet's "To Slay or Not To Slay" soliloquy received an roar of approving laughter from the couple. The ladies did not laugh at the soliloquy.

The ladies from the play and the couple from the movie both laughed at the dance off scene. Even though both the couple and the ladies displayed different senses of humor during the production, the male cheerleaders floundering around in a dance off crossed the cultural and social boundaries. The direct Shakespeare references however did not cross the cultural and social boundaries. Hamlet: The Vampire Slayer is a comedy that can both succeed and fail when viewed by people with different backgrounds.

With this paper, I will create a method to identify comedy. While there is no "Rosetta Stone" for identifying comedy, I am creating a set of tools to recognize comedy. Any good tool box has different sets of tools. My particular set uses the linguistic paradigm. Since comedy does not always cross cultural or even individual tastes, I believe that a set of tools for identifying comedy is important. In this paper I will first explain the difference between comedy and drama. Then I will explain comic failures and the time specificity of comedy, followed by an outline of comedy based on a linguistic approach using expression, meaning, and context to identify comedy.

The second moment that defined the idea of the simultaneous success and failure of the communication of comedy was *Janguru wa itsumo hare nochi Guu*. The television show was about a contemporary town was located in a jungle. They wore clothes made from animal hides but also possessed video games and appliances. *Janguru*'s lead character, a young boy named Hale, lived with his single mother Weda. The relationship between the mother and was often strained because Weda, a free spirit, often embarrassed her child.

A friend of mine, who married a Japanese woman, watched the show with me. He explained jokes that I did not understand being an American. One such joke was a moment where a man left his chopsticks in a bowl of rice. Hale freaked out and thought the man was a ghost. My friend explained to me that chopsticks inside the food are a way of offering food for the dead in Japanese culture. The proper way to rest chopsticks is across the top of the bowl rather than inside the bowl. Basically the humor of Hale's reaction is rather than thinking the man is merely being impolite or ignorant of diner etiquette, he thinks the man is a ghost. As an American the joke did not play for me. However moments in show like where Weda drinks too much and embarrasses her son worked for me. Basically the show was a success and a failure in comedy communication to me.

Because comedy can still be funny even though every joke does not cross social and cultural arenas of knowledge, I think a method to identify humor is important. Taste is a big factor when analyzing comedy. Not every person laughs at the same joke, even for the same reasons. Because of different tastes in humor, I believe recognizing the logistics of the comic transaction, the "Comic Idea A," is an important part of looking at comedy. Recognizing humor, even though a person may not find the humor funny can help situate understanding of texts.

In another personal anecdote, a reader attacked a comedy blog that I write. The post was a couple of jokes about corporations taking control of NASA. He emailed me with an inflamed message that began, “Your article was full of emotional anti-corporate crap!” He then proceeded to critique the flaws in my logic. I gathered from the email, that he didn’t realize that he was reading comedy. I would have appreciated a “You are not funny.” At least then I have known the reader judged the post based on a comedy standard. I have chosen the linguistic properties of comedy because I feel comedy is another form of communication. Even if the comedy does not use language, (i.e. a drunk mother embarrasses her son), the author of the comedy still intended the audience to laugh. For the purpose of this paper I will explore how the author of comedy creates the moment where the audience can laugh.

Another reason why identifying the comic moment is important is because comedy generates a different response than drama. Without the laughter of the audience, identifying comedy may not always be simple because of cultural, taste, and even historical distance. Take “Little Red Riding Hood” for example. The story uses classical comedy elements. A cross-dressing character and a character that does not see through the ruse interact with each other under false pretenses. “Little Red Riding Hood” uses the same elements as Shakespearian comedies. However “Little Red Riding Hood” does not generate laughter with contemporary audiences unless the author adapts the story. Was “Little Red Riding Hood” an attempt to generate laughter? There are many versions of the Little Red story, some easily identifiable as comic and others not comic. What about oral versions of the story? A comedian often presents information with a certain inflection to clue the audience about the comic intention. What if a medieval storyteller did a comic presentation of “Little Red Riding Hood?” Could a

contemporary person understand that the story was intended as comedy? A method to identify comedy is useful because the audience isn't always there to clue a person "not in" on the joke.

Hokenson correctly identifies that comedy received very little critical attention throughout the ages but comedy still existed. After the fall of the Roman Empire I doubt the people thought, "The Middle Ages suck, so let's not laugh for another thousand or so years." Comedy appears in many forms, and through variety of cultures. There is humor for a variety of tastes, cultural awareness, and even points in time.

Comedy functions as a cultural awareness method. Tune into the late night talk show monologues and you can see what is on the cultural conscience of the United States. When the economy has problems, economic woes find ways into the monologues. For other cultures comedy can show what is important to them. Through *Janguru wa itsumo hare nochi Guu*, I received some understanding of Japanese culture. Historically comedy can function to see what is important during specific moments in time. Identification of comedy helps expand the awareness.

Comedy and Drama

Before approaching the linguistic model of comedy, I feel a necessity to distinguish comedy from drama. Finding the moment when the audience is intended to laugh is the dividing line between comedy and drama. Comedy functions like drama in a variety of ways. The differences are so small that parodies can be made out of a drama with a simple tonal shift. A comedy can be turned into a drama with a tonal shift in the opposite direction. The tonal shift of comedy is best illustrated with a simple example. Drama: A man while on drugs is fascinated by a bus. In his drug induced delirium he is hit by the bus. Comedy: A man while on drugs falls in

love with a bus. He is hit by the bus. Both examples follow pretty much the same structure; the tone shift is the man's feelings towards the bus. In the drama example, the use of drugs causes him anguish and pain. In the comedy example, the use of drugs causes him to be in an absurd situation. The comedy becomes even more apparent after unpacking the idea of a man loving a bus. Imagine the man bringing flowers to the bus, lying in bed with the bus, and running along the beach with the bus. All the comic moments could play in the man's head before he steps out into the street. The comedy was communicated via the tone of the piece.

A screenwriter constructing a comedy tries to communicate his or her idea via a movie. When they write the script, they put ideas that they find funny in the piece. Later when the audience laughs at the ideas, the screenwriter has successfully conveyed their sense of comedy. For example in Airplane! Jim Abrahams and the Zucker brothers present the idea that McCroskey progressively going back to drugs that he gave up is comedy. McCroskey starts his journey when he lights up a cigarette and says off handedly "Looks like I picked the wrong week to quit smoking."

His binge ends when after he "picked the wrong week to stop sniffing glue." His mind, strung out from the drugs, makes him believe the plane is headed for the tower and he jumps out of the window. The screenwriters of Airplane! present McCroskey's degeneration in a comic way. They highlight the humor of the situation through comic communication to the audience. Comedy is a different language than drama. For example Trainspotting handles drug use differently. The film does not communicate in a comic capacity about drug use. Because of the drug use in Trainspotting, a baby dies. The image of the baby haunts Renton during the climax of film when he goes into withdrawal. The baby crawls on the ceiling and stares at Renton. He truly suffers from his affliction whereas McCroskey comically suffers. McCroskey's journey in

Airplane! follows a different path than Renton's journey in Trainspotting. They both ultimately have a breakdown from the abuse of drugs. McCroskey's ends comically as he jumps out the window during the climax of the film. Renton learns from his mistakes and moves forward with life but not without his mistakes inflicting horrors on him.

In comedy, suffering is treated differently. The audience enjoys McCroskey's misery. He spends time upside down on the ceiling grinning and sniffing glue. Renton spends time in bed staring at a dead baby on the ceiling. McCroskey's image inspires humor; Renton inspires horror. Comedy opens a means for people to experience laughter over a subject matter that may be very painful in life. The writer of comedy can make us laugh at a situation we might not normally laugh at. The trick is inviting the audience to find the humor of the situation. The way the information is presented is the difference between comedy and drama.

Comedy is like a language where an idea transfers from one person to the next. However unlike a language, comedy can be created through accidents. Two parties can communicate a comic idea through the transaction of comedy on accident. Language requires utility of an intentional action to communicate the thought. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on comedy that is intentionally created by a writer or performer. Unintentional comedy can be identified in much the same ways but the method requires more research. In short, I could make a whole chapter about unintentional comedy identified through linguistic properties but chose not to do so because intentional comedy is enough to focus on for now.

Comedy ideas function like language. The audience has to understand the comic idea in order to laugh. In a normal language oriented conversation, the idea may not be understood by the intended recipient. For example a lady winks at a man across the room. He thinks she is

attracted to him; she is trying to inform him about a mustard stain on his pants. Essentially, they communicated but they didn't understand what exactly transpired, the genesis of a comic idea. In comedy, the audience knows exactly what happened, even though the characters did not. In a sense the lady and the man's interaction was aware of itself as a comedy. Comedy always has an awareness of its comic value.

The awareness level is an important part in the comedy communication process. McCroskey has a level of comic awareness that allow the audience to laugh. The audience understands they are watching comedy. They know he is acting strangely because of the drugs. There is no real fear, pity, or sorrow for McCroskey. He jumps out of the window in the end of the film, but the audience never sees the direct consequences of the action. In fact the other characters barely register that he jumped out of a control tower window. They simply take a beat to notice that McCroskey went off the deep end then turn right back to the action of the scene. His passing is communicated in a comic way. If McCroskey was in a non-comic piece, the pain his character feels will be highlighted via a different set and mood. The audience would understand the physical pain of going through a glass window and falling to his death. In Trainspotting all the pain is brought to the front. The audience can experience the uncomfortable feelings with Renton.

Time and Comedy Communication

Before getting to the linguistics, I will spend some time with what happens when comedy communication breaks down. With language people can have a failure to communicate; comedy functions the same way. Humor that is centered in pain does not display the pain in a way that takes away the comic awareness from the audience. If the awareness of comedy ever becomes

lost, the audience will not laugh. The writer of the comedy basically has a pact with the audience to provide comedy. With comedy, the audience expects to laugh. An audience in a stand-up comedy club expects to see a performance that is funny and not necessarily deep and meaningful. Comedy performance can be deep and meaningful but the information is conveyed through humor. A stand-up will usually bullet point anything profound they have to say through comedy. A drama form of a single performer that follows a similar performance mode to stand up (one person with an audience) is Spoken Word or Slam poetry. While Spoken Word or Slam Poetry can have comedy, just like Trainspotting has funny moments (for example when the group goes to the highlands of Scotland), the performance is not “about” the comedy whereas stand up is “about” the comedy.

When the audience expects comedy and they do not receive comedy, the pact is broken. Comedy communication breaks down. An audience that does not receive comedy will turn off. A performer caught in a situation with a “communication brake-down” will experience uncomfortable silence from the audience, even heckling. Comedy, unlike other forms of entertainment, has a direct method of the audience displaying their appreciation for the material. A laughing audience is comfortable and in direct communication with the performer. An audience that is not laughing is alienating and scary to the comedy performer. The performer will often attempt to over compensate to keep from losing the audience further. Communication break down between performer and audience depends on multiple factors.

One factor is the lack of shared experience. This factor can take form in a variety of ways. Cultural boundaries is one way comedy communication breaks down. Often the comic writer requires the audience to be aware of a subject matter. A Japanese comic relating the experience of navigating the Japanese school system may not be able to communicate the

experience required to understand the humor. The creator of the comedy can sometimes explain the cultural note in the setup of the joke but some jokes do not cross cultural boundaries very well. In the Japanese animated series called *Golden Boy* the humor translates to the American experience well because the character is a loser super genius that always never ends up with a job, but always solves the problems of a character each episode. The nuances of the series might be lost to an American audience, but the plot offers a resonance about a person navigating society with street smarts and dealing with lack of ambition. A style that is not far off in similarity from an American writer Kevin Smith.

In a more direct way, humor that does not cross the cultural lines, puns and word play. Humor that manipulates similar sounds in the English language may not translate because the sounds may not be the same in another language. The simple joke “If there is snowshoes how can there be any?” relies on the sounds of no being close to snow. In Japanese, the word for no is *ie*, and the word for snow is *yuki*. The premise of the joke is completely removed when the words are translated. Essentially, in order to understand and laugh at the joke, the audience must have a degree of competency in the English language and of course to be partial to the style of humor. Another communication breakdown is taste. For the purpose of this essay I won’t go into taste issues, being that humor always has the chance be considered “not funny” regardless of the skill of the author. Comedy taste is dependent on factors that vary for each individual. Taste is dependent on the question on “why do we laugh?” This essay is here to not answer why we laugh but to identify what people can potentially laugh at.

Another way the comic communication with the audience may not work is through the lack of shared experience. Time is the big factor. A specific point in time gives someone a specific sensibility in life. Since comedy requires the audience to understand the specifics (like

me knowing chopsticks in the rice bowl is food for the dead) time is certainly a factor. A joke about New Amsterdam being changed to New York because they couldn't spell Amsterdam doesn't have the same weight without some contemporary context (i.e. a secessionist wanting to take back New York to the good old days). Despite the time dependency on humor, comedy can cross time barriers like it cross-cultural ones. Not every reference to Elizabethan English life may inspire waves of laughter to a contemporary audience but Shakespeare still has audiences laughing.

Time's relation to comedy is apparent in the television series *Family Guy*. The writers often parody television shows. However, the shows they end up parodying most often are shows from the seventies and up. They do have references to shows earlier than that range but those shows are the time transcendent pieces. For example the original *Star Trek* series still continues to capture audiences beyond the sixties whereas *Green Acres* is rarely the subject of fan fiction and conventions. *Family Guy* will parody *Star Trek* and other shows that lasted beyond the era of their syndication but rarely go beyond the "age range" of the *Family Guy*. The "age range" of *Family Guy* is simply those that understand the references to the television shows they parody. Generally an older audience will not have much experience with the shows parodied in *Family Guy*. The humor is geared toward a younger generation, and the *Green Acres* generation may not get a direct reference to a show from the eighties like *Family Ties*.

An even more distilled example of the time element of comedy is *Robot Chicken*. The series is specifically geared towards a particular age of viewership by the mechanics of the show. The series operates on a series of short comedy sketches acted out by toys. The toys range from Star Wars action figures, comic book heroes, transformers, and even Barbie dolls. The toys usually act out references to the toys themselves. For example in one sketch, Lex Luthor, Cobra

Commander, Skeletor, and the villain from *Thundercats* are carpooling to work. They see the heroes (Superman, Liono, He-man, etc.) in the fast lane. In order to really be well versed in the “time frame” of the sketch, three of the four character groups in the sketch are based on children’s cartoons in the eighties. Another sketch features Optimus Prime with a urinary tract infection, a character that may be unrecognizable today. In the sketch, they use the original transformer figure. A person who only knows the character Optimus Prime from the new Michael Bay Transformers movies may not really know what robot they are looking at until the characters reference the robot by name. In another sketch Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, and other celebrities notorious for binge drinking turn out to be the aliens from *V*. In the eighties version of *V* the aliens were infected with a virus and needed a drug every twelve hours to suppress the virus. The aliens, working covertly, looked human but had reptile skin underneath. In the *Robot Chicken* sketch, the drinking suppressed the virus, however without prior knowledge to the show *V* the sketch would simple look like the celebrities are randomly reptile aliens after they stopped drinking. *Robot Chicken* is comedy that relies heavily on audience awareness. Especially because toys play the roles in the sketches, being a child that grew up in the eighties really helps inform the comedy of the show. The *Robot Chicken* old folks home comedy tour would be an example of comedy not crossing the time barrier.

The Comedy Language

Comedy is dependent on time and culture as a means of expressing the humor. Language also is dependent on time and culture. With language, one person tries to communicate an idea through the use of words to another person. Comedy functions the same way a comedy writer tries to communicate a “comic idea.” In a sense, the way the comedy is presented is like the “words” of a comedy language. Although the “words” of the comedy language is more like the

structure, the methods used to create comedy. Buster Keaton and other silent film comics, show how comedy can be completely visual, whereas a writer comic like Dave Barry uses actual words. In a sense, comedy is a language that has rules and grammar. Humor is subject to time and cultural understanding. The big difference is that the comedy language is spoken across cultural and time boundaries. A contemporary American may have trouble understanding the language of Elizabethan England or present day Japan but they know when they have seen something funny and can laugh at something from those cultures. Through the “language” of comedy, the idea of what is funny is transferred from writer to audience. Basically comedy works like a language that everyone speaks to one degree or another. My comedy language is fluent from the perspective of a white male born in the last years of the twentieth century America, but I can also “speak” the basics of comedy from Japan, and from Shakespeare. I may not understand everything that makes a Japanese comedy funny, but I’ll get parts from my knowledge of the “comedy language.”

Comedy functioning like language is a method to identify comedy. Edward Finegan, a professor of linguistics, states, “the fundamental function of every language system is to link expression to content – to provide verbal expression for thought and feeling” (6). Comedy is the language system of humor. An audience laughs at the comedy writer’s creation. In order for the writer to expound comic thought, the writer must “speak the comedy language.” The comedy functions like language. Finegan explains that there are three different parts to language, meaning, expression, and context. Comedy has each of these three elements.

Expression

Finegan explains that expression in language involves the words and the intonation of the words. The “words” of comedy is the joke or the intended funny bit. Often “words” of comedy are indeed real words. Take Dave Barry in Dave Barry Does Japan:

When we think of Japanese sports, we immediately think of sumo wrestling, an ancient, tradition-rich sport played by superb athletes who prepare via a strict centuries-old training regimen of eating 275 quarts of Häagen-Dazs butter pecan per day (137).

The joke is “sumo wrestlers eat ice cream as part of their training regimen.” The comedy is apparent for several reasons. Two hundred seventy five quarts of ice cream per day is nearly impossible for human consumption. Sumo wrestlers are athletes, and ice cream is more than likely not on their diet. The subtle joke is the play on culture, an American lack of understanding on how the wrestlers are so big. He begins the expression of humor with setup for a rich cultural note. Ancient traditions combined with the massive consumption of ice cream. Dave Barry expresses his take on Sumo.

Barry’s words are simple and direct. He sets up the premise of an ancient sport with superb athletes, then twists the premise with ice cream. The expression part of the comedy language is the twist; we are given one idea, then twisted to another. A sport practiced for centuries is morphed into men eating ice cream. In a sense, the twist is grammar in the comedy language. Without the twist, the grammar is incorrect. The expression is no longer a part of the comedy. Take a revised version of Barry’s statement, “The Japanese have a very strict centuries-old training regimen for Sumo. There is a

bunch of large men eating ice cream.” The two ideas are no longer connected. The twist combines these two ideas. The large men eating ice cream are training for their sport. Together they comprise the expression of a joke.

The expression is not only the words but the intonation. The intonation of the words is the method used to let us view them as comedy. Comic intonation is the second half of the expression. Without the twist, the comedy is no longer apparent. There are two ideas, but they are not connected. Comedy often connects two ideas together to create comedy. Dave Barry connects ancient sports and ice cream. The way the passage is written gives the reader a cue that the words are funny. By combining two ideas normally separate from each other, he creates a comic intonation.

In Airplane! the comic intonation of McCroskey’s drug addiction is the simplicity of his drug abuse. Under the pressure of the situation, he begins to smoke. Then he turns to alcohol, pills, and heavier substances until he is quite literally on the ceiling. He announces each step with “It looks like I picked the wrong week to quit (insert drug here).” The comic expression is the quickness of each step. The moment is abrupt for such a life-changing chemical. He does not think twice. We watch as he deteriorates. The difference though is that the pains of his choices are not the focus. The expression is matter of fact and does not highlight the pain of his choices. He builds a comic tension that bursts when he jumps out of the window. The audience never sees him fall or hit the ground. He jumps from a window in a drug-induced craze. The expression is more a celebration of his madness than a condemnation.

In Trainspotting, the drug addiction is condemned. The intonation is no longer comic. We experience the real pain. The expression is gritty and shows the consequences of drug abuse.

When the characters experience pain, the sensation created is sorrow rather than celebration. The expression sets up the audience to feel sorrow for the characters. Seeing the consequences of the characters' actions is a large part of the expression. In the comedy world, McCroskey can jump through a window. We never see the character. The consequence is never presented. In Trainspotting, the dead baby is presented to the audience. We know a child has died. We fully realize the consequence. McCroskey is never seen again. He could have landed on a walkway, a little banged up but all right. Comedy characters fall down but there is always potential to stand back up. For example in *Family Guy*, Stewie the family baby beats Brian, the family dog, senseless looking for money that he loaned to Brian earlier in the episode. The scene is graphic and violent, very far from McCroskey jumping out the window where audience sees no blood. Later in the episode, Brian is fine; there is no permanent damage. He also gets a chance to hit Stewie back whenever he chooses. Stewie, in the end, cannot stand the fact that he does not know when exactly Brian will hit him. The consequences of *Family Guy* and Airplane! are expressed comically, without lasting pain. In Trainspotting, Renton will never fully be able to forget the baby unlike Brian who heals and McCroskey who disappears from the conscience of the film with his dramatic exit.

Comic intonation is a way of showing that the passage is comedy. Without comic intonation the words, do not imply comedy. Take Eric Hoffman and Gary Rudoren's Comedy by the Numbers for example. The idea of the book explains that comedy will make you a popular and very likeable person. They provide many different examples on how comedy can enrich the life of the reader. However, if a reader follows the advice Hoffman and Rudoren provide, he or she really will not be well liked by friends and co-workers. For example, in their list of witty retorts when a coworker confronts the reader

about daydreaming on the job they offer, “What’s good about being awake if I have to listen to your stinky pie hole, whore?” (22). Knowing that one of the expressed purposes of the book is to become a more likeable person, calling a co-worker a whore is fairly distant from that goal. The whole book offers many suggestions that if followed to the letter, will do the opposite of the intent behind the book.

The comic intonation is the method that the author presents an idea as comic. Comedy by the Numbers is written like a self-help book. They offer the reader a chance to better themselves. The suggestions, if followed exactly as they described, will actually turn the reader into an asshole. The tone of the book is comedy. The thought of a person really enacting the suggestions from the book is funny. The expression of comedy sets up a way the reader should view the piece. Methods are devised to signal the reader that comedy is being communicated. Hoffman and Rudoren use a sarcastic strategy for providing comedy. They provide the wrong advice disguised as “there is no way this advice can go wrong.” Barry uses an incongruent strategy. He combines two ideas normally separate from each other. Airplane! parodies an addict.

The strategies of comic expression make up the “grammar” of comedy. The words and the method in which they are conveyed or “intonation,” are the structure of comedy. Comedy like language has a grammar. The grammar is part of the expression of the comic language. The rule for executing various jokes is like sentence structure. The sentence in language has various rules so the readers can understand what the author is trying to express. Comedy functions the same way. When an author uses the rule of incongruity, (two ideas, normally separate, brought together and presented as one idea (i.e., training for Sumo with ice cream)), they are simply using a “grammar” rule for

comedy. If the expression of comedy is clear, the grammar (or tone) is understood by the reader to produce comedy, the writer can then use other parts to the humor language, the meaning and context to complete the comic interaction.

Meaning

Meaning in language is the direct object of the expression. In Barry's description of Sumo wrestling, the meaning is the comic idea taken as a whole. Expression is how the comic moment arrives. Meaning is where the expression points. In the incongruent rule of comedy, two ideas normally separate presented as one idea is how to create the idea. The result is the meaning of the comedy. If comedy were on mathematical terms, the meaning and expression would appear on different sides of the equals sign. They are different necessary parts to comedy. Meaning is the punch line, and the expression is the method used to deliver the punch line. Without expression, the punch line (meaning) is no longer comic.

The meaning for McCroskey is the comic "total" of his journey. The expression may be the words he uses to introduce each drug, or the abruptness that he takes them. The meaning is the steps that he takes followed by going out the window. McCroskey's path and end is the expression. When he ends up on the ceiling and out the window the meaning is expressed. Comedy meaning is the journey plus the punch line equaling the joke.

Trainspotting's meaning is the dead baby, the journey of Renton with the consequences of his actions. Dramatic meaning is the journey plus the consequence equaling the character arc. The only difference between comedy meaning and drama meaning is a punch line is used in lieu of a consequence. Both movies postulate that drugs cause lots of problems in a person's life. For McCroskey the consequence is turned into a punch line. For Renton, the consequence is fear and

anguish. Comedy and Drama meaning are similar; the difference is recognizable via the expression and the context. Comic meaning may not be identifiable without knowledge of expression of context. When Stewie beats Brian in *Family Guy* without the context, the before and after the scene, as well as expression, how the before and after scenes are setup, the audience may not be perceive Stewie beating Brian as comic. Because the meaning in comedy is close to the meaning in drama the context and expression serve as guideposts.

The meaning of Barry's sumo wrestling joke is Sumo wrestlers are large so therefore must eat ice cream. The way Dave Barry arrived at the joke was through expression. Combine ancient sport with ice cream. The reader knows the mirth of the suggestion and understands the comic meaning. Later he unpacks the idea of large wrestlers through errant liposuction dealers exporting their waste to Sumo wrestlers. They "lipopump" the excess fat from Los Angeles. The meaning is the result of the joke. When an audience laughs they have grasped the meaning.

In the language of comedy, the meaning is the literal joke and not necessarily why the joke is funny. The question of why the audience laughs is derived from all three parts of the comic language. Delivery, timing, build up are all part of the expression. What the audience laughs at is the meaning. The meaning of language is referent, according to Finegan. Comic meaning is an object. Every slice of humor has a point where the audience laughs. When Barry begins the prose with a description of Sumo wrestlers training, the joke does not come until the ice cream. Once all the pieces of a joke fall into place, the meaning is called into existence. Comedy language always includes a point where the audience is invited by the comic to laugh.

In And Here's The Kicker, Mike Sacks interviews many different comedy writers. During an interview, Al Jaffe, a writer for *Mad* magazine, recounts a story where the editor took him to Haiti.

We went there to pay a visit to the one and only Haitian subscriber to *Mad*. On the entire island, there was only that one subscriber, and he had let his subscription lapse. So when we got there, Bill Gaines took a bunch of writers and illustrators over to this guy's house and knocked on the door. When the guy answered, Bill offered him the gift of a renewal (224).

The comic meaning of Jaffe's story is the staff of *Mad* offering one person in the entire country a gift of renewal. The reason the audience thinks the meaning is funny is because of the context. The audience knows the staff of the magazine trying to create one loyal customer is a ridiculous notion. The context of Jaffe's story is like the humor in the movie Swing Vote. The future presidents need to sway of the opinion of one man to win the election. However the meaning is different than context in that the meaning does not ask why a moment is funny but what is funny. The "what" of Jaffe's story is the staff approaching their one customer in the country. The "what" of Swing Vote is the president's attempt to persuade one man to decide the election.

The meaning and context are similar and important parts of the comic language. The meaning is the point of humor. The expression constructs a meaning. The meaning infers humor via context. While meaning is a fixed identifiable point, the context is subject to conjecture. The context is part of the why the audience laughs. The meaning is strictly what they are laughing at. The meaning is not always identified clearly like in the case of Dave Barry. The meaning is identified as soon as ice cream enters the joke. In the case of Jaffe's story the meaning comes up

in several places. In the beginning, we know there is one subscriber to *Mad* on the entire island, and he let the subscription lapse. We already have the meaning. The staff approaching the customer with the gift of renewal is also part of the meaning. The whole of the story points to a comic interaction. The expression is more subtle. The twist of the joke is not a change in directions at the end but sort of a twist from the beginning. The staff of *Mad* magazine on an island with one subscriber twists reality from the beginning. Dave Barry delves into the humor world by starting serious and spinning the narrative. Jaffe points the narrative from the beginning towards a humorous conclusion. Meaning of Jaffe's story is the combination of the parts. Expression is how he puts all the parts together. Context is why we laugh at those parts.

Context

In the comic language, expression is how the writer constructs the laughter. The meaning is what the audience is laughing at. The context is why people laugh. There are several different theories on why people laugh: relief, superiority, and incongruity. For a simple break down of the three theories read [Stop Me If You've Heard This](#) by Jim Holt. However, I am not focusing on the big question of why people laugh at humor but more on why the humor writer causes the audience to laugh. The context in the model of humor as a language is variable. Why people laugh at the humor depends on the meaning and the expression. Rather than answer why a person may laugh, I want to focus on the context of the joke.

The context of a joke is why the audience is going to laugh. Context can have multiple answers and even some that are not in the original text of the joke. The subtext, the cultural awareness, and even the writer's personal viewpoint are all part of the context. In Barry's joke about Sumo, the context is several layers that are not in the text. The most identifiable context is

that Sumo wrestlers are very large people. On a basic level, eating ice cream is the reason these wrestlers are large is one layer of context. Another layer is that eating ice cream for sports training is not a wise idea. Another layer of the context is saying that eating ice cream is an ancient tradition. Some layers are less identifiable and not in the text. Dave Barry is an American male conjecturing about a Japanese sport through an American lens. He places himself in the role of the blundering American. While the text does not explain the context surrounding the joke, the author creates the context by writing the joke in fixed point of time.

The audience laughs at McCroskey because he is quick to take drugs. He doesn't treat them with the same heaviness that Renton treats drugs. The audience celebrates McCroskey's wacky antics whereas they pity Renton. The audience knows the consequences of drug abuse, and understands the harm an addict can cause to themselves. This knowledge allows the audience to laugh at McCroskey. For Renton, the audience sees the harm the drugs cause. The contextual difference is the emotional response caused from the act of viewing their habits. The audiences know with both films that the characters are wrestling with harmful substances they put into their bodies. The idea that drugs are harmful is presented by laughing at the character (McCroskey) or feeling sorry for them (Renton). Contextually they are very similar, the question is different. For comedy context the question is *Why do we laugh?* For drama, *Why do we cry?*

When an author creates the comic moment, the author crafts the piece in a particular point in time. Whether they have sat down and thought about the each and every point of context surrounding a joke, does not matter because there is context that surrounds the language of humor. Dave Barry is an American. That holds weight in the text because the reader has a certain expectation of how an American thinks and acts. The reader takes delight because of an understanding about the author. Barry does not know why Sumo wrestlers are big. He does know

that people in his country are big because they eat too much. He super imposes the context of his cultural understanding on another culture. The reader knows that Dave Barry made an error, and that Sumo wrestlers do not eat ice cream all day, so the reader laughs.

Whether we laugh because of relief, superiority, or incongruity, does not change the act of laughter. The act of laughter is when the context collides with the expression and the meaning. Without context, there is no humor. The comedy language cannot be spoken without context. Take Barry's text and remove the entire context. The text itself remains unchanged but there is no reason to laugh at the Sumo wrestlers eating ice cream. Context is hard to remove. The reader with a basic knowledge of sports and human biology will have some understanding of the context in Barry's joke. What if the reader had no knowledge that 275 quarts of ice cream would make a human large? Or that eating junk food is not a good way to train for sports?

Let's say Dave Barry's text was the only human writing to survive years in the future. An anthropologist finds the text in an important discovery of early humans. Now let's say the anthropologist does have some basic understanding about human culture from our time and of course can read ancient languages. If she knows that a sport is a game and the athletes are competitors in the game, but does not know the definition of quart or butter pecan, her context for the text is changed. She might conjecture that 275 quarts of butter pecan is a measurement of an energy supplement, like in the same sense that Vitamin intake is measured in milligrams. 275 milligrams of Vitamin C is not really unreasonable to us. 275 units of an energy supplement are not unreasonable either. The context of how much a quart really holds is a key part to understanding the joke. She might conclude Barry's text is a health and sport manual for Sumo. Because of her context surrounding Barry's words, she does not have any indicators that she discovered a comedy text. Laughter requires information and the information is context.

Context is required for comedy to exist although the context, unlike the meaning, and the expression is not always in the comedy text. Jaffe's story is an example of context that is not in the story. The reader knows that the staff that creates *Mad* (the illustrators and writers) does not approach customers about renewal as part of their regular job rotation. Jaffe does not need to explain the hierarchy of publishing to setup up the context needed to understand the joke. He also does not need to compare money earned from one subscriber, and the cost to fly all the writers and illustrators to Haiti. The reader understands the business model is flawed. Losing one subscriber will not break the magazine. The one subscriber does not hold a lot of weight, but they treat that person as if they do; thus we have context to laugh.

Let's go back to our anthropologist from the future. Now let's say Jaffe's story is the one text to survive, however there is a flaw in her translation software. Let's say the word "Haitian" was entered in the database to mean the person that wields supreme executive power over mankind. Now that the context has changed for our future anthropologist, she might think that Jaffe's story was an epic struggle for the magazine. Even if she did know about the hierarchy of magazines, she would find it natural that the writers and illustrators came to this very important event. The weight of the one subscriber has changed, and there is no context to laugh. The very lively hood of the magazine is staked on this one moment. Without context on why our anthropologist should laugh at the story, she does not know to laugh.

Context is a very important part of the three parts of the comic language. Without context the reader will not know to laugh. An author of comedy takes ownership of the context. Barry knows how the statement about Sumo wrestlers will be understood. In fact he even assumes context on part of the audience. He does not explain that Sumo wrestlers are large people. He assumes the readers know this so will therefore understand why ice cream is funny. If the author

believes there is some context necessary to understand the joke, they will use expression, to build part of the context. Jaffe knows that in order for the story about Haiti to be funny, the audience needs to understand that there is only one subscriber in the whole country. He nailed the point home by mentioning the fact twice. He knew the context of one subscriber was important. Without that particular part, the audience will only hear a story of the staff going to Haiti to save a subscriber. By making the subscriber as unimportant as possible, the grand gesture to save the subscriber becomes comical.

Jaffe's story, via the combination of context, meaning, and expression, "speaks the language of comedy." The expression of his story uses the comic "grammar rule" of taking a lot of effort to achieve very little. Meaning is the editor, writers, and illustrators offering the one and only Haitian subscriber a renewal. The context is what the reader knows about this situation that makes it funny. We know about the hierarchy of magazines, the expense of travel to Haiti, even the fact that they are a staff of a comedy magazine helps contextualize the story. Comedy staff are bound to have comedy moments in their life. Through the use of the three parts of language, comedy is language as well. Like other languages, authors can become fluent and learn to "speak the language of comedy."

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Appendix:

Economically Viable

Characters:

Gerald – 40's stout, pot bellied man, looking for a change

Maureen- 40's, stout, Gerald's wife, looking for a change

Timothy – 40's, Gerald's best friend, divorced, ex-wife obsessed

Celeste – 40's, Maureen's best friend, really attractive, plastic surgery house wife,

Beauford – 50's, An out of work actor serial killer, and killer for hire

Ted – 20's, attractive probably still in college

Smash – An 80 year old martial arts instructor

Other Characters:

Bartender – Out of work Shakespearian actor

Police Officer – Went to high school with Timothy

Old Students – A 65+ martial arts class

Old Man – One of the students

Buff Guy – Introduces the class

Phone Operator – The “if you'd like to make a call” voice

Mayor – The mayor

Chick One-Three – Gerald's fantasy women

Bro One-Two – Ted's buddies

Stage:

Variable, gritty, quick change, one piece of furniture can serve multiple functions,

Maureen's and Gerald's Living Room, focus, clean, middle class,

The warehouse, a bar, a place for shady business,

Scene 1: Criminal Activity

Lights up at a bar. It's dark, dingy, and possibly smelly. The PATRONS come from all walks of lower class life. A BARTENDER fills a drink and slides it to GERALD (40's), a stout pot bellied man. TIMOTHY (40's) a thin balding man sits next to him.

Job? TIMOTHY

None. GERALD

Wife? TIMOTHY

Same. You? GERALD

Same. Sans-wife. TIMOTHY

Yep. GERALD

Silence passes for a bit as the men sip their drinks.

Bulls? TIMOTHY

Won. GERALD

Bears? TIMOTHY

Lost. GERALD

Yep. TIMOTHY

The two men sit in silence.

Puppies? TIMOTHY

Cute. GERALD

Kitties? TIMOTHY

Cuter. GERALD

Yep. TIMOTHY

Pause.

Whiskey. GERALD

BARTENDER
O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! That we should, with joy, pleasance, revel, and applause, transform ourselves into beasts!

Poor the drink! GERALD

Forbear to judge, for we are sinners all. BARTENDER

What? GERALD

Some people have no class. I don't know why I bother. BARTENDER

Bartender pours the drink.

Lousy out of work actors. TIMOTHY

I was the Soothsayer at the globe theatre! BARTENDER

The what? TIMOTHY

The lady doth protest too much methinks. BARTENDER

TIMOTHY

We should start our own business.

GERALD

Remember the last one that failed?

They drink some more.

TIMOTHY

What can we do to make money?

GERALD

I don't know...

Pause.

A man, BEAUFORD (50's), walks into the room. Beauford is a hard man, his face has scars, his hair and beard matted, and he wears the outfit of an outlaw.

BEAUFORD

Caribbean Cruise, strait, with an umbrella.

Timothy and Gerald glance at each other. The bartender rolls up.

BARTENDER

O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! That we should, with joy, pleasance, revel, and applause, transform ourselves into beasts!

BEAUFORD

Poor the damn drink.

Bartender pours the drink.

BARTENDER

The lady doth protest too much methinks.

BEAUFORD

What you say?

Beauford calmly takes a drink and stares down the bartender. Gerald and Timothy grab their drinks and hide under the counter. Bartender pulls out a saber.

BARTENDER

Do you bite your thumb at me sir?

Beauford pulls a shotgun from his jacket.

BARTENDER

I'm sorry sir! I...

BEAUFORD

What did you say?

BARTENDER

The lady doth protest too much methinks.

BEAUFORD

Shakespeare! Hamlet? Right?

BARTENDER

That's right!

Beauford laughs. Bartender joins tentatively in.

BEAUFORD

Ain't that something! I never did understand a lick of Shakespeare.

Timothy and Gerald pop their heads out.

BARTENDER

Brilliant writer.

BEAUFORD

If he wrote in English. Get it? Am I right? Am I right?

He punches Timothy on the shoulder.

BEAUFORD (CONT'D)

It's funny because he did write in English but it's hard to understand.

Timothy lets out an uncomfortable chuckle.

BEAUFORD

I don't need your pity laugh.

BARTENDER

He is easy to understand! You only need to deconstruct what he is saying. Hamlet's mom is reacting to the character based on herself. Breaking down the sentence, The lady, the character based on Hamlet's mom, doth protest, solemnly vow, but in a more modern context, too whiney.

BEAUFORD

Are you calling me a whiney bitch?

BARTENDER

No I....

Beauford blows away the bartender.

TIMOTHY

Holy crap!

BEAUFORD

What?

TIMOTHY

That's a nice weapon!

BEAUFORD

I need it for my job.

TIMOTHY

What job?

BEAUFORD

Killing people.

TIMOTHY

Cool!

Beauford slams his drink.

BEAUFORD

I'm in business for myself. It's a little slow with the economy slump and all. I should be off. Places to go, people to kill. Haha! Get it? Places to go, people to kill.

Another uncomfortable laugh from Timothy. Beauford exits.

MAUREEN (40's), tired of life, a perfect match for Gerald enters.

GERALD

We better call the police!

MAUREEN

Damn right you better call the police! Look at this!

GERALD

Not now!

Maureen shoves papers in his face. Timothy is on the phone.

TIMOTHY

Yes, officer! He is dead! Right in front of us!

MAUREEN

They are going to take our house! Your bar buddies can wait!

TIMOTHY

Like dead dead! I don't need to check his pulse!

GERALD

You always do this! I am not avoiding my responsibility!

MAUREEN

Why won't you read the papers?

GERALD

Because there is a dead guy behind the bar!

MAUREEN

It's always excuses with you Gerald. I am really sick of excuses. My mom warned me about marrying you. All vision. No action.

GERALD

I have good ideas!

BARTENDER

Can I have some water?

MAUREEN

Your ideas never pan out!

GERALD

I try.

MAUREEN

"That big contract is around corner, I can feel it."

GERALD

I don't see you thinking of ideas.

MAUREEN

Look at this Gerald, I told you the house was a bad deal.

BARETENDER

Am I dead?

TIMOTHY

No, the bar is on Michigan Avenue. No not the nice part of Michigan. I don't care what you want to buy for your wife.

GERALD

The house is fine. It's everything we ever wanted.

MAUREEN

Exactly! Look.

Gerald looks at the paper.

GERALD

What? Jesus...

MAUREEN

I told you that Mortgage Company was shady.

GERALD

We can't pay this! There must be a mistake.

MAUREEN

He said our loan would increase in three years!

GERALD

By this much?

MAUREEN

Of course by this much! We were only paying the interest.

Gerald pulls the paperwork away.

GERALD

Why would we only pay the interest?

MAUREEN

Because we signed a lousy loan!

GERALD

We got to find this guy.

MAUREEN

The loan office doesn't exist anymore. It's a hair salon now.

GERALD

But it's criminal! People can't get away this!

MAUREEN

Criminal or not. We have to pay this! We will be homeless.

Maureen and Gerald exit. POLICE OFFICER enters.

POLICE OFFICER

Anyone seen a dead body?

TIMOTHY

Right here.

POLICE OFFICER

He's not dead!

BARTENDER

Are you my spirit guide?

POLICE OFFICER

Oh no. no! Just bleeding profusely.

BARTENDER

I tried hard. I really did. Are you here to take me to the next life?

TIMOTHY

Aren't you going to help him?

POLICE OFFICER

Whoa! Buddy. He needs to be in a hospital. I know a little CPR. Did some in high school. John Adams, go cougars! Roar!

TIMOTHY

You went to John Adams?

POLCE OFFICER

Yeah about twenty years ago.

BARTENDER

My spirit guide is John Adams?

TIMOTHY

No shit! I went 22 years ago. Did you know Pauly?

POLICE OFFICER

Polish Prince of Penis Pauly! Ah!

TIMOTHY

Ah! Pauly who can forget Pauly! What a character.

BARTENDER

I know it's going to seem a little weird to you John, but the Polish guy was an experimental phase. I don't think it should affect my afterlife. Times are different John, the world is different.

POLICE OFFICER

What ever happen to Pauly?

TIMOTHY

Died of syphilis.

POLICE OFFICER

Shame.

TIMOTHY

I know.

BARTENDER

Fine John Adams! Whatever! I don't want to be a part of your lousy after life. I am leaving.

Bartender stands up. His intestines fall out. He dies.

POLICE OFFICER

Oh, looks like he's dead now. Now it's in my jurisdiction. Did you get a look at the perp?

TIMOTHY

Yeah, he was mean looking.

POLICE OFFICER

Could you give me a physical description?

TIMOTHY

Scary.

POLICE OFFICER

A better physical description.

TIMOTHY

Very scary.

POLICE OFFICER

You see, this doesn't help. I need details, ways to find the guy.

TIMOTHY

He did order a Caribbean Cruise.

POLICE OFFICER

There you go! You see that's how you investigate a crime. It's all in the details.

TIMOTHY

Interesting.

POLICE OFFICER

Oh yeah anybody can do it.

TIMOTHY

I couldn't.

POLICE OFFICER

Sure you could, So you know he orders Caribbean Cruises, so you go around town find out who else orders them. It's all putting the clues together.

TIMOTHY

I heard Hilary Clinton ordered one once at a white house function.

POLICE OFFICER

Holy Crap!

TIMOTHY

What?

POLICE OFFICER

I think you just solved this case. Hilary Clinton killed this man. This goes all the way to the top! This means my promotion! Who would off thought the Out of Work Actor Killer was Hilary Clinton?

TIMOTHY

Out of Work Actor Killer?

POLICE OFFICER

You didn't hear about him, or as we know now, HER! Am I right? Am I right?

TIMOTHY

I don't watch the news.

POLICE OFFICER

The families of the victims are offering a pretty big reward.

TIMOTHY

Reward?

POLICE OFFICER

For his, or her, wink wink, capture.

TIMOTHY

Really? Great! Well you go tell your superiors about Hilary. Hey, Gerald! Gerald? Gerald!

Scene 2: Maureen's Plan

Maureen sits on the couch. She types on a computer.

CELESTE (40's), fashionable in a stuck in her twenties sort of way, enters the room. She is holding a brochure.

CELESTE

Maureen! Look what I have!

She shoves the flier in Maureen's face.

MAUREEN

A trip to Hawaii? I can't afford a trip to Hawaii!

CELESTE

Think of it! Cocktails! Massages! Sunshine! And all the sexy, wealthy men we could meet.

MAUREEN

I can't. I am going to get a divorce.

CELESTE

A divorce? What better way to spend your single life than a vacation!

MAUREEN

I'm in trouble, Celeste.

CELESTE

Let's go to Paris. All your troubles will go away.

MAUREEN

I don't have the money for Paris.

CELESTE

Maybe we can go someplace cheaper. Like Orlando?

MAUREEN

That's exactly the problem. I have no money because I support my good for nothing husband.

CELESTE

New Orleans?

MAUREEN

He doesn't work.

CELESTE

Cleveland? They really have cleaned up the city. They execute homeless people on site.

MAUREEN

No. Celeste you are not listening. I can't rely on Gerald.

CELESTE

Why not? I rely on my husband all the time. I live a pretty good life. Women have it made. You think I want to sit in an office for eight hours a day with some asshole for a boss, dealing with customers I hate? I rather clean my family's toilets. It's at least shit I know I can deal with.

MAUREEN

You don't get it. I can't make the house payment myself.

CELESTE

Have Gerald get a job.

MAUREEN

He never does. He is always trying to beat the system. One failed money making scheme after another.

CELESTE

So you'll foreclose! Lot's of Americans do it.

MAUREEN

I don't want to find a new place! I want this place. This is my house. I am sick of not being in control. I can't live with Gerald anymore.

CELESTE

Kicking him out won't help you make the payments.

MAUREEN

Keeping him around doesn't help either. He lives like a child. Never accountable for anything.

CELESTE

Not being accountable for anything is freedom!

MAUREEN

Freedom is supporting yourself.

CELESTE

Freedom is a good book and a glass of wine.

MAUREEN

Freedom is creating something.

CELESTE

It's life without responsibilities.

MAUREEN

I want responsibilities!

CELESTE

Then knit a sweater.

MAUREEN

I want a partner not someone I support.

CELESTE

Then take a synchronized swimming class!

MAUREEN

You don't get it! It's painful! Having nothing to do! No goals.

CELESTE

Goals are for people with jobs.

MAUREEN

That's precisely it! He needs a job. I'm his lover not his mother. And lately, I've been feeling like his mother.

CELESTE

Do you still love him?

MAUREEN

I do. But I can't live with him.

CELESTE

Then give him a chance. Maybe this whole house thing is the wakeup call he needs.

Scene 3: Freedom

Gerald sits on the couch. Maureen enters. Awkward silence.

GERALD

I've been thinking.

MAUREEN

Yes?

GERALD

We need a new couch. The indentation I made on this one is getting uncomfortable.

MAUREEN

We can't afford a new couch.

GERALD

I have the perfect idea...

MAUREEN

You need to get a job, Gerald.

GERALD

A job? But the idea...

MAUREEN

A real job. I don't care what.

GERALD

Hear me out.

MAUREEN

I can't support the both of us. Look, I don't care what it is. Get something to show that you are at least trying.

GERALD

Don't worry yourself. I have an idea that will make more than enough for the both of us.

MAUREEN

No, not another crazy scheme to make money. A job, work in one hour photo, flip burgers, I don't care, something to show you care about us.

GERALD

I don't want to work in one hour photo or flip burgers. I am better than that!

MAUREEN

There is nothing wrong with that kind of work.

GERALD

It's not the job. I'd take any job as long as it is interesting. Jobs like that are boring. They are repetitive. I need a challenge.

MAUREEN

It's a pretty crappy time to go looking for your dream job. We are going to be kicked out of our house.

GERALD

You always do this.

MAUREEN

What? Am I selfish for wanting a place to live?

GERALD

No! You don't care about what I want.

MAUREEN

You don't care about us!

GERALD

Oh come on. What's wrong with finding a job that I like and will help pay the bills?

MAUREEN

It's not that simple.

GERALD

You did not even listen to my idea.

MAUREEN

Because your ideas never work! Remember the frozen fish business?

GERALD

I sold a couple.

MAUREEN

To your parents! We can't eat halibut three hundred days of year to make up for unsold product.

GERALD

It's not my fault the fish market was in a slump!

MAUREEN

What about the time tried to sell alligator insurance?

GERALD

Come on! How was I supposed to know that alligators attacked Chicago!

MAUREEN

And the time you got an MFA in playwriting!

GERALD

That would have landed me a job for sure.

MAUREEN

None of your ideas are economically viable.

GERALD

What's that supposed to mean?

MAUREEN

You are a normal person who has to work. If you were a shrewd business man destined for billions of dollars, you should have some sort of success in forty years. Meanwhile in reality, you have a wife that is sick of keeping everything together herself.

GERALD

But I have good ideas and developing photos at the local drugstore still won't make our house payment. If you would listen to them...

MAUREEN

What is your big plan to save us all?

GERALD

I want to be a bounty hunter.

MAUREEN

Bounty hunter? Bounty hunter? Bounty HUNTER?!? Where the hell did this come from? You can't even walk a block without winding yourself much less chase down a criminal!

GERALD

Remember that guy that killed the bartender last week?

MAUREEN

Yeah?

GERALD

He got away. The police haven't found him yet.

MAUREEN

What makes you think that you can?

GERALD

Detective work. Bounty hunters can do more than police, I can rough up a lead that won't talk. They won't report me because I'm not a cop. The police have to worry about lawsuits.

MAUREEN

This is a really bad idea.

GERALD

Trust me Maureen! I can do this.

MAUREEN

Meanwhile whose going to make the house payment? See that's why you need a job.

GERALD

You don't get it. There are rewards on these people. That guy that killed the bartender, he is worth three months worth of house payments. Three months!

MAUREEN

He is a killer Gerald!

GERALD

I know what he looks like. I was right there!

MAUREEN

Look at you! No offense dear but you are not exactly the hero type. You organize your sock drawer.

GERALD

I am sure tons of heroes do that.

MAUREEN

By date?

GERALD

So what if I have grey sock Thursdays!

MAUREEN

That's exactly it. Every part of your life is planned and well rehearsed. Criminals don't really have Bank robbery Thursdays!

GERALD

I can do it.

MAUREEN

I'm skeptical.

GERALD

Any job I find still won't save us from foreclosure. This may.

MAUREEN

But it will show that you care.

GERALD

I do care. That's why I will do it.

MAUREEN

Well... ok.

GERALD

Good. It's settled then. I'll be a bounty hunter.

MAUREEN

I want a divorce.

GERALD

A divorce! Why!

MAUREEN

I am done supporting you.

GERALD

Maureen, don't you care about me?

MAUREEN

I do, as my partner. Not as your mother.

GERALD

But as my partner wouldn't you want me to be happy.

MAUREEN

Of course. I'm not saying you can't go for your dreams. You need something in between. Something to show you care about our partnership.

GERALD

That's not fair! You say partnership but you really want to boss me around.

MAUREEN

No, I say partnership in the sense that it feels like I'm the only one that cares about our life. I feel lonely. Like I am the only one that cares about what happens to us.

GERALD

I care about what happens to us. I show it in a different way. Give me a chance. One more.

MAUREEN

You've had twenty two years of chances.

GERALD

I will do this for us.

MAUREEN

If we still like each other we can go on a few dates.

GERALD

You won't be able to resist me. I will be sexier than ever after I am a bounty hunter.

MAUREEN

Right. Go on deluding yourself. Don't mind me, I'll be back here in reality.

GERALD

A strong fit and tone body.

MAUREEN

A body that considers cheeseburger wrapped in bacon on the food pyramid.

GERALD

I'll be working out.

MAUREEN

The only thing you work out is your jaw muscles.

GERALD

Fine, whatever. I don't want to see you either. You are not so hot yourself.

MAUREEN

Great it's settled then! Let's get a divorce.

GERALD

Fine.

MAUREEN

Fine.

GERALD

Good!

MAUREEN

Good!

GERALD

Be that way.

I am. MAUREEN

Fine. GERALD

Fine. MAUREEN

Agonizing moment.

Do you think I can live here? For now. GERALD

I don't see why not. MAUREEN

I can take the guest room. GERALD

No it's fine. I'll take the guest room. MAUREEN

No really, I'll take it. All my action figures are in the guest room. GERALD

That's true, and the humidifier is already setup in the bedroom. MAUREEN

Agonizing moment. They speak at almost the same time.

I'll go set up my room and cut the grass. GERALD

I need to finish the dishes and make diner. MAUREEN

They exit.

Scene 4: Training

Gerald and Timothy stand in a line of martial art STUDENTS over the age of seventy-five.

Why are we here again? TIMOTHY

GERALD
We need training!

TIMOTHY
Couldn't we have a little, I don't know, intense training?

GERALD
All I can afford was the senior discount.

TIMOTHY
Ask Maureen.

GERALD
No no! I need to do this myself.

TIMOTHY
If you say so.

GERALD
Now let's find the instructor. He goes by the name of Smash. Excuse me, sir. Do you know a Smash?

OLD MAN
Huh?

GERALD
Smash! Do you know a Smash?

OLD MAN
What?

GERALD
Smash!

OLD MAN
What?

A really BUFF GUY that looks like he can tear through a prison cell with his teeth walks out.

GERALD
Nevermind.

OLD MAN
Huh?

TIMOTHY

He said forget about it.

OLD MAN

What?

GERALD

Nevermind!

OLD MAN

OK.

The Buff Guy stares down the class.

BUFF GUY

First rule of Smash Club, is you do not talk about Smash Club. Second rule of Smash Club, is you can talk about it if you want to take advantage of our two for one frequent fighter's discount. Rule three is the first person to receive two ducats and one hundred bonus points receives a quarter game penance, within the three fourths of winning, and must yell 'bam.' Rule Four if this is your first night at smash club you have to smash. Rule Five...

GERALD

I told you it would be worth it.

TIMOTHY

But what about them? Aren't they a little... old for something like this?

OLD MAN

You youth today doesn't understand a thing.

TIMOTHY

Isn't that a little cliché?

OLD MAN

Not when you kick the crap out of the youth and take their women to the box social or whatever it is that kids do these days.

GERALD

That Smash guy seems pretty intense.

OLD MAN

That's not Smash.

GERALD

That's not?

OLD MAN

Nope.

GERALD

Who is he than?

OLD MAN

Him.

Buff Guy moves aside and this OLD FRAIL MAN, SMASH, starts inching up in a walker.

GERALD
(loud)

That's Smash! Ha!

Everyone gasps. The room falls silent. Everyone stares at Gerald.

SMASH

Why don't you come up here Sonny?

Gerald walks to the front.

SMASH

I see you're new here.

Everyone chuckles.

SMASH (CONT'D)

Shut up! That means you all have been breaking rule number one and not taking advantage of the two for one frequent fighter's discount. OK sonny, I fight the fresh meat the first time so put your dukes up.

GERALD

I really don't want to hurt you old man.

SMASH

It looks like we have a chicken pretty boy.

Smash hits him a fly swatter.

GERALD

Ow, that stung!

SMASH

Had enough yet pretty boy?

Smash starts smacking Gerald repeatedly with the swatter. Everyone else gathers around and cheers like it's a really intense fight.

GERALD

Ow. Stop that! Stop that!

SMASH

Had enough? Eh? Come on mother fucker let's see what you're made of!

GERALD

You're really starting to piss me off. Now stop that or I'm going to hit you.

Gerald smacks the flyer swatter out of his hand. Smash let's out a war cry picks up his walker over his head and topples to the ground.

SMASH

Ow. My hip!

GERALD

Are you alright?

Gerald leans in to check and Smash snaps at Gerald. He backs away and Smash starts crawling toward him.

SMASH

Sissy boy can't take it! Gonna go cry to your momma sissy boy?

Smash starts to nibble on Gerald's foot.

GERALD

Stop that!

Gerald walks away and drags Smash with him.

SMASH

Chicken! Chicken!

Gerald pries off Smash with the fly swatter and leaves the room.

SMASH (CONT'D)

Sissy boy can't take it! He is going to go cry to his momma!

Scene 5: The Biz

Timothy and Gerald are sitting behind a desk. A banner that says “Bounty Hunter’s Plus Grand Opening” is displayed behind them.

TIMOTHY

Any minute now.

GERALD

Very soon.

Pause.

TIMOTHY

Almost.

GERALD

Close...

Pause.

TIMOTHY

Right about now...

GERALD

Now...

Longish Pause.

TIMOTHY

No one is coming.

Pause.

TIMOTHY

We should get a secretary.

GERALD

We don’t have money for a secretary.

TIMOTHY

All businesses need a secretary. We need someone to take the calls while we are on the case.

GERALD

We don’t have any cases!

TIMOTHY

My ex-wife could be the secretary.

GERALD

Why would we do that?

TIMOTHY

She used to dress up like a secretary and I dressed up like Bill Gates and then..

GERALD

Whoa! Enough...

TIMOTHY

I miss my wife.

Pause.

GERALD

We need to catch a criminal. A really high profile one. That will get us clients. What about that guy from the bar?

TIMOTHY

He had a pretty large gun.

GERALD

So? We are bounty hunters man!

TIMOTHY

We haven't finished our training.

GERALD

Do you know how much money that guy is worth? They tripled the reward on him.

TIMOTHY

Really? Why?

GERALD

He kills out of work actors. Studios are running out of out of work celebrities for their reality television shows.

TIMOTHY

Some of those shows give me the creeps. It's like an elephant graveyard. The actors go on those shows to spend their final years.

GERALD

You know an actor is one foot in the grave when they appear on reality TV.

TIMOTHY

Like when rock bands play at the Indian Casinos. You know they'll be dead soon when they play at the casino.

GERALD

I'm being serious.

TIMOTHY

So am I. Look if that guy is worth so much we are going to have to do it right.

GERALD

I have an idea.

TIMOTHY

You do?

GERALD

Yeah. Remember how he said he was in the business of killing people?

TIMOTHY

Yeah?

GERALD

Let's pretend we are potential clients. Like we need someone dead. Find out where he works. Scope out his security. Bam! Ambush!

TIMOTHY

How do we get in contact with him?

GERALD

That's the part I haven't figured out yet.

TIMOTHY

That's easy. Look on craigslist.

GERALD

I don't think a professional killer would advertise on craigslist.

TIMOTHY

It says right here, in the serial killer section.

Timothy types at the computer. Gerald reads.

GERALD

“You need someone dead? Contact Beauford! Fast, friendly, efficient killing. I offer discounts if the target is an out of work actor.” I guess you can really find anything on craigslist.

TIMOTHY

What do you think?

GERALD

Send him an email.

TIMOTHY

Ok, “Dear Beauford. I really need to kill Flava Flav.”

GERALD

Is that really believable? We need to earn his trust.

Gerald takes over.

GERALD

Give me this. “I really need to kill a Flava Flav impersonator that lives on my block. He keeps me up at night.” You need to give realistic motivation. Or else he will be on to you.

TIMOTHY

I don’t know Flava Flav might be motivation enough...

The computer dings.

BEAUFORD (V.O.)

Meet me at this address in the map link. 10:30 pm. Could you get me a coffee? Make sure it’s a skinny, they always seem to forget the sugar free part of skinny.

GERALD

Give me fist love!

TIMOTHY

Gross!

GERALD

I mean like tap the fists together.

TIMOTHY

Oh sorry... Fist love with my ex-wife meant something different.

GERALD

Gross.

TIMOTHY

I miss my wife.

Scene 6: The Warehouse

Timothy and Gerald enter a large empty warehouse with coffee.

TIMOTHY

Are you sure this is the place?

GERALD

That's where the map link directed us too.

TIMOTHY

I thought there would have been you know, a lobby, with a secretary.

GERALD

What's with you and secretaries?

TIMOTHY

My ex wife pretended like she was the secretary of the state. And I dressed up like the president.

GERALD

Gross.

TIMOTHY

I miss my wife.

Noise.

GERALD

Sush! Someone coming... Hello?

Celeste walks out.

CELESTE

Gerald?

GERALD

Celeste? What are you doing here?

CELESTE

Getting prom make over tickets! Wait, what are you doing here?

GERALD

Um... I am... meeting another woman.

CELESTE

A skinny latte. Maureen's favorite. For another woman!

GERALD

Well yeah. We are divorced!

CELESTE

You could have at least given her some time.

Celeste exits.

TIMOTHY

What did you tell her that for?

GERALD

Why would anyone be in this warehouse except to hide something from someone else?

TIMOTHY

But you are not here to sleep with a woman.

GERALD

I know that but if Celeste knew I was here to see a contract killer, she'd probably think I was here to put a hit out on my ex wife!

TIMOTHY

She didn't know why you were here.

GERALD

Prom make over tickets? Come on! The only reason she would be here is to see the exact same man we are here to see!

BEAUFORD

Exactly.

Beauford and Timothy are startled.

GERALD

How long have you been there?

BEAUFORD

The whole time.

GERALD

Right well um. Is this where you meet all your clients?

BEAUFORD

No! Do you think I would be stupid enough to leave a craigslist ad that leads bounty hunters strait to me?

TIMOTHY

How do you know we aren't bounty hunters?

GERALD

Timothy!

BEAUFORD

Too stupid. That's why I have to get the latte. Gives me a chance to spy on you. Make sure you are not bounty hunters. Plus I like them. So it's like a double bonus. Now on to business.

GERALD

So there is this Flava Flav impersonator that lives on my block.

BEAUFORD

Why don't you cut the crap! I know there ain't no Flava Flav impersonator.

TIMOTHY

Crap!

BEAUFORD

You are just trying to get my out of work actor discount. Now, I ain't cheap. But you best have the money when I have my target in sight.

GERALD

We'll have the money.

BEAUFORD

Good. Now don't you go contacting me. I'll get a hold of you when I'm good and ready.

Beauford disappears.

TIMOTHY

How did he do that?

Gerald looks around.

GERALD

I don't know.

TIMOTHY

Do you think that was wise?

GERALD

What?

TIMOTHY

Oh um, I don't know. Putting a hit out on someone.

GERALD

Relax. We haven't yet. Did he ask who it was?

TIMOTHY

Not really.

GERALD

Because he wants to see the money up front or else he doesn't want to know. It protects himself. We have to build his trust.

TIMOTHY

You are going to put hit out on someone to do that!

GERALD

No, no we show him money, and lay trap for him.

TIMOTHY

And how are we going to do that?

GERALD

I don't know. I'm working on it.

Scene 7: Prom Maker Over

Celeste and Maureen sit on the couch.

CELESTE

I have the solution to all your troubles!

MAUREEN

For the last time, I am not going anywhere. At least not now.

CELESTE

Oh no this is better then travel!

She hands Maureen a ticket.

MAUREEN

I can't afford a makeover!

CELESTE

It will be my treat!

MAUREEN

It says it's for an ultimate prom make over! I'm a little past the age for prom.

CELESTE

No one is past the age of looking good! We'll get a makeover. Go to the clubs.

MAUREEN

I'm not in the mood! I'd rather sit at home. I have plenty of um catalogs to look through.

CELESTE

You are single now, and the best part of being single is young sexy men!

MAUREEN

I don't want to start this all over again.

CELESTE

I'm not asking you to start over again, just go out and have a bunch of non commitment sex.

MAUREEN

I wouldn't feel right about it.

CELESTE

And you don't think that Gerald isn't having sex right now?

MAUREEN

Gerald? Please! He can't convince starving children to take frozen fish!

CELESTE

I saw him with a latte last night.

MAUREEN

Gerald? A latte. He hates coffee!

CELESTE

I don't want to jump to any conclusions but he said it not me.

MAUREEN

I can't believe it!

CELESTE

Well believe it!

MAUREEN

We are going out tonight. Let's get our make overs.

Scene 8: Eye of the Beholder

Celeste and Maureen walk into an Ultimate Prom Make Over shop.

Beauford walks out.

BEAUFORD

Evening ladies.

MAUREEN

This guy is going to give us our Make Overs?

BEAUFORD

Wish I could, but I can't.

CELESTE

It's ok dear, I know you are the best.

MAUREEN

I'm sorry if I am not seeing it.

BEAUFORD

I used to be the best in my field.

CELESTE

He did mine for prom.

BEAUFORD

But I lost my Make Over license from the beauty academy.

MAUREEN

That's sad.

BEAUFORD

What's worse is that it wasn't my fault. It was an out of work actor. They claim her make over caused her accident. I know she was drinking because of the audition she failed. Can't prove it though.

MAUREEN

Didn't the cops do a blood test? At the accident?

BEAUFORD

They couldn't. All that was left was her pristine hair. So the cops concluded that the hair must have slipped blocking her vision. My hair never slips! Never!

CELESTE

It's ok Beauford. He gets a little emotional.

BEAUFORD

You try sweeping up the hair that other people cut!

CELESTE

There, there. Hey Beauford, so I have these tickets for free make overs.

BEAUFORD

Right well let me, pencil you in for Jo-Anne. She'll take care of you.

CELESTE

Take your time.

BEAUFORD

No no, you came here for a Make Over. And that's one you'll get. Hey Jo-Anne you got clients!

Scene 9: The Trails

Smash enters with Gerald and Timothy.

SMASH

Back for more sissy boy?

GERALD

We need more training.

SMASH

What makes you think your pansy ass can take the heat!

GERALD

We need too. We need to take out the Out of Work Actor Killer.

SMASH

Well shit why didn't you say so?

GERALD

Can you help us?

SMASH

That jerk killed Bob Barker!

TIMOTHY

I thought Bob Barker...

GERALD

Yeah, the show is not same with Drew Carry.

SMASH

I know, I need my role model of a senior citizen with all sorts of young women back.

Gerald and Timothy share a glance.

SMASH (CONT'D)

Can't an old man be lecherous anymore? What's this world coming too? Well anyways, I'll train you. If you can pass three trials, you can catch anyone. The first is the trail of speed. Now catch me if you can.

Smash starts running to one end of the stage. He takes a comically long time to make a little distance.

Gerald and Timothy look at each other.

Scene 10: Ted

Club lights and music. Maureen's Make Over isn't really the best.

MAUREEN

Are you sure about this?

CELESTE

It's not as good as Beauford would have done. But you look good! Trust me.

MAUREEN

No I mean this! Club.

CELESTE

Trust me. The men here... don't care about anything but sex.

TED (20's) a really attractive young man enters.

TED

Hey ladies. You are like hot and stuff.

CELESTE

Hey. I'm Celeste.

TED

Cool. Hey chick. What's her name?

CELESTE

This is Maureen.

MAUREEN

Hey.

TED

Yeah bro.

CELESTE

Great. Sounds like you two are hitting it off! I'll be right back.

Celeste exits.

TED

So, do you like stuff?

MAUREEN

Is that true?

TED

What?

MAUREEN

That all the men here are looking to get laid.

TED

Yeah, bro. I made a photo copy of my penis. Want to see it?

MAUREEN

Later. Would you go on a date with me Saturday night?

TED

Me? What?

MAUREEN

If I am coming on to strong...

TED

Um...

MAUREEN

I want to have non commitment sex with you.

TED

I'll pick you up at eight.

MAUREEN

I will see you then.

TED

So like not commitment sex means like I don't have to take you to diner?

MAUREEN

Of course you have to take me to diner.

TED

But non commitment means like I don't have to work at it. You'll like have sex. Like if I were a grocery boy and you tell me to put the various grocery items away in your...

MAUREEN

First off, that never happens in real life.

TED

It happens in movies all the time!

MAUREEN

That's not real life.

TED

Dude! So Matt Damon really didn't lose his memory only to find out he was a spy?

MAUREEN

Movie.

TED

Whoa!

MAUREEN

Look, you aren't the brightest one, but neither was Gerald, pick me up at eight. I'll teach you a thing or two about women.

TED

Man I thought Matt Damon could have been a spy. You never know, we see him in a bunch a bad movies. Then BAM! He does good movies! He starts to get his memory back! Spy!

MAUREEN

Right, eight! Let's not get too excited. You need to ease women into it.

Scene 11: The Second Trail

Smash slowly traverses the stage.

Timothy and Gerald enter winded.

GERALD

How does he do that?

TIMOTHY

I don't think I can make it.

GERALD

You have to! This is our chance!

They run a few steps. Timothy is winded. Smash cackles

TIMOTHY

Do you think we should have worked out a little before committing to this?

GERALD

We'll keep in shape on the job! Come on...

They run a few steps. Timothy stumbles and falls.

TIMOTHY

Leave me!

GERALD

Leave no Marine behind!

TIMOTHY

We aren't Marines.

GERALD

Goonies never say die!

TIMOTHY

We aren't Goonies!

GERALD

Avon Calling!

TIMOTHY

That doesn't make sense.

GERALD

It doesn't have to. We are bounty hunters.

Smash cackles.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Come on! He is getting away!

Gerald runs a few steps. He catches up to Smash.

SMASH

You have past the first trial. The second is endurance

Smash lifts his walker slowly.

Two MEN bring out walkers for them. Gerald and Timothy lift.

GERALD

Christ! This is harder than it looks.

SMASH

You want to quit now, sissy.

TIMOTHY

You can't quit now! Remember what Maureen did to you last night?

GERALD

How can I forget?

Lights fade and wobble. They come back up.

Scene 12: Make Love Not War

Gerald is in his living room. He no longer has a walker. He pulls out a cardboard cutout of a muscled man with no head. He stands behind the cutout.

GERALD

Yeah, look at you. Who is the sexy one now? Look at all those muscles. "Oh no! My house has been invaded by criminals." "Don't worry miss, me and my muscles will save you."

Maureen comes in through the front door. She looks quizzically at Gerald.

GERALD (CONT'D)

"I'm a mean, tough, fighting machine. I've killed a man for each muscle." Including all those facial ones that no one ever knows the names of. But as you can tell my chin is finely chiseled...

MAUREEN

You're pathetic.

GERALD

You have to strike fear in the bounty Maureen.

MAUREEN

That's cardboard! That would strike fear in a tree.

Ted runs in.

TED

Are we going to have non bonding sexual activity now? Hey.... Whose that?

GERALD

I'm her husband.

TED

(fear)

Oh my god! Please don't hurt me sir! I wasn't going to have sex with your wife! Please! I haven't even finished college yet! Please I'm so sorry.

GERALD

Ex-husband.

Ted regains composure.

TED

Whatever. I can take him. I don't care how many muscles he has. You want me to throw this trouble maker out, babe?

Ted takes an aggressive stance towards Gerald.

TED (CONT'D)

Yeah I thought so! Whatever. Let's get out of here babe. This loser is stinking up the room.

MAUREEN

Shut up! I only wanted to have sex with you. That doesn't mean you can talk. Go to my room.

Ted walks to a different part of the stage.

GERALD

You are going to have sex with him! While I'm still in the house!

MAUREEN

Yes Gerald. That's what a divorce means.

TED

(loud)
Ahhh... Sweet! You have a Robo Action Man figure!

MAUREEN
That's Gerald's room.

TED
Oh... um... Can we have sex there anyways?

MAUREEN
I don't know... Gerald?

GERALD
Gee... Let me think about it... Of course not! He is young enough to be your son!

TED
Another time little Robo-buddy. Another time.

MAUREEN
You don't have to get all snippy. I'm mean we are divorced!

GERALD
I'm not fucking the first high school woman I meet!

MAUREEN
He is from college. I'm not stopping you from having sex with anybody.

GERALD
Fine, maybe I will.

MAUREEN
Good! You do that then.

Gerald dials a number.

GERALD
Maria! Hey! What's up with you? Good... good! Everything is great here. I was wondering if you'd like to come over and have sex later? Great.... You'll do what to me? Oh that's dirty... with your tongue...

The phone emits a beeping noise.

PHONE OPERATOR
If you'd like to make a call please hang up and try your number again.

MAUREEN

Really? You're pathetic.

GERALD

No you're pathetic!

MAUREEN

That's not really an insult. You repeated what I said.

GERALD

You're a stupid... head... person!

MAUREEN

I don't have time for this. If you'll excuse me! I have some sex to make. Are you ready back there?

TED

(singing)

Robo Action Man! Defender of the city people. Robo Action Man! With his missile launchers of justice.

MAUREEN

Why do I always fall for the same man?

Maureen walks towards Ted.

GERALD

I'll be rolling in chicks after I'm a successful Bounty Hunter!

CUTAWAY: The MAYOR hands Gerald a giant golden key.

MAYOR

Thank you for arresting all the criminals in the city.

All these CHICKS surround Gerald.

CHICK ONE

Oh, Gerald.

CHICK TWO

You're a big strong man.

CHICK THREE

Oh no I spilled cooking oil all over myself. What shall we do?

GERALD

I know just the thing.

Gerald rolls on the ground while giggling.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Come on! Come on! Join me! It's fun.

The chicks roll on the ground like Gerald. The mayor watches them for a moment then rolls.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Whoa! Whoa! Sorry buddy! No guys, I don't have anything against your lifestyle. I don't swing that way.

END.

Gerald is rolling on the floor by himself.

GERALD

Yeah, hot chicks! Wohoo, you know who is the man.

Maureen walks back and stares at him for a second.

MAUREEN

You're not fooling anyone.

GERALD

Shut up!

Gerald sits down and tries to read a folder.

Maureen goes to Ted's side of the stage.

TED

I was thinking maybe we could pretend like I am Robo Action Man and you are-

MAUREEN

Shut up and make sex noises.

TED

Can't we just really...

MAUREEN

I am too flustered right now. Make the noise.

Maureen and Ted make noises.

Gerald has several failed attempts to block out the noise.

Eventually Gerald gets angry and storms off.

MAUREEN

Gerald! You forgot your bounty hunter folder.

Ted enters. Maureen opens the folder.

TED

So are we going to have sex yet or not? You are becoming high maintenance

MAUREEN

Shut up!

Maureen stares at the folder.

TED

What?

MAUREEN

Does this guy look familiar to you?

TED

Um... no!

MAUREEN

Of course! It's the guy from the Makeover place! The hair sweeper is the guy Gerald's looking for!

TED

So I get make overs! What's wrong with it! Guys need to look pretty too!

Maureen dials her phone.

MAUREEN

I have to tell Gerald!

TED

You aren't mad?

MAUREEN

Why would I be mad at you?

TED

My bros would be pretty mad at me. They would think I'm gay or something. I do need to maintain a homophobic image.

MAUREEN

Sounds like you need new friends.

TED

You see that's the sort of smothering behavior I am attempting to avoid.

MAUREEN

Look it's non commitment sex. I don't care who you hang out with.

TED

You are giving me mixed signals.

MAUREEN

I can't have sex with you right now.

TED

There you go again.

MAUREEN

Maybe later, I need to get some information to my ex.

TED

I don't understand women, bro!

Scene 13: The Third Trail

Gerald and Timothy look like they have been holding the walkers for weeks with no rest or shower. Timothy collapses. Smash cackles.

SMASH

I can do this all day!

TIMOTHY

Vision fading...

GERALD

Stay with me! Stay with me damn it!

TIMOTHY

Gerald... Gerald... Listen to me.

GERALD

No! You are not gone man! You are not gone.

TIMOTHY

LISTEN TO ME... I want you...

GERALD

Stay with... Keep your eyes open.

TIMOTHY

I want you...

GERALD

Eyes open! Stay with me!

TIMOTHY

I want you to tell my ex-wife that I love her.

GERALD

But she cheated on you with forty five other men and a Brazilian football team.

TIMOTHY

That's not important. Only love is important.

Timothy goes limp.

GERALD

But...Wake up man! Wake up! Noooooooooooooooooooooo!

Smash stops and turns to Gerald.

SMASH

You have passed the second trail. The third is the true test of a warrior. Me verses you. Go on!
You get the first shot.

GERALD

I am really going to pound you!

SMASH

Is that really the best you can come up with?

GERALD

I haven't taken the Bounty Hunter catch phrases class yet.

SMASH

Oh! You really should.

GERALD

I know. I keep meaning to.

SMASH

No really. I mean a well placed catch phrase is pretty intimidating.

GERALD

Really?

SMASH

Oh yeah. One time this bounty hunter almost caught the Out of Work Actor Killer with one good catch phrase.

GERALD

Wow! What happened to him?

SMASH

A human body takes a few minutes to be completely devoured in my Parana tank.

GERALD

Gross!

SMASH

See! You flinched! I took super villain intimidation lines.

GERALD

That's good!

SMASH

Scary huh?

GERALD

I know. I could almost feel them biting me!

SMASH

I know! It's pretty cool stuff.

Pause. They step back into their attack stances.

GERALD

You are going to so get it! You mean... guy... person!

SMASH

My flesh eating pigs are hungry. And look whose over for dinner.

GERALD

Stop that! Ok so seriously why are you being an asshole? Couldn't you be a sweet old man who teaches me the ways of the bounty hunter?

SMASH

My dad was killed by a bounty hunter.

GERALD

Seriously.

SMASH

I am serious.

GERALD

Oh my god, I'm sorry. I didn't know.

SMASH

Gotcha! Haha! You're a dick!

GERALD

Stop it! Really! Why do you have to be a jerk?

SMASH

Well if you must know, I like being an asshole.

GERALD

Really? Really?

SMASH

Oh yeah! It's OCD for asshole, I call customer service for a cell phone company and take thirty minutes to learn how dial a phone number, the only time I eat at restaurants is about five minutes before they close. My favorite is causing a mess in a supermarket then hitting on the young lady that comes to clean it up with unwitty and unoriginal remarks.

GERALD

That's low.

SMASH

OCD for asshole, and I love it.

GERALD

Could you stop?

SMASH

Not unless you want to fight to the death.

GERALD

Yeah, and I'm going to really whomp on you.

Smash lifts his walker and charges very slowly.

Gerald cries in rage. Smash continues to charge. This takes awhile.

Finally Smash is almost at Gerald.

Gerald hits Smash once and he goes down.

SMASH

I think I broke my hip.

GERALD

That's it?

SMASH

Yep, you passed.

GERALD

Really? Timothy.

TIMOTHY

What?

GERALD

I guess we passed.

TIMOTHY

We did?

GERALD

Yep.

TIMOTHY

We should be celebrating! What's going on?

Gerald exits.

TIMOTHY

It's good that we never told him the trials were kind of weak?

SMASH

You couldn't pass it pansy boy!

TIMOTHY

Yeah, but I could now that I know how.

SMASH

I know. It was just build his confidence up. That's all he really needs just a little confidence.

TIMOTHY

Do you have any training for getting your ex wife to wear the bee suit one last time?

SMASH

Um... no... Could you help me up?

Scene 14: Bounty Hunting

Gerald and Timothy enter the warehouse again. They have a suitcase.

TIMOTHY

I don't know if I feel right about this.

GERALD

It will be fine. Watch. Lights!

Lights go out for a moment then go back on.

GERALD (CONT'D)

Then he opens the suitcase and we got him.

TIMOTHY

It's my life savings.

GERALD

You'll get it back. After the job is finished...

BEAUFORD

I got something you'll want to see.

GERALD

Would you stop sneaking in like that!

BEAUFORD

Easy, it's my style man. I took some surveillance of the person you want me to kill.

GERALD

We haven't told you who it is yet.

BEAUFORD

Flava Flav impersonator? Really? I ain't stupid. I know why you are really here. Now look at this video I recorded while scoping out the target.

Beauford hits a button on a remote, Maureen and Ted enter.

Ted is wearing a Robo-Action man costume. Maureen is dressed in a suit. She has an alien on her.

TED

Robo Action Man to the rescue!

MAUREEN

Robo Action man! Please save me!

GERALD

That's my Robo Action man costume!

BEAUFORD

It gets better.

Beauford fast forwards.

MAUREEN

The alien possessed my suit and is constricting my breathing.

TED

Don't worry dear! My clothes incinerating ray gun will take care of that alien.

GERALD

That's my clothes incinerating ray gun!

Beauford fast forwards. Maureen removes the suit. She has a comic Book heroine costume underneath.

MAUREEN

Oh Robo Action man! The alien will destroy the city.

TED

There is only one thing we can do. Aliens hate orgasms!

Ted pulls out a bottle of pills and takes two.

GERALD

Those are my Robo Action Man Orgasmarator pills!

BEAUFORD

It's OK man, lots of men suffer from erectile dysfunction.

GERALD

Those are my Robo Action Man Orgasmarator pills and nothing more. Shut up!

BEAUFORD

It's cool man! We cool!

GERALD

This ends... tonight!

Gerald storms out.

BEAUFORD

Hey man! That's my job!

TIMOTHY

Um... Well this is awkward.

BEAUFORD

Tell me about it! At least I get paid.

TIMOTHY

Wait. Don't open the suitcase!

BEAUFORD

Why?

TIMOTHY

Um it's rigged with crazy purple knock out gas.

BEAUFORD

Why would you go and do a thing like that?

TIMOTHY

Um to make sure no one gets the money but you.

BEAUFORD

Good thinking. How do you open it?

TIMOTHY

There is a trick you. Disarm the gas here... Lights!

The lights go out. There is a hiss and a thud.

Lights on. Beauford is unconscious.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

I wasn't expecting that.

Lights go out. Hiss. Thud.

Lights on. Timothy is out. Beauford stands up.

BEAUFORD

Hah.

Scene 15: Gerald Get's Even

Maureen sits on the couch. Gerald walks in with a HOOKER.

HOOKER

Two people is gonna cost ya double.

GERALD

Shhh... Remember what we talked about?

MAUREEN

Who is that?

GERALD

Maureen this is Chardonnay. She is a medical student.

HOOKER

I like study doctors and shit.

MAUREEN

She does not look like much of a medical student.

GERALD

She happens to be the best. She was the best in her high school. They gave her a full scholarship.

MAUREEN

Right.

HOOKER

I remember taking a test in high school once. I didn't get past the first question. It asked me what a NA-ME was. I don't know what a na-me is.

GERALD

That's name, dear. Now that I have a smart and well paid girlfriend, I guess I won't need a job.

MAUREEN

I guess you don't need the information I was going to give you.

Maureen's holds out a file.

GERALD

Nope. I guess not. Come Chardonnay. Let's play Robo Action man in my room.

HOOKER

The test also said something about a TIT-LE. How am I supposed to know what tit-le is!

GERALD

That's title dear.

HOOKER

So that notice I got on my door last week? The one that says, E-VIC-TION NOT-ICE PLE-ASE VA-CATE THE PRE-MISSES I-MED-IATE-LY, that really means?

GERALD

I am afraid it does.

HOOKER

Sweet! I won the ten million prize! I never have to turn tricks again!

Hooker skips away.

MAUREEN

Pathetic.

GERALD

It's good money! And if she makes the choice then who am I to judge.

MAUREEN

Not her. You!

GERALD

That's not fair.

MAUREEN

You know what irritates me more?

GERALD

What?

MAUREEN

Not that you would try to make me jealous. That shows me there is some part of you that still cares. It's that you will put all this time and energy into some scheme that's right for you and you don't give a damn about what's right for us!

GERALD

That's why I'm doing this. For us.

MAUREEN

Fuck off Gerald.

GERALD

Maureen!

MAUREEN

I said fuck off Gerald.

Gerald exits.

MAUREEN

Gerald.

GERALD

What?

MAUREEN

Don't forget your file.

GERALD

I thought you didn't want me...

MAUREEN

Take the file.

Gerald takes the file and exits.

Ted and a bunch of BROS enter, drinking.

They start trashing the place.

MAUREEN

What the hell are you doing?

TED

Chill out woman! I am having bro time.

MAUREEN

Not in my house!

TED

See what I mean bro! She is smothering me!

BRO ONE

Lay off chick! If he needs bro time he should get bro time!

MAUREEN

You can have all the bro time you want! I am not your fucking girlfriend! What part of no commitment sex do you understand?

BRO TWO

I thought you said she was going to leave your all her stuff when she died.

BRO ONE

Yeah bro, why else would you fuck an old chick?

MAUREEN

Get the hell out of my house! Out! Out! Out!

Maureen shoves them out the door.

TED

Hey next time we have sex can my Bro's join?

MAUREEN

There isn't a next time now leave before I chop off your balls.

BRO TWO (O.S.)

I thought you said she was easy, bro!

Maureen cleans the house. She breaks a vase.

Maureen sits down on her couch. She starts to cry.

Beauford enters the room.

MAUREEN

I told you to get the fuck out.

BEAUFORD

I'm sorry I can't. I'm here to kidnap you.

MAUREEN

Gerald and I bought that vase. In Mexico. So are you here for some sort of sick revenge plot against my husband?

BEAUFORD

Not really.

He hands her a business card.

MAUREEN

Killing for fun and profit? Why does your business card have hearts all over it?

BEAUFORD

Ultimate Dream Prom Make-Over business. Now I'm into discriminatory killing.

MAUREEN

How are the benefits?

BEAUFORD

Good but I miss the Prom Make-Over days.

MAUREEN

Me too.

BEAUFORD

You did Make-Overs for prom too?

MAUREEN

No but I got one! Gerald took me to the prom. And he paid top dollar for a Prom Make-Over.

BEAUFORD

Sounds lovely.

MAUREEN

It was! I made a terrible mistake.

BEAUFORD

Actually not having your make-over for prom is a terrible mistake. Imagine. Prom Night. The lights, dim, low. They step to the podium. They make the announcement. You are the Prom Queen. But look at that! Bed Head! You forgot to style your hair! People jeer. Throw meat at you. Unable to control your psychic rage you incinerate the entire high school.

MAUREEN

You described the plot to Carry.

BEAUFORD

You never know. It could happen. Better get the Make-Over to be sure.

MAUREEN

The Make-Over wasn't the mistake. The mistake was leaving Gerald. Sure having sex with young hot college guys sounds sexy. But I can't stop thinking about him.

BEAUFORD

It's never too late.

MAUREEN

It is though! We already...

BEAUFORD

You need to tell him how you feel.

MAUREEN

That's right! We need to settle this between us! I know Gerald isn't perfect. But I love him.

BEAUFORD

I guess sometimes you figure out what is important in life a little too late. Ironic isn't it?

MAUREEN

That really is ironic.

Scene 16: Economically Viable

Gerald sits at his desk. He stares at the folder.

GERALD

It says here that Beauford's used to give make-over's in the Miss Texas pageant.

Timothy enters pissed. He throws water on Gerald.

TIMOTHY

That's for leaving me.

GERALD

You are not hurt.

TIMOTHY

I skinned my knee after I was left unconscious in the presence of a trained killer!

GERALD
Skinned your knee?

TIMOTHY
It could get infected!

GERALD
I think we have bigger things to worry about.

TIMOTHY
It's a dirty warehouse, there could be diseases on everything. I remember when...

GERALD
Your ex-wife dressed up like a disease.

TIMOTHY
Gross! Why would I do a thing like that? A single celled organism maybe but a disease!

GERALD
You need to stop worrying about your ex wife.

TIMOTHY
I love her.

GERALD
I love mine too but that doesn't mean I am any closer to getting back together.

TIMOTHY
Listen to yourself. What have you done lately to prove that you love her?

GERALD
This! This whole business is for her!

TIMOTHY
Really? I'm doing it so I can stop thinking about her.

GERALD
I doing this so I can provide...

TIMOTHY
I've heard it all before. You are doing this for you. She needs know what you are doing for her.

GERALD
I... um...

TIMOTHY

You see that's it, nothing man! I think about my ex all the time but at least I admit I was a shitty boyfriend. I did everything for myself. Nothing for her. Women need to know you want them, that you are trying for them. They don't care what. It's the act that counts.

GERALD

You're right. I'm gonna find job.

TIMOTHY

See that's the spirit.

GERALD

That doesn't mean I have to give up bounty hunting but at least I can help Maureen out a little.

TIMOTHY

There you go!

GERALD

Then once she sees that I really do care about her, I'll find some young hot girlfriend.

TIMOTHY

See that's the... huh?

GERALD

She cheated on me.

TIMOTHY

Why bother getting a job and all that?

GERALD

To show her exactly what she is missing.

TIMOTHY

That's the stupidest plan I've heard in my life!

GERALD

I don't see you coming up with any plans.

TIMOTHY

Because I don't sit here scheming ways to get back at my ex wife.

GERALD

Seeing another guy, cool whatever. We are divorced. But playing Robo Action man! That was our game!

TIMOTHY

And now it's their game who cares?

GERALD

I do.

TIMOTHY

Why?

GERALD

Because I still love her.

TIMOTHY

Oh... shitty.

GERALD

It drives me crazy to think of her with another guy.

TIMOTHY

Why don't you talk to her?

GERALD

She thinks I'm a useless. And you know what? She's right.

TIMOTHY

You're not useless man.

GERALD

Then why can't I find a job.

TIMOTHY

You got other talents man.

GERALD

You see that's exactly it. That's what I keep telling myself. If it was true then you think in twenty two years of marriage one of my ideas would have worked.

TIMOTHY

Your fish business did well.

GERALD

I sold them to my parents.

TIMOTHY

And, me, your cousins, your grandparents, and the crazy guy down the street. If I remember correctly you sold about six hundred of them.

GERALD

But I still had four hundred left.

TIMOTHY

But you only needed to sell fifty percent to turn a profit. By that standard you did alright.

GERALD

I did buy Maureen an Ultimate Prom Make Over that year.

TIMOTHY

See you are not a failure. You didn't get rich, but you did something you love and made buck.

GERALD

I guess you are right.

Celeste bursts into the room.

CELESTE

Gerald!

GERALD

Celeste? Where have you been?

CELESTE

I bought a bagel this morning. It turns out that the bagel was the favorite flavor of the exact clone of Tony Danza, who happened to be walking down the street. He asked me out. Flattered. I accepted. Turns out it was a trick by a group of terrorists to collect hostages and bagels. The police rushed the bagel store. Because the terrorists happen to be the entire New York Knicks, the police challenged them to a game of basketball. Having built the trust of the terrorists. I offered to be their coach and I took the rag-tag team of under dogs to victory. The New Yorkers got control of the world's bagel supply. Somebody needed to stop them! Since I was the woman on the inside. I...

Time passes.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Forty Five suede boots. I couldn't believe it! Then the dog, the one that can shapeshift-

Times passes.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Dodging three hundred dinosaurs. I knew we had to fix time. We got to the copter-

Time passes.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Thirty one flavors... I can't believe it. Only thirty one flavors! So we ordered the ice cream anyway. Three giant bugs-

Time passes.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

And that's the plot so far! Anyway, the bagel shop happens to really make the best bagels in the city and I thought the paper might want to do a story on it. You know a little bagel shop human interest piece. I always like those. I find really neat places to eat from those type of stories. Anyway so it turns out the message through space time was this one that Maureen sent.

GERALD

Your cell phone plan is offering two for one ring tone special?

CELESTE

Sorry, wrong text.

GERALD

Maureen's in danger!

TIMOTHY

Danger! How?

CELESTE

Apparently someone put a hit out on her.

GERALD

Oh shit.

CELESTE

What?

GERALD

I think I might have accidentally put a hit out her.

TIMOTHY

Sorry! When I woke up, the money was gone.

GERALD

Timothy. Get the big guns.

TIMOTHY

We don't have big guns.

GERALD

Then get the medium size guns.

TIMOTHY

We don't have any guns really.

GERALD

What do we have?

TIMOTHY

A leatherman.

GERALD

That will have to do.

Scene 17: Till Death Do Us Part

Gerald walks out with a leatherman. Timothy walks in behind him covering the rear. Gerald halts and puts his arm up. Timothy backs up into him.

GERALD

When I raise my hand like this... That means it's time to stop.

TIMOTHY

I was covering the rear.

GERALD

No one is going to follow us! We are looking for one person with a hostage.

TIMOTHY

How do you know it's one person? What if he hired an army?

GERALD

He can't afford an army.

TIMOTHY

What if he collected the reward on himself?

GERALD

He would... shut up. He might hear us...

BEAUFORD

I hear you fine.

GERALD

You have to stop doing that! You are going to give me a heart attack.

BEAUFORD

That's how I roll.

GERALD

Couldn't you walk in the door like a normal person?

BEAUFORD

What would be the fun in that? I love surprises. Like this.

Lights up on different part of the stage. Maureen is tied up.

MAUREEN

Gerald! This man is crazy! Get out of here.

BEAUFORD

I figure, I'd give you the pleasure of killin' her yourself.

GERALD

No! I don't want to kill her. There was some kind of mistake.

MAUREEN

You hired a hitman to kill me?

GERALD

No, Maureen. It's not true. Tell her it's not true.

BEAUFORD

He did pay in cash.

GERALD

Seriously Maureen! Do you think I would really want to kill you?

MAUREEN

I am worth a lot in life insurance.

GERALD

Do you think I would really do that?

MAUREEN

How do I know this is not Gerald scheme five thousand forty two...

GERALD

Because I'm going to get a job.

MAUREEN

Really?

GERALD

I get it now.

MAUREEN

You do?

GERALD

You need me to show that I care about what happens to us. If getting a job shows you that. Then that's what I am going to do.

MAUREEN

Gerald! You really mean it?

GERALD

I really do.

Gerald unlocks her chains.

BEAUFORD

Damn it. If you need to kill somebody kill them yourself. I'll shoot her.

GERALD

Whoa! Whoa! There will be no killing today.

BEAUFORD

Sorry my services are non refundable.

GERALD

I don't need a refund.

BEAUFORD

I'm still gonna kill her.

GERALD

That's not fair!

BEAUFORD

Well, shit. You got me, I am not being very fair. Now get out of the way before I kill you too. I have a reputation to uphold. Go soft once, and no one will ever hire me again.

GERALD

Then kill me.

MAUREEN

Oh Gerald.

GERALD

No Maureen, you say that I'm lazy. That I never move from the same spot all day. Well now is my chance to prove it.

BEAUFORD

Suite yourself I'll kill you too.

Beauford lifts up the gun. Gerald pulls out the leathermen.

Beauford inspects the knife then laughs.

BEAUFORD

You going to stick me with that little thing?

TIMOTHY

That's a multi-purpose tool there buddy. It's got a can opener, a screw driver, a-

GERALD

No, I needed the scissors to open an envelope.

Gerald pulls out an envelope.

BEAUFORD

What's that?

GERALD

A little something I got from the state department.

BEAUFORD

You think you'd make a deal with me? There ain't nothing you got that I want.

Beauford's points the gun at Gerald.

TIMOTHY

You'll really want to take a look at this.

BEAUFORD

It's hard to kill with you jabbering.

GERALD

I guess I will trash this Prom Make-Over Specialist license.

BEAUFORD

You are joking?

GERALD

Nope, it says it right here.

He hands the paperwork to Beauford.

BEAUFORD

Let me see that.

TIMOTHY

How did you know that?

GERALD

A good bounty hunter always does his research.

BEAUFORD

This is a load of crap. It says I have to stop killing to do Prom Make-Overs again.

GERALD

Remember what you said to your dad? Remember what you promised him before you died?

BEAUFORD

I told him I would become Miss Texas. But I can't be Miss Texas! I am a man!

GERALD

But you can sure make other girls feel like Miss Texas.

Beauford lowers his gun.

GERALD (CONT'D)

And look who we brought...

Celeste wheels in a cart of beauty products.

CELESTE

Hey Beau! Beau! Look what I have!

BEAUFORD

The red evening dress.

Celeste pulls out a red sparkling dress. Beauford hugs Gerald

BEAUFORD (CONT'D)

You are the best!

CELESTE

Now let's sit you down and style that hair!

Celeste sits Beauford down and sprays his hair.

CELESTE (CONT'D)

Did you ever think about highlights. I think your hair would look beautiful in highlights.

BEAUFORD

I want go all the way.

CELESTE

Really? Are you sure?

BEAUFORD

I want to be Miss Texas.

CELESTE

Alright then.

BEAUFORD

I want to be the most beautiful.

CELESTE

You are the most beautiful.

Celeste continues to style his hair.

Gerald finishes getting Maureen down.

MAUREEN

Let's go home.

GERALD

I can't.

MAUREEN

Why?

GERALD

You were playing Robo Action man with another guy!

MAUREEN

We were divorced, that means you try out different partners. You were with other women too!

GERALD

Not once! I couldn't think about anything else but you.

TIMOTHY

Really? You could have been playing the field but you moped around thinking about your wife?
Haha! Seriously. That's lame man. Very lame.

BEAUFORD

I know! What sissy right!

TIMOTHY

Tell me about it.

GERALD

Do you mind?

BEAUFORD

Golden curls! I want golden curls.

CELESTE

You'll get your Golden curls.

MAUREEN

If it's any consolation. I didn't cheat.

GERALD

But I heard you!

MAUREEN

We were just making sex noises.

GERALD

You were?

MAUREEN

I want to give it a second chance.

GERALD

To make sex noises?

MAUREEN

No, our marriage.

GERALD

I do to but I don't know if I can trust you.

MAUREEN

Don't play that game with me buddy. You were with other women too.

GERALD

I wasn't! I swear.

MAUREEN

Celeste saw you with another woman in the warehouse.

GERALD

I wasn't with anyone I swear. Ask Beauford and Celeste!

CELESTE

Technically I didn't see him.

MAUREEN

What do you mean technically?

BEAUFORD

It's true he was with me. Ribbons! Can you put ribbons in my hair?

MAUREEN

I couldn't do it either.

GERALD

What? But about that guy...

MAUREEN

Oh I tried to do it! I was angry and upset with you. I thought if he wore the costume. I could think of you. But it wasn't you.

GERALD

But I saw him take the pill.

MAUREEN

Yeah that was kind of awkward. His erection lasted for twelve hours. He is a pizza delivery boy.

CELESTE

He is a pizza delivery boy? I thought he was coming on to me!

TIMOTHY

Yeah, me too.

MAUREEN

The point is that I want you back Gerald.

GERALD

How do I know we won't sleep around?

MAUREEN

We don't. But that's what trust is.

GERALD

I guess we'll have to trust each other.

Gerald kisses Maureen. Beauford cries.

BEAUFORD

It's so beautiful.

TIMOTHY

Come on man! You're a killer. Man up.

BEAUFORD

I'm not talking about them. I'm talking about my hair! I can't remember a time I felt this beautiful.

TIMOTHY

I hate to do this man.

He cuffs Beauford.

GERALD

You'll make other girls feel that beautiful every day.

BEAUFORD

How can I from prison?

GERALD

You know that reward money? I will donate half of it to a Make-Over charity of your choice.

BEAUFORD

Really?

GERALD

It's the least I can do.

BEAUFORD

You are alright man. Hey, do you think the inmates will want Make-Overs?

Everyone exits but Gerald and Maureen.

GERALD

Let's go home Maureen.

MAUREEN

To our home?

GERALD

To our bedroom.

MAUREEN

Should I bring out the Robo Action man gear?

GERALD

Of course! Duh!