

ART

By,

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EXT. ARTHUR AND MANDY MANN'S HOUSE. SUBURBS. TWILIGHT.

An average home in a typical, middle class neighborhood. ARTHUR MANN, thirty seven years old, appears underneath a Ford Escape, trying to fix it in the dying light of day. A cat sits indifferently alongside the place where he works. Arthur drops a tool and unable to see, his hand searches for another one. The cat watches with sudden interest, and abruptly pounces on the hand, grabbing it in both paws. Arthur cries out, sits up instinctively and bangs his head. The cat runs away in fright.

JOY, his twelve year old daughter, dressed in her softball team's uniform and wearing braces, pitches softballs into a net. A stray ball flies through the open window of the Ford Escape and knocks the car out of park. The car slowly rolls out of the driveway just as Arthur leans back down in pain, narrowly escaping a worse accident. Joy GASPS. Arthur looks up to see the car bump into the curb across the street and stop there.

EXT. MANN'S HOUSE. SAME TIME.

The door opens and MANDY MANN, Arthur's attractive thirty seven year old wife, appears just as Arthur drives the car back into the driveway.

MANDY
Honey, five minutes!

Arthur heads inside.

ARTHUR
Are you coming, Joy?

Joy barely nods, but brightens with a sudden happy thought.

JOY
Three more games and we're in the playoffs!

ARTHUR
It's exciting, huh?
(To himself:)
I could use a little excitement.
Work and home, work and home...

INT. LIVING ROOM OF MANN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

The Mann's house is decidedly conventional. Mandy sits on the couch waiting, absorbed in a historical romance novel. AJ, for Art Jr., age fifteen, sits in a chair.

He reads a history book and listening to an Ipod, while his long legs, swung over the arm of the chair, impossibly manipulate a skate board off the ground, transferring the board from one foot to the other.

MIKEY, age six, his leg trapped in a brace, works at a near-by computer. His crutch rests against the desk. An open book: WHERE THE RED FERN GROWS sits by the computer.

Arthur and Joy enter. Arthur plops alongside Mandy and comfortably puts his arm around her before he picks up the remote and turns on the TV. Commercials blare into the room. Standing, Joy tosses the ball up, catching it in her mitt.

ARTHUR

Mikey, are you going to come and watch?

MIKEY

I'm busy, Dad. I'm writing a letter to Dear Abby.

ARTHUR

Dear Abby?

MIKEY

I'm thinking maybe she can help me with my problem. How do you spell animosity?

ARTHUR

A-N-I-M-O-S-I-T-Y.

GRANNY, a frail eighty plus year old woman, wears a pale house coat and worn slippers. Leaning on her walker, mumbling unintelligibly, she makes her way onto the couch.

GRANNY

This indigestion is killing me.

ARTHUR

(Under his breath;)
Not quick enough.

GRANNY

What? What was that?

ARTHUR

I said I'm sorry to hear that, Granny.

GRANNY

Did you call the tree trimmers?

ARTHUR
Shoot. I forgot.

GRANNY
You'll remember when the next big
storm comes and that branch falls
off and crushes me to death as I
sleep. I bet you won't forget then!

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM. MORNING. ARTHUR'S IMAGINATION.

A bright and beautiful morning after a ferocious storm. One side of the wall is demolished by a fallen tree branch and Granny lies dead in her bed, the tree branch over her chest. Mandy, Arthur, the kids stand solemnly to the side as the ambulance attendants and police inspect the scene.

POLICEMAN
She never knew what hit her...

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Granny continues towards her place on the couch.

ARTHUR
Now, that would be memorable.

GRANNY
What?

ARTHUR
I said I'm sorry, Granny. I'll do
it tomorrow, I promise.

MIKEY
How do you spell murder?

MANDY
M-U-R-D-E-R.

AJ
For being such a genius you sure
can't spell worth a--

Mandy casts her son a sharp look, stopping him.

AJ
(continuing)
Crap.
(Irritated;)
Can I say crap, Mom?

MANDY

Just not too often, okay sweetie?

Granny sits alongside an end table that displays over thirty bottles of medicine. She picks up her knitting--a thick, very red scarf--that stands as a metaphor for her life, and with arthritic fingers, she slowly begins to knit.

GRANNY

I feel like I've been working on this for years. I feel that it just never ends.

ARTHUR

We have that very same feeling, Granny.

Mandy nudges Arthur. Granny doesn't hear very well.

GRANNY

This indigestion. I can barely breathe. If my blood pressure gets any higher, there's no telling what might happen.

ARTHUR

We can always hope.

GRANNY

What? Who is a dope?

ARTHUR

No, no. I said I'm just hoping you'll make it through the show, Granny.

GRANNY

(Confused;)
What show?

MANDY

(With a sigh:)

AFV...

GRANNY

What? What?

Granny adjusts her hearing aid.

MIKEY

Joy, do you still put an e at the end of your name?

JOY
 Mom, Mikey's trying to murder me!

AJ
 (With genuine despair:)
 Kids!

MANDY
 Mikey, Joy can't help it if she has
 allergies.

Joy tosses the ball up and sneezes.

MANDY
 (continuing)
 I'm sure she'd like a dog as much
 as you would--

Distracted by the sneeze, the ball veers off course and hits
 Granny in the head. Granny falls unconscious. Mandy screams
 and rushes to Granny's side. Arthur stares in shock. AJ rips
 off his head phones, shoves aside his books and the
 skateboard and lands at Granny's side.

MANDY
 (continuing)
 Oh my God, she's dead!

MIKEY
 Joy killed Granny!

ARTHUR
 She's dead?

JOY
 (Amazed:)
 I didn't mean to! It was Mikey's
 fault! He's trying to kill me!

AJ
 Dad, call 911!

Arthur rushes in to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN.

Unseen by the others, Arthur jumps for joy, crazily excited.

ARTHUR
 Ding dong, the witch is dead, the
 witch is dead...

Still, he reaches for the phone and calls 911.

INT. LIVING ROOM. TWILIGHT.

Mandy and AJ, desperately trying to revive Granny, meet with success. Granny opens her eyes.

GRANNY

What? What are you doing to me?

Arthur rushes in the living-room, phone in hand, his expression sinking with disappointment.

MANDY

Granny, you well, it seems you passed out and--

GRANNY

Get away from me. Get!

MANDY

Are you all right?

GRANNY

Of course I'm all right! An old woman can't even doze off now and again without the world falling apart.

MANDY

Honey, I think she's fine.

ARTHUR

(Into phone:)

Forget it. Emergency over.

JOY

It's starting! The shows on.

TV shows the opening to Americas Funniest Home Videos.

INT. LIVING ROOM.

The family, all huddled together, with Granny at one end of the couch, perpetually knitting and Arthur and Mandy at the other end, the two younger kids in-between and AJ in the chair. A funny video of a man who dumped his screaming daughter and her chase lounge into the pool concludes and the family laughs with appreciation, except for Granny who shakes her head in disgust.

GRANNY

Stupid, imbecilic people, making fools of themselves on TV. It would never happen in my day.

Oh no. We made fools of ourselves
in private or not at all...

A look of intensity has crossed Arthur's face; an idea is born.

INT. SET OF AFV'S. ARTHUR'S IMAGINATION.

TOM BERGERON addresses the audience:

TOM
And the winner of the one hundred
thousand grand prize is Arthur
Mann!

The audience goes wild. The Mann's leap out of their chairs. Balloons and colorful streamers fall. Arthur grabs Mandy and holding Mandy as she arches her back, Arthur kisses her passionately.

INT. MANN'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

ARTHUR
You know I could do that.

MANDY
Push your screaming daughter into a
pool?

JOY
I thought you loved me, Daddy?

ARTHUR
I do love you, sweetheart, very
much. I mean, I bet I could make a
funny video. Don't you think?
Wouldn't that be great to make a
funny video and win the big prize?

INT. MANN'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Wearing an old football jersey, Mandy reads a paperback romance novel in bed, engrossed. Deep in thought, Arthur returns from the bathroom and begins undressing.

ARTHUR
Honey, how much do you think one of
those digital cam costs?

MANDY
Humm... I don't know. A couple of
hundred maybe.

ARTHUR
That's what I figured.

Arthur falls on the bed with a sigh.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
I suppose we can't really afford that right now, with AJ starting to drive, Joy's braces and Mikey's private school. Then, there's the car and the mortgage...

With a grimace and another sigh, he shrugs off these burdens and snuggles up to Mandy, who continues reading.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
Still, it would be really something to try to make it on that show. All I just have to dream up something funny.

MANDY
Humm...

Arm draped across her chest, Arthur caresses Mandy's shoulder.

ARTHUR
Are you at a good part yet?

MANDY
It's coming. Ram Barrington's mistaken her for a prostitute and she's on his ship.

Mandy's eyes widen as she reads the juicy part.

MANDY
(continuing)
Oh boy. I think I'm ready.

Arthur chuckles and moves to kiss her.

EXT. MANN'S HOUSE. MORNING.

The house falls into the normal morning chaos of five people trying to get ready for work and school. Cereal, toast, and orange juice clutter the kitchen table. Arthur wears a beige coverall uniform.

GRANNY

Is everyone out of the bathroom?

Mandy glances at the clock, which reads 7:55.

MANDY

You've got five minutes left,
Granny.

GRANNY

I feel early today.

MANDY

(Calls out)

Is everyone out of the bathroom?

The kids shout back at their mom before appearing in the kitchen, hurriedly putting on backpacks.

MANDY

(continuing)

All clear, Granny.

ARTHUR

Shoot, I've got to get going.

AJ

Dad, I need twenty five dollars
today for the contest registration.

ARTHUR

That's right. I forgot.

Arthur withdraws his wallet.

JOY

And Coach says we each need to chip
in twelve dollars for the new bats.

ARTHUR

Okay, okay, the bank is open.

The kids line up, AJ sporting a backpack and his skateboard, Joy sporting a backpack and mitt and ball and Mikey with his backpack. Arthur starts handing out money.

AJ

Thanks, Dad.

JOY

I love you, Daddy.

MIKEY

I need lunch money.

ARTHUR

Didn't your mom fix you a lunch?

MIKEY

I hate cheese sandwiches. I won't eat. I'll starve and maybe that'll be good, cause when you're dead you probably don't have a burning desire for a dog.

Arthur hands him two dollars.

ARTHUR

Mikey, you can have a nice life without a dog, you know.

MIKEY

I'm not convinced, Dad.

Mandy shakes her head.

MANDY

I need fifty for that collection, honey.

ARTHUR

Fifty dollars...

MANDY

I know it's a lot, but it's over five hundred titles, all in good condition. The old lady's grand daughter wants a hundred for them but I think I can talk her down to fifty.

He withdraws the money before heading out the door, mumbling.

ARTHUR

I am more than a paycheck, I am more than a paycheck...

GRANNY

Here I go.

Granny gets up with surprising vigor.

GRANNY

(continuing)

Make way! Make way!

EXT. HOUSE. MORNING.

AJ takes off on his skateboard with impressive skill. Still wearing her uniform, Joy joins two other girls, waving good--bye to her parents as Mandy, Arthur and Mikey pile into the Ford Explorer.

INT. FORD EXPLORER. MORNING.

Mikey appears small in the back seat.

MIKEY

Mom, I want to go the regular school.

MANDY

(Sighs:)

Sweetie, we've discussed this a hundred times. There's no place for you. You're only six and you're already so advanced--

MIKEY

That's not the real reason, mom.

MANDY

Kids can be so cruel. If they teased you about your leg, I just couldn't bear it.

MIKEY

At the school for Jr. Einsteins they tease me about my spelling.

MANDY

That's different. That's something you'll outgrow.

MIKEY

(Questioning:)

The doctor said it was possible that I'd get better? I heard him.

Mandy and Arthur exchange worried glances.

MANDY

The odds were, well, astronomical.

MIKEY

Still...

(Sighs; whines:)

It's hard being the dumbest of the smart kids.

I'd rather be the smartest of the regular kids.

(Brightens:)

You wouldn't believe what Morton did yesterday.

ARTHUR

What's that?

MIKEY

He memorized four chapters of the Guinness book of world records.

ARTHUR

(Sarcastic:)

Extra IQ points sure come in handy.

MIKEY

He got right up to the barf records-

-

ARTHUR

(Confused:)

The barf records?

MIKEY

You know where they list all the winners of the eating contests? Names, dates, how many burgers or pies the winners consumed. They just never tell you what happens after someone wins. The barf records.

ARTHUR

I can't believe I'm paying for this school.

MIKEY

Now we're working on evolutionary theory.

ARTHUR

That sounds good.

MIKEY

Actually it's kind of depressing: This idea that the only purpose in life is to have your DNA represented in the next generation.

ARTHUR

What do you mean?

MIKEY

It's simple, Dad. The DNA we have wants only to replicate, see. Obviously the DNA that didn't care about replicating isn't here anymore. So, all this--

His arm sweeps the surroundings.

MIKEY

(continuing)

Is just support stuff for DNA reproduction. That's it, the whole shebang.

MANDY

What about love, Mikey?

MIKEY

DNA's greatest triumph. The illusion of love gets people reproducing like crazy, like there's no tomorrow.

ARTHUR

(Whispers:)

Is he already taking sex-ed?

MIKEY

And Ms. Platt didn't like my oral report on homeless dogs.

Arthur rolls his eyes.

MIKEY

(continuing)

Did you know they kill millions homeless dogs a year? Millions! They've got these mini gas chambers set up all over the country where they gas all the loser dogs: Dogs that bark too much, or dogs that chew things, dogs that don't have homes--

MANDY

Okay, that's enough. You're being morbid now, Michael.

ARTHUR

(With obvious relief:)

Here we are, son!

The car pulls up at a school that bears a sign reading:
School for the Gifted.

MANDY

Have a good day, sweetie.

MIKEY

That's what the Germans said to the
Jews as they boarded the trains.

INT. FORD ESCAPE. MORNING.

ARTHUR

I love that kid so much Mandy, but
sometimes I worry that... well he's
odd, Mandy.

MANDY

Honey, all children seem strange at
this age. Then, they grow up and--

ARTHUR

Lo and behold, they're really
weird.

MANDY

(She laughs:)

I guess you're right, honey.

Arthur drives Mandy to work, through the streets of a suburb,
finally pulling into a strip mall and letting Mandy off in
front of her store: USED ROMANCE. They kiss good-bye.

MANDY

(continuing)

Oh, and don't forget Joy's game
today.

ARTHUR

If I can get off.

Mandy runs into her store, waving good-bye.

Arthur drives off, gradually entering a more industrialized,
downtown area of a city. He listens absentmindedly to talk
radio.

DR. LAURA

And me? I am my kid's mom!

Arthur flips the radio off.

ARTHUR

Yeah, yeah. I got the whole picture too, Dr. Laura: the job, the house, the wife, the kids, all of it and boy oh boy, I love my family. The love part's easy.

Arthur falls against the steering wheel, waiting for the light to change.

ARTHUR

(continuing)

Sometimes I just feel there's just got to be more than DNA replication and mortgages...

The signal changes and as he starts off, he spots a camera store. The sign reads: REEL LIFE CAMERAS. He freezes, contemplating the decision. He pulls over.

EXT. REEL LIFE CAMERAS. MORNING.

Arthur emerges from the store with a hand held camera in hand. The city street bustles with activity as people head to work. Enthralled with his new purchase, Arthur removes the digital camera from its case and holds it up, practicing. He searches the city streets for something to shoot, but finds nothing remarkable.

Looking through the camera, the world is transformed.

A car pulls up in front of a no parking sign. An average looking man gets out and looks sneakily in both directions before removing a small plastic sign cover from his jacket. He opens his car door and stepping on the passenger side, he fits the cover over the no parking sign. It now reads: Free Parking. Once done, he continues merrily on his way.

Arthur drops the camera and laughs. Picking up the camera again, he aims it on the street. He zooms in on a man's unzipped trousers. The man is oblivious. Arthur captures a startled woman's reaction.

Arthur turns his camera up the street. A moving van is parked at a curb, where outside of an apartment building, workers attempt to lift a piano outside the building to a forth story window. Using ropes and a pulley, two men attempt hoist the piano up. A woman with a little dog stands unaware beneath the piano and as she waits for a cab.

ARTHUR
Deja-vu..

He shakes his head and returns to his vision. As the piano goes up, it disturbs a group of roosting pigeons. They take flight. A pigeon dropping lands on one of the worker's head. He lets go of the rope. The other worker flies up as the piano falls down, heading straight for the old woman and her dog.

A cab pulls up and the woman steps to it, just missing the crashing piano. Laughing, enjoying himself, Arthur suddenly remembers the time, checks his watch and rushes to put the camera away and return to his car.

EXT. CARPETS R US. MORNING.

A giant warehouse sits in-between other warehouses in an industrial part of town.

INT. CARPETS R US. MORNING.

Arthur enters the spacious building with a smile on his face and a bounce to his step. Men in coveralls work at giant machinery. They call out greetings to Arthur as he passes through the factory toward the office. ROB and BOB stand at machines, working.

ROB
Hey Art. You look happy.

BOB
Like your wife was reading one of her books again.

ARTHUR
Oh yeah. And was it hot! Sizzling, passionate, full of wild abandon...

ROB
(Explains:)
His wife reads those romance novels.

BOB
(Impressed:)
Wow. I heard about that.

ROB
Married men get all the sex.

Arthur waves them off, chuckling.

BOB
Say hi to Lisa from all the guys
out here, will you, Art?

Rob and Bob laugh as they manipulate the machinery.

The office is partitioned off from the rest of the factory. A tall stack of boxes is piled up just before the office. SHERLOCK, a big, beefy, young man, dumb as a box of rocks, stands near a small mountain of packages, probing them with a stick. A look of fear rests on his face. The stick causes the boxes to settle and Sherlock jumps back in fright. When nothing happens, relief floods through him.

ARTHUR
Hey Sherlock.

SHERLOCK
Uh, hi Art.

ARTHUR
What are you doing? Don't you have
to get those moving?
(He looks at his watch:)
It's after nine already.

SHERLOCK
Yeah, yeah. I'm on it.
(Remembers:)
Hey, Art. Look at this.

Sherlock holds up two tickets.

ARTHUR
What is it?

SHERLOCK
The big wrestling championship!
Saturday night. I'm going to ask
Lisa. I'm like, thinking she'll be
so excited, she won't mind me going
with her.

ARTHUR
Lisa? Sherlock, buddy. How many
times does she have to turn--

The earnestness and hope on Sherlock's face changes Arthur's mind.

ARTHUR
 (continuing)
 Ah, well, I've never met any woman
 who actually likes pro-wrestling.

SHERLOCK
 (With dreamy affection:)
 But Lisa's different. She's
 special. Lisa has a tatoo.

ARTHUR
 I just don't think--

SHERLOCK
 (passionately:)
 I dream about seeing that tatoo!

Arthur notices Sherlock's hopefulness.

ARTHUR
 Good luck, Buddy.

Three cluttered desks fill the office space. A computer tops two of the desks, but one desk has two computers. There are no windows and to compensate for this, cheap travel posters decorate the walls, revealing the universal desire to escape.

LISA, thirty something, tough as nails, voluptuous, sexy as all get out, works as the company receptionist who sells Amway products on the side.

LISA
 (On the phone:)
 Forty nine dollars might sound like a lot in these tough times, but it's like this: Have you ever seen something that at first seemed very small but well, it just kind of grew and grew and wow-- suddenly you're impressed? This little product is like that. It looks small but it packs one heck of a bang!
 (pause:)
 No, no it won't explode! None of our products actually explode...
 Hello? Hello?

Lisa hangs up the phone, hands Arthur a pile of papers.

LISA
 (continuing)
 Shoot.

ROY, a young black man, is the company's computer operator who creates computer games on the side. He wears thick glasses.

ARTHUR

Hi guys.

ROY

You're late, Art. We're already backed up. Here are the pick ups.

Roy hands Arthur a sheet of paper.

ROY

(continuing)

Here are the deliveries.

Taking the paper, Arthur steps over to Roy's computer to see what is happening. Arthur presses a button on Roy's computer and a monster appears on the screen.

ROY

(continuing)

Look at my graphics now. I got him to blow up!

The monster explodes, Roy laughs with pleasure.

ARTHUR

Wow! That's really something... that has nothing to do with work.

ROY

I'm thinking it might be better if I make him break, you know, like shattering glass.

ARTHUR

Maybe he could melt.

ROY

(Startled:)

I never thought of melting...

Arthur notices Sherlock's struggle with the loading the boxes again.

ARTHUR

What's wrong with Sherlock?

LISA

Another mouse. He found the remnants this morning.

ARTHUR
 (Rolls his eyes:)
 He's just got to get over that
 fear.
 (Brightens:)
 Hey guys! Guess what I bought this
 morning?

Arthur removes his camera from its case.

ROY
 What is it?

ARTHUR
 A video camera. I'm going to try
 to make one of those funny home
 videos to get on the show. Do you
 ever watch that--AFV's?

ROY
 Once or twice.

LISA
 Sure, I've seen it.

ARTHUR
 We never miss it. Anyway, all of a
 sudden I thought, Hey! I could do
 that. I could make a funny video!
 So...

He peers eagerly at each face.

ARTHUR
 (continuing)
 What's funny?

INT. OFFICE. LATER.

With camera in hand, unobserved from the side Arthur films
 Roy as he creates his computer game.

Roy's expressive face shows intense concentration and the
 computer screen is reflected in his thick glasses. His eyes
 seem to pop out suddenly as the monster melts helplessly. His
 face bursts with sudden joy and he claps his hands, wiggling
 his fingers over his mouth in a very child like expression of
 excitement. All expressions disappear as the phone rings and
 he has to answer it.

INT. OFFICE. LATER.

Everyone appears busily engaged in work. Sherlock enters and sheepishly, hopefully looks to Lisa's desk. Arthur slides his camera out and again, unobserved he records Sherlock's quest. Sherlock's gaze always zooms and locks on Lisa's gargantuan breasts.

SHERLOCK

Lisa, guess what I've got for you?

Lisa turns to Sherlock with a smile, one that does not reach her eyes.

LISA

Based on past experience, I'd have to say the willy nillies.

SHERLOCK

No, no, nothin' like that. What are you doing Saturday night?

LISA

Saturday night? Plans.

SHERLOCK

Big plans?

LISA

I'll be watching bugs drown in my apartment pool.

SHERLOCK

(Confused:)

Bugs drown?

ROY

She's just kidding, Sherlock.

SHERLOCK

Oh?

(Brightens:)

Maybe you'd rather go see the big pro--wrestling tournament? I got front row seats! And hey! If you like bugs, one of the guys, named Repellant Man, dresses like this well, I guess it's a spider--

LISA

Thanks but no. I'll stick to my own, more local bugs.

EXT. CARPET'S R US. AFTERNOON.

Roy, Lisa, Sherlock and Arthur sit among other factory workers eating lunch. Lisa uses her lunch time to share various catalogues and talk up Amway products with her co-workers. Roy toys with a game boy.

Arthur waves his hand in front of Sherlock's gaze, which is on Lisa. He catches his attention.

ARTHUR

Have you ever seen America's
Funniest Home Videos, Sherlock?

SHERLOCK

Yeah, sure. A few times.

ARTHUR

What's funny about those videos?

SHERLOCK

I don't know.

(He shrugs:)

Mostly people falling down, I
guess.

This is a revelation to Arthur.

INT. SMALL CITY GROCERY STORE. DAY.

Arthur buys a banana. The store CLERK smiles brightly.

CLERK

(Cheerful:)

Have a nice day.

EXT. CROWDED CITY STREET. DAY.

Arthur eats the banana as he watches a busy city street. Once finished, he looks in both directions before carefully placing the peel in the middle of the sidewalk.

Sitting in front of a building, beggar's cup in hand, a homeless man, JOE watches Arthur with interest. Arthur ducks behind an entrance way and begins filming.

A well dressed man steps on the peel and slips, but catches his balance before he falls. He turns back to stare angrily at the offending peel. He violently kicks it into the gutter before moving on his way. A car rolls over the banana peel.

INT. SMALL CITY GROCERY STORE. DAY.

Arthur buys another banana.

CLERK
(Smiling:)
Another one?

ARTHUR
It was so good...

EXT. CROWDED CITY STREET.

Arthur hurriedly eats the banana to get the peel.

JOE
You need to leave some of the
banana.

ARTHUR
What?

JOE
You need to leave some of the
banana. You know, to make it
squishy.

Arthur looks at the banana, grasps the wisdom of this but it
is too late. The banana is gone.

INT. SMALL CITY GROCERY STORE. DAY.

ARTHUR
I just can't get enough!

CLERK
I guess not...

EXT. BUSTLING CITY STREET. DAY.

Arthur eats half of the banana before carefully placing the
remnants on the sidewalk.

JOE
America's funniest home videos?

ARTHUR
(Surprised:)
Yeah!

JOE
Cool.

ARTHUR
 There's a lot of falling down on
 that show.

JOE
 (Nods:)
 Falling down is always funny.

Arthur turns back to the waiting banana.

A well dressed lady steps on the banana, seems like she's going to fall, but catches herself at the last minute. The banana, peel and all, is stuck to her high heel shoe. She uses the curb to get the squashed banana off her high heels shoe.

INT. SMALL CITY GROCERY STORE. DAY.

Arthur buys another banana. The store clerk eyes him wearily. Arthur smiles back.

ARTHUR
 I love bananas.

CLERK
 Oh yeah. I can see that.

EXT. BUSTLING CITY STREET. DAY.

Arthur eats half the banana. He carefully places this back on the side walk.

An old woman, very well dressed with a matching coat and hat and bag, stops in front of the banana. She stares at it with revulsion. She removes a lace handkerchief from her bag and very carefully picks up the offending banana and places it in a near-by trash can. She continues on her way.

INT. SMALL CITY GROCERY STORE. DAY.

Arthur buys another banana.

CLERK
 (Under her breath:)
 A lot of nut cases in this city.

ARTHUR
 Oh, this one's for a friend.

CLERK
 Whatever.

EXT. BUSTLING CITY STREET. DAY.

With some effort Arthur eats a few bites from the banana before placing the half eaten banana on the side walk again.

A street cleaner comes by and sweeps the banana into his dustpan.

INT. SMALL CITY GROCERY STORE. DAY.

Arthur buys a whole bunch of bananas.

CLERK
You're starting to scare me,
Mister.

ARTHUR
Me?

CLERK
You're not some kind of stalker,
are you?

ARTHUR
Me? No, no. Nothing like that.
Now, well, now I'm feeding the
homeless.

CLERK
Right. The mother Teresa of
bananas.

EXT. BUSTLING CITY STREET. DAY.

Joe eats half the banana and hands the rest to Arthur, which he dutifully places on the sidewalk.

Most people side step the mess.

Arthur and the homeless man spot three young men approaching: dangerous looking gang bangers, each wearing baggy clothes, one carrying a boom box and all three walking in perfect unison. Arthur and the homeless man clasp hands with sweet anticipation.

JOE
This will be good!

ARTHUR
Perfect!

Arthur films. The middle gang banger steps on the peel. His leg shoots out and he falls, squashing the banana on the seat of his pants. The other two stop as the banana victim jumps gracefully to his feet and briefly, with a cool air of indifference, inspects the seat of his pants.

The victim positions himself back side to the trash can and without using his hands, brushes the mess on the seat of his pants into the trash. His shirt covers the stain. The three young men continue on their way.

Arthur and Joe laugh.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
Want another banana?

EXT. BUSTLING CITY STREET. DAY.

A business man approaches, slips and falls.

EXT. BUSTLING CITY STREET. DAY.

A young man, wearing roller blades and a head phone, skating gracefully in between passing people, spots the banana. Alarm changes his face. Disaster seems unavoidable but just in time, our skater leaps over the mess. Only to fall full body into two people in front. They all fall down.

Arthur and Joe laugh uproariously. They both enthusiastically reach for another banana.

EXT. BUSTLING CITY STREET. DAY.

People side step the banana.

A woman approaches with a toddler in a stroller. The baby wears a beanie and sucks on a bottle. The banana peel sticks to the wheel of the stroller, going round and round. The woman doesn't notice. The peel finally comes off. The woman steps on it. She slips and falls, letting go of the stroller. The stroller takes off.

The stroller drops off the curb and heads into the street, rolling merrily into the intersection, where it stalls. Cars and buses screech to a grinding halt. One car crashes into the bus, which bumps forward ever so slightly and barely touches the stroller. The stroller merrily takes off again, heading disastrously into on coming traffic. Cars screech to a halt, colliding into each other. One bumps the stroller in another direction. The stroller now heads in the same direction as the traffic.

It veers slightly and another car slams on the breaks and bumps it off the street, up onto the sidewalk and through the doors of a candy shop where the stroller hits the front counter, knocking a open box of candy on to the toddlers lap.

The toddler greedily grabs a piece of candy.

TODDLER

Again!

INT. MANN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Arthur swings open the front door.

ARTHUR

Honey, I almost killed a baby today!

(Chuckles:)

And boy, was it funny.

INT. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Mandy fixes Granny's hair. Confusion crosses their faces upon hearing this. Granny smooths her hair.

GRANNY

I warned you not to marry him...

INT. LIVING ROOM.

Arthur takes out the video cassettes he has made so far and begins labeling them. Joy comes in, still wearing her softball uniform.

JOY

Daddy, you missed my game today!

ARTHUR

Oh... Oh!

(Realizes:)

Sweetie, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I got tied up at work.

JOY

I hit a triple and we won four to three!

ARTHUR

(Distracted:)

That's my girl.

JOY
 (Petulant:)
 But you missed it! You didn't see me.

ARTHUR
 Well.. Guess what? I got this new digital camera. Now, I can film all your games.

Arthur shows Joy the camera.

JOY
 (Excited:)
 Wow.

ARTHUR
 I'll capture all your hits. We'll show them over and over to your mother's relatives... until they stop wanting to come over. And you won't believe this, but I already have some great footage, funny footage! I just know America's funniest home videos is going to want it. We're going to be on TV!

Arthur moves to the stairs and calls up to the rest of the family.

ARTHUR
 (continuing)
 Honey! AJ! Come on down and see the funny footage I got today!

Arthur laughs, pleased as a well fed King.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Mandy, with a romance novel in hand, AJ with his skateboard at his feet, Granny with her knitting, all sleep soundly as Arthur replays his videos over and over, still excited, still chuckling, amused. Mikey sits at the computer, working.

ARTHUR
 I need to get a rolling stand, to steady the camera. Sometimes the picture comes out a little jerky. And the lighting too. Natural light works best, but inside, you really need to brighten things... Mikey, come and tell me which you think is the funniest.

MIKEY

In a minute, dad. I'm almost done.

(Turns to look:)

I found this great program on the net. You just answer all these questions, you see and it tells you the exact breed that's best suited to your life-style.

Arthur sighs, rolls his eyes and returns to his video tapes.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD. DAY.

Joy's softball team is playing another team. Arthur, Mandy and Mikey sit in the bleachers with other parents and kids watching the game.

MANDY

Honey, why aren't you filming this?

ARTHUR

I'm just filming Joy, when she's up at bat. I don't want to waste the battery with, you know, mundane kind of footage.

MANDY

You're so funny about this, Art.

(Musing thoughtfully;)

You don't really think you're going to get on that show, do you?

ARTHUR

(Surprised:)

Didn't you think the baby stroller bit was funny?

MANDY

If you like hysterical moms and car crashes...

ARTHUR

Well, I'm working on it. They might not take that particular one-it was almost too funny, too dramatic!

(Laughs at the thought:)

But eventually I'll shoot something really funny. Irresistibly funny...

Arthur toys with his video camera as the game progresses.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD. DAY.

Finally Joy steps up to the plate, but Arthur is distracted by his camera. The pitcher throws the ball and Joy swings and misses. Joy fares no better on her second try. She connects with the third pitch and the ball flies out into left field. Mandy and other parents leap from their seats, screaming as Joy takes off around the bases.

Simultaneously, Arthur has trained the camera on a young boy and a girl sitting in front of him. Both kids hold a popsicle. The little boy looks to his side to see Joy swing and as he does so, the little girl consumes his popsicle in one bite.

Arthur chuckles just as the crowd goes wild. He misses his daughter's triumphant home run.

Mandy returns to her seat.

MANDY

Honey, that was fantastic!

ARTHUR

Maybe a filler piece, but it's probably not even a ten thousand dollar winner...

MANDY

Honey, no. You missed Joy's homer!

Arthur realizes what he missed.

MANDY

(continuing)

Oh Arthur!

ARTHUR

Okay, okay. I'll start filming the whole game.

The next batter hits the ball into right field. Three girls gather in a close circle there, each trying to catch it. The ball hits one girl on the head and bounces onto the other girls head and finally, the third girl catches it. They all fall down.

EXT. BASEBALL FIELD. DAY.

An ambulance parks just behind the plate, where two of three girls are carried off on stretchers. Concerned, worried parents collect around the girls.

ARTHUR
 (Oblivious:)
 I got it! I got the whole thing!
 And boy was it funny. This is it!
 At least a ten thousand dollar
 winner!

Mandy and the other parents stare at him with confusion.

ARTHUR
 (continuing)
 I mean it was terrible. The poor
 kids...

INT. FORD EXPLORER. DAY.

JOY
 A forfeit! I can't believe it.

ARTHUR
 It was a great shot. I mean game.
 Ah, until, you know, the trouble.

JOY
 At least I got a homer! I can't
 wait to see it! You got it all,
 didn't you, Dad?

A pained expression falls over Arthur's face. Mandy bites her lip with agony. Mikey rolls his eyes, sighs, shakes his head.

MIKEY
 A father's participation and
 support of his daughter's athletic
 activities is highly correlated
 with that daughter's success in
 life. The converse is probably
 true, too. Maybe even leading to
 poor grades, drug abuse, eventual
 welfare dependency or
 prostitution...

EXT. MANN'S HOUSE. DAY.

The car pulls into the driveway. Joy bursts from the car and runs, crying into the house.

EXT. MANN'S HOUSE. DAY.

Arthur waters the lawn outside in front. Across the street, a large dog rests, tied to a tree. AJ flies up on his skateboard.

The dog goes wild, barking ferociously, trying to get at AJ. AJ does a summy, lands gracefully on his board and laughs at the dog.

Arthur watches this with interest.

EXT. STREET. ARTHUR'S IMAGINATION.

The dog spots AJ on his skateboard and goes wild. The dog breaks free of his chains. The chase is on. AJ laughs hysterically as he speeds up. The dog gains on AJ. A look of horror changes AJ's face. The dog bites him in the seat of his pants just as AJ does a flip. The dog flips with him and they both crash... Arthur shakes his head.

ARTHUR
(Under his breath to
himself:)
Impossible to set up.

AJ comes to an amazing stop before his father.

AJ
Hey dad, you know that digital cam
you got?

ARTHUR
(Perks up:)
Yeah!

AJ
Some of the guys and me were
wondering if you could shoot us
tomorrow? You see they take stills
from videos now and we got one of
the zines interested.

ARTHUR
Zines?

AJ
Magazines. There might be some
money in it.

ARTHUR
How much time do you think that
will take?

AJ
(Shrugs:)
I don't know. An hour?

ARTHUR

(Reluctantly:)

Well, okay, I suppose I could...

AJ

I was thinking too, Dad, it would be so cool if you let me drive over to the ring. I mean six weeks, two days until I get my permit and I'm thinking I might need some, you know, experience...

Mandy appears on the doorstep, purse in hand, hurrying to the car.

ARTHUR

Where are you going?

MANDY

(Surprised by the question:)

Carol and I are going shopping for our evening gowns!

ARTHUR

Evening gowns?

MANDY

For the big Romance convention! Two more weeks! I can hardly wait. Everyone's going to be there: All the big names. The stars!

She clasps her hands over her heart.

MANDY

(continuing)

And Fabio.

ARTHUR

Fabio? That guy who used to be on all the covers?

ARTHUR

(Starts chuckling:)

Didn't he have a weird mishap with a goose or something? A goose flew in his face on a roller coaster?

MANDY

It was a ferris wheel.

ARTHUR
I wish I had seen it...

MANDY
Thank heavens he wasn't hurt badly!
Anyway he's coming! Fabio in the
flesh! We're so excited.

Mandy moves to the car, calling back.

MANDY
(continuing)
Now, remember I signed you up for
the decorating committee. Next
Saturday.

ARTHUR
Next Saturday? Oh honey, it's my
only day off and I had this really
great shoot in mind--

MANDY
Arthur, this is important!

Mandy gets in the car and drives off.

ARTHUR
Two whole days shot. Fifty for the
tickets. Another hundred for the
dress...
(Dismayed:)
There goes the down payment on an
editing program...

INT. MANN'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. TWILIGHT.

The Mann's sit down to dinner.

GRANNY
You probably can't wait until a big
storm comes up and that branch
comes crashing down.

Arthur stands up.

ARTHUR
I'll call the tree trimmers right
now, Granny and leave a message.

INT. KITCHEN. TWILIGHT.

Arthur returns to the table. Mandy serves up vege-burgers and
french fries.

ARTHUR

There it's done.

Granny mumbles unintelligibly.

GRANNY

Did I tell you about my minister's aunt's friend? No, it wasn't a friend. She was a relative. Maybe a friend of a relative. No, I remember! She was a cousin. Wait. That can't be right--

JOY

Well, what happened, Granny?

GRANNY

She died last week, if you can believe that...

AJ

We're all going to die, Granny. You're just closer to the big exit. I guess it weighs on your mind.

GRANNY

No, it wasn't her time! She was only ninety two years old, trapped in a coma for three years. They think she felt everything, all the pain. Tragic, just tragic...

ARTHUR

Thanks for sharing, Granny. Mandy, I priced one of those editing programs. What a bargain!

MANDY

An editing program? You mean like, cutting and slicing film?

GRANNY

They never got the chance to cut into her. She just went like that! These bodies of ours are just clumps of cells, all ticking away like time bombs. There's no hope. We're doomed, we're all doomed. There's no point anymore--

MIKEY

Ms. Platt says the point is to get your DNA in the next generation.

She says it's all about mating strategies.

ARTHUR

Not that again. Please--

AJ

Mikey, you never make any sense.

MIKEY

You want a car, right? Why?

AJ

To drive?

MIKEY

That's what you think, but it's really because a car will elevate your status among the male members of the tribe and consequently, you'll secure better mating opportunities.

JOY

Yuck.

MANDY

Please, children. We're eating dinner. And Mikey, there must be more to life than mating opportunities.

MIKEY

That's just another big DNA trick, the way we all want more.

ARTHUR

I really starting to hate this evolution section of his science program.

JOY

What about God, Mr. Smarty Pants?

MIKEY

God is DNA's biggest trick of all.

AJ

(Exasperated:)

Oh come on!

MIKEY

Our DNA programmed us to believe these optimistic fairy tales of happily ever after: that there is this beautiful place up in the sky, populated by fairy people with wings, and all ruled by the great benevolent King.

AJ

(Concerned by this depiction:)

I don't see where DNA comes into the picture?

MIKEY

Optimistic, hopeful people who believe things like that have better survival strategies than sad and pessimistic people like me and Granny.

ARTHUR

Can we please get back to my editing program? You see, I've realized that if I had a means of cutting and pasting, so to speak, I could make my videos even funnier.

GRANNY

I don't see anything funny about mating these days. It's not for old folks, I'll tell you that. Viagra! Don't get me started on that nonsense. If God wanted old folks to be mating, he wouldn't have worn out the equipment.

Mandy pats an agitated Granny.

MANDY

That's nice, Granny.

(To Arthur:)

Can we afford something like that now?

JOY

My orthodontist said you missed two payments.

AJ

(Shakes his head:)

Dad, you're really starting to lose it here.

GRANNY

Old folks lose it and good riddance.

(Muttering:)

First you're terrified of it, then just when you realize it's not so bad and you don't mind so much, he loses it. And then just when you get use to the long dry season, along comes viagra and the old goats at you again. Thank the heavens Harry died before he got hold of those darn rabbit pills.

(She looks at Arthur:)

Arthur did you remember my prescription at the pharmacy?

EXT. SNOW COVERED FIELD. DAY. ARTHUR'S IMAGINATION.

A snow blizzard swirls over a vast, wild snow filled landscape for as far as the eye can see. The old Ford Escape appears and stops. The doors open and the Mann family gets out, each bundled in snow clothes. Granny finally emerges and using her walker, moves slowly into the snow as the family waves a final good-bye.

INT. KITCHEN. MORNING.

ARTHUR

I forgot, Granny. I'll go after the blizzard, I mean dinner, okay? Anyway, the guy said he'd give me ten percent off if I buy it before next month and the way I see it, with editing capabilities, I can win the big one for sure--

MIKEY

Dad?

ARTHUR

What Mikey?

Arthur takes a sip of his coke.

MIKEY
I've been thinking. You know,
there's a lot of dogs on America's
funniest home videos.

Arthur's hand stops midair as he grasps this revelation.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE. DAY.

Arthur and Joy sit in a allergist's office. Arthur presents his case to the DOCTOR, who reads Joy's chart. A nurse assists him.

ARTHUR
She needs to get over this allergy
to dogs. Even Poodles make her
sneeze.

DOCTOR
There's a new treatment that's been
very successful in some people...
but it involves monthly shots.

JOY
(Alarmed:)
Shots?

ARTHUR
Does it work? We'll be able to get
a dog?

DOCTOR
These shots virtually assure the
patient can live with dogs symptom
free.

JOY
(Alarmed:)
I hate shots!

ARTHUR
It's just a little prick,
sweetheart.
(Rubs hands:)
Let's get to it.

The doctor motions to the nurse who prepares a giant syringe,
which she hands over to the doctor.

JOY
(Screams:)
Daddy!

INT. FORD EXPLORER. DAY.

The whole family sits inside the car as they head to the animal shelter. Mikey sits way in the back, strapped in the cargo section of the Ford Escape.

GRANNY

It's got to be very small so it won't knock me over. A broken hip is a killer of women my age. Mary Abrams' insurance man's wife died within months of a broken hip. No, it wasn't his wife, but his mother. Wait. I remember. It was his mother's aunt...

EXT. ARTHUR'S IMAGINATION.

A small engine airplane. The Mann's stand at an open door. Granny wears a flight suit, but one noticeably without a parachute. The Mann's wave good-bye. Granny leaps into the wide open air.

INT. FORD EXPLORER.

AJ notices Mikey's intense excitement. Mikey can hardly speak. AJ grabs Mikey's hand in a rare display of affection.

AJ

Well, little brother, you finally get your wish.

Mikey nods, squeezes back.

GRANNY

(Triumphantly:)

It was her plumber's wife's neighbor!

JOY

This family owes me big time.

MANDY

You're a very brave girl, Joy. If Mikey could speak I know he'd say thanks.

Joy looks at her little brother, who nods.

JOY

I hope he can play catch, one of those retriever type dogs.

ARTHUR

We need a smart dog, one we can
train to do tricks, lots of tricks.

MANDY

A short haired dog. My vacuum is
getting old.

GRANNY

Old? It doesn't know what old is!

MIKEY

(Quietly;)

I just want to save someone...

INT. POUND. DAY.

This is a modern facility, clean and humane, but still a
pound. An older woman, KIM wearing a blue smock and levis,
leads the Manns through a double row of cages that house
dogs. All kinds of dogs anxiously waiting for adoption.

KIM

I'll answer any questions you might
have but keep in mind: you are
choosing a family member. Our motto
is dogs are people, too!

INT. POUND.

The Manns stand in front of a cage that shows a medium,
Rottweiler mix dog.

ARTHUR

He looks good! What's his name?

KIM

Killer.

The dog snarls menacingly.

INT. POUND. DAY.

Arthur stands in front of a cage that shows three midsize
terriers. One stands on his hind legs, circling.

ARTHUR

Perfect!

INT. POUND. DAY.

Mandy stands in front of a cage that reveals a German short
haired kind of dog.

MANDY

How cute!

INT. POUND. DAY.

Joy stands in front of a cage that shows a retriever type mix.

JOY

Yes!

INT. POUND. DAY.

Granny stands in front of a cage that shows a small mixed breed.

GRANNY

That'll do.

INT. POUND. DAY.

Mikey looks anxiously around, overwhelmed by the prospects, by trying to choose. All of sudden someone catches his eye at the very end of the cages. Using his crutch, he hobbles over.

INT. POUND. DAY.

The Manns stand in a small circle, each ARGUING for their dog. Mikey is nowhere to be seen.

AJ

Hey, hey! It's Mikey's pick,
remember. This is Mikey's dog.

ARTHUR

Where is Mikey?

INT. POUND. DAY.

Mikey sits in the cage with a giant black and white long haired Newfoundland dog. The family rushes up. Kim follows.

MIKEY

This is him. This is the one I've
been looking for.

MANDY

(Dismayed:)
Oh look at the hair!

GRANNY

He's a monster! He'll be my death!

ARTHUR
We'll take him.

KIM
(Sad:)
Mikey, this one's not available for adoption. He's got some problems.
(Sighs:)
Which is probably why he was abandoned outside our doors last week.

Mikey puts his arms around the dog, who licks him with affection and stares up with sad eyes.

MIKEY
What kind of problems?

KIM
It appears he's lame. He's crip--

Kim stops, abruptly realizing the impact of what she's saying.

MANDY
(Gasps:)
Oh my God.

MIKEY
He's crippled?

Mikey looks with alarm to the dog's back leg, which seems loose, different. Desperate now, Mikey stands up and calls the dog to him.

MIKEY
(continuing)
Come on, come on!

The dog wags his tail furiously and with effort, manages to lift up and hobble over to Mikey.

MIKEY
(continuing)
He can get up. Lots of dogs just have three legs, you know.

KIM
Not the large dogs. This guy weighs one hundred and fifty five pounds and I'm afraid he needs all his legs. You can see; the poor thing can barely get around.

MIKEY

So, are you going to fix him?

KIM

The vet tried but well, he says
there's nothing we can do.

MIKEY

What do you mean? What will happen
to him?

Arthur has put his arm protectively around Mandy. Joy
huddles close as well and AJ and Granny look horrified.

KIM

Well, we... It's our policy, when a
dog can't be adopted, you know, we--

GRANNY

The big euphemism!

Comprehending, Mikey turns from his grandmother to Kim.

MIKEY

You're going to kill him! Just
because he's crippled!

INT. FORD ESCAPE. DAY.

Mikey sits in the far back of the Ford Explorer with his very
large, crippled Newfoundland dog. Shaken by what has
happened, the family confronts the unpleasant prospects of a
crippled, very large, furry dog.

ARTHUR

I suppose Boomer won't be able to
learn many tricks.

Mandy squeezes Arthur's hand affectionately.

JOY

He sure can't retrieve.

AJ

A crippled kid with a crippled dog.
What are the odds...

AJ catches himself and sighs.

AJ

(continuing)

I can't believe I just said that
out loud.

GRANNY

(Angry:)

That dog will be the death of me.

ARTHUR

(Under his breath:)

There's always a silver lining.

MIKEY

(Whispers to the dog:)

Don't listen to them, Boomer. We're going to make it.

Boomer licks Mikey and snuggles closer with dog affection.

MIKEY

(continuing)

I know we're going to make it.

EXT. MANN'S HOUSE. MIKEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Arthur appears in the doorway to Mikey's bedroom to check on him before going to bed. Mikey is not in his bed. Arthur finds Mikey on the floor, crying, with his arms around Boomer.

ARTHUR

Mikey? Mikey? Son, why are crying?

Arthur lifts Mikey to his arms. Mikey hugs him.

MIKEY

I'm just so happy, Dad. I love him. I already love him.

ARTHUR

(A sweet whisper:)

Even if it is just a trick of your DNA?

MIKEY

Even so...

Arthur holds Mikey close.

EXT. SKATEBOARD PARK. DAY.

AJ and three friends, GARY, MO and CARL warm up on their skateboards. Each young man wears baggy skateboarding clothes. Arthur begins setting up to film and the preparations are now elaborate. Arthur now sports a baseball cap, levis, blue denim shirt, dark glasses and a couple of days worth of beard.

He checks the lighting with a light meter. Once done he begins adjusting his newest camera against the distance from the action.

Arthur misses one incredible skateboard stunt after another.

AJ races up a jump, flips in the air with his board and lands gracefully on the down side.

GARY

Way to go!

MO

Cool!

AJ

Did you get that, Dad?

ARTHUR

(Distracted:)

I'm not quite ready yet...

Mikey and Boomer watch nearby. Mikey notices an ice-cream stand.

MIKEY

Dad, can I have a couple of dollars for an ice-cream?

ARTHUR

A couple of dollars? Since when is ice-cream a couple of dollars?

MIKEY

Since the late nineteen eighties when Ben and Jerry began making largely organic ice-cream with fancy, designer flavors.

Arthur rolls his eyes, searches his pockets for money and hands Mikey a couple of dollars. Mikey finds the sum wanting.

MIKEY

(continuing)

Boomer wants one, too.

Arthur looks at the dog. Two long lines of drool drop from the pup's muzzle. With a sigh, he supplies the extra cash. Mikey--with his ever present crutch and leg brace--and Boomer move towards the ice cream stand, limping together.

ARTHUR

Let's get this show going! Ready action!

The boys fly into action.

Arthur begins shooting.

AJ bends low with a particularly difficult stunt, and Arthur films AJ's pants slipping over his buttocks. Arthur chuckles, moves to Mo and catches the same thing. He zooms in on Gary and films Gary's desperate tug on his pants.

EXT. PARKING LOT. DAY.

Arthur is still chuckling, excited about the shots he got as the boys begin to part.

ARTHUR

This is great stuff, just great.

CARL

Can we come see it tonight?

ARTHUR

Ah, maybe tomorrow night. I need to do some editing first.

MO

Cool. See you tomorrow night, then?

ARTHUR

Yeah. Tomorrow will be fine.

AJ's friends pile into another car, driven by a mom. Mikey and Boomer get in the back seat of the Ford Escape. Arthur heads for the driver's seat.

AJ

Dad, you said I could drive, remember?

ARTHUR

Oh. Right. Okay.

They both get into the Ford Escape.

MIKEY

Hey! Wait! Boomer doesn't have a seat belt!

AJ

Relax, Mikey. I'm a good driver. I'm not going to crash, I promise.

INT. FORD ESCAPE. DAY.

Arthur holds his video cam, checking various things and not at all paying attention to AJ's driving.

ARTHUR
Just ease onto the parkway slowly
and accelerate until you reach the
speed limit.

Mikey desperately tries to fit Boomer into a seat belt as AJ follows Arthur's instructions and the Ford Escape zips along.

AJ
(Nervous:)
Dad, look at that car.

The Mercedes station wagon in front has two kids in the back cargo space. The kids make funny faces at AJ from the back seat.

ARTHUR
Humm. This might... Hey!

Arthur laughs as the kid's antics become more exaggerated.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
We might have something here!

He hurriedly adjusts his digital cam. No one notices the Porsche behind, flashing his lights at AJ to move into the slower lane.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
Get closer, AJ.

AJ
Dad! I'm so close as it is!

ARTHUR
Don't worry! Every driver has to
know how to come real close without
crashing. Just ease up a little
bit. You can do it, AJ.
(Excited:)
We're looking at a ten thousand
dollar winner here!

Mikey escalates his desperate effort to get Boomer strapped into a seat belt.

The porsche finally swings around and approaches on the driver's side. AJ nervously clutches the steering wheel.

Ahead the kid's laugh hysterically as they moon AJ. Arthur chuckles with excitement.

The porsche, now on the side, cuts AJ off, slipping between Arthur and the kids.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
The bastard!

Mikey squeezes his eyes shut tight, while his hands cover Boomer's eyes, prepared for the crash.

MIKEY
(Praying:)
Please God, even if you're a figment of my DNA...

ARTHUR
Two can play this game! AJ, get in the fast lane and floor it. Give him a taste of his own medicine-- cut the guy off.

AJ
Dad! I can't cut the guy off!

ARTHUR
He did it to you first! This is an important lesson. Everyone needs to know how to cut someone off.

EXT. EXPRESSWAY. DAY.

From above, we see the Ford Escape swing into the fast lane, zip ahead and cut off the Porsche.

INT. FORD EXPLORER. DAY.

ARTHUR
You did it! And look! Look they're doing it again!

Arthur films the kids as they gleefully moon AJ.

EXT. EXPRESSWAY. DAY.

From above, we see the Porsche zip in front of AJ again.

From above, we see the Ford Escape speed up and fit into the impossibly tight space between the Porsche and the Mercedes.

INT. FORD EXPLORER. DAY.

Arthur laughs triumphantly, like a madman as he films. Sudden sirens and flashing lights surround the Ford Escape. A huge sound blasts into the car from a police helicopter above.

MEGAPHONE

This is the police. Will the driver
of the green Ford Escape pull to
the side of the road.

Arthur looks up through his video cam and gasps.

EXT. FREEWAY. DAY.

AJ pulls the Ford to the side of the road.

MEGAPHONE

Will the driver and passengers get
out of the vehicle with your hands
in the air.

EXT. FREEWAY. DAY.

Arthur, Mikey, AJ and Boomer stand at the side of the road, with their hands up on the side of the Ford Explorer. Boomer stands uncertainly on his back legs with his front paws on the Ford Escape. Four policemen and two police cars surround them.

EXT. MANN'S HOUSE. DAY.

The Ford pulls into the driveway. Arthur, Mikey, Boomer and AJ get out. AJ storms into the house.

ARTHUR

He'll get over it.

MIKEY

Some year.

ARTHUR

Well, it could have been worse.

MIKEY

If we crashed and died.

ARTHUR

Thank god, those cops love
America's funniest home videos.

Arthur looks to Mikey, who stands facing his father with hands on his hips.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
It's like, I don't know...Like I
already have fans, you know?

MIKEY
(Sighs)
Pathetic, Dad.

INT. MANN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

Gary, Mo, Carl and AJ gather on the sofa, rustling with excitement. Arthur slips in a CD and kills the lights, chuckling with anticipation.

ARTHUR
This is great. Wait until you see
what I got.

The TV shows one pair of falling pants after another. Occasionally pants fall all the way, only to be pulled up at the last minute. AJ and his friends exchanged confused, anxious glances.

AJ
What's this, Dad?

ARTHUR
Wait, wait. Here comes the really
good stuff.

The TV shows one boy crashing after another. Really spectacular falls. Arthur laughs almost uncontrollably. AJ turns on the lights and turns off the TV.

MO
Geez, that was fun...

CARL
I'm glad you find it amusing, Mr.
Mann.

AJ
Dad, what were you thinking? You
were suppose to be catching the
stunts, the really good stuff.

The boys look accusingly at Arthur.

ARTHUR

Well, I did. I mean I got some of that, but I well, I just began to see the possibilities. You guys are hilarious! This one coming up--

The boys get up one by one.

MO

I'm outa here.

CARL

Way to go, Mr. Mann.

GARY

I thought you were pretty cool-- for a parent.

ARTHUR

Wait, wait. You have to see this one series. I think it could be a ten thousand dollar winner...

With sad shakes of their heads, the boys exit.

CARL

We've seen enough.

AJ

Thanks a lot, Dad.

Standing alone in the living room, Arthur makes sure everyone is gone before slipping the video out and lightly tapping it on his hand. He steps over to the computer desk and starts downloading his films.

ARTHUR

Once I win, I'll make a nice donation to the new skateboard park...

INT. MIKEY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Reading a book, Mikey lays on his bed, with the ever present Boomer at his side. Mandy lovingly massages Mikey's bad leg, lifting it up and down.

MANDY

What are you reading, sweetie?

Mikey shows her the book cover: AWAKEN THE GIANT WITHIN by Toni Robbins.

MANDY
(continuing)
Why are you reading that?

MIKEY
This girl at school called me
Eyore.

MANDY
We all have different temperaments.
You've always been more serious
than other kids.

MIKEY
She thinks I need to awaken the
giant within. I thought I'd read
it. You see, now that I have
Boomer, I'm ready for some new
challenges. This guy believes you
can do anything if you just put
your mind to it.

Mandy pauses with concern, her hands stop their loving
massage.

MANDY
But that's not always true.

MIKEY
Maybe it is. If anything is
flexible, mom, it's truth. Will
you do Boomer's leg again, too?

MANDY
Sure.

Mandy moves to Boomer and gently begins massaging his leg. A
dumb look of ecstasy rest on Boomer's face as she does so.

MIKEY
I'm going to apply the principle to
my bad leg--really working it extra
hard.

Stopping, Mandy tries to measure her son's reaction.

MANDY
The doctors said--

MIKEY
I know, Mom. I was there. Doctors
aren't always right.

And anyway she said that there were some cases where the nerves started working with the muscles, right?

MANDY

But they were so rare. One in a million. Sweetie, I just don't want you to get your hopes up.

MIKEY

Hope is a good thing.

MANDY

Until you lose it.

Mandy sits down on the side of the bed and sighs.

MANDY

(continuing)

I'm so worried about your father. He's so counting on getting on that show and winning. He must have sent them a dozen videos so far.

MIKEY

He's having fun, mom. He's enjoying himself. And anyway, there's no harm in trying, is there?

MANDY

(Sighs again:)

I suppose you're right.

Mandy kisses him and goes to turn out the light.

MIKEY

(He reaches down to pet

Boomer:)

Maybe I will awaken my giant within.

Mikey turns the light back on and returns to his book, lifting his leg up and down. Boomer stretches his bum leg, too and lies down.

INT. ARTHUR AND MANDY'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Mandy reads in bed, wearing only a football jersey that says: I LUV MY PIRATE. Her face charges up with sudden interest as she anxiously turns the page of a romance novel.

INT. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Mandy flies down the stairs. Arthur has all his film equipment out, which has grown monstrously, all of it arranged on the living room floor. He polishes lenses.

MANDY

Arthur, I'm at the good part.

Arthur does not look up, engrossed in cleaning an overhead light bulb.

ARTHUR

I'll be there in a minute, honey.

MANDY

That's what you said last night but you never came.

ARTHUR

Really. Just one minute.

Mandy watches as he carefully begins taking out his lenses and arranging them according to size before getting up to adjust the lighting. She turns sadly away.

INT. PET'S R US. DAY.

Arthur enters the giant pet store. Noisy, caged birds line one wall. Reptiles fill another aisle. Stacks of dog food line another aisle. Arthur finds the correct forty pound bag of dog food and with effort, carries it to the cash register. A teenage girl, HEIDI attends the cash register. An aquarium filled with mice sits alongside the cash register. A sign posted there reads: Twenty five cents each.

ARTHUR

Twenty five cents for a mouse?
That's pretty reasonable.

HEIDI

(Indignant:)
Snake food.

Taking this in, Arthur's face registers horror.

ARTHUR

Yuck. How do people... I mean they're alive? How do they kill the little buggers?

HEIDI

(Disgusted:)

Snakes do it for them. People feed the little guy alive to the snake.

ARTHUR

Eww.

HEIDI

(In a whisper:)

I hate snake people! I saw it once. Once the poor little mouse realizes he can't escape from the evil snake, he curls up into a little ball and puts his little paws over his eyes, like this.

Heidi demonstrates.

HEIDI

(continuing)

It's sick. And if you can believe this--the snake people think it's so funny.

ARTHUR

Funny? They do?

(musing:)

Being terrified is funny, isn't it?

Arthur ponders this and misses Heidi's sudden contempt.

HEIDI

Not if you are the mouse.

ARTHUR

No, no I don't mean the snake situation but well, if someone were afraid of something harmless, like, like a mouse! Imagine watching this person become frightened, really terrified!

(He laughs:)

It would be such a hoot!

Arthur starts laughing.

ARTHUR

(continuing)

I want them!

Arthur rubs his hands together with excitement.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
Give me two mice!

HEIDI
(Confused:)
You want a... snake too?

ARTHUR
No! Heavens no. Just the mouse, er
mice.

HEIDI
You're going to rescue them!

ARTHUR
Well, I, yes! I'll rescue the
little buggers.

HEIDI
You'll need a cage.

ARTHUR
Oh right...

HEIDI
And some food.

ARTHUR
Food? Don't they eat everything?
Can't I just feed them scraps?

HEIDI
They need the right diet. You'll
need a water bottle, some saw dust
for bedding and an exercise wheel.

ARTHUR
(Sighs:)
Probably cheaper just to buy the
snake.

INT. CARPETS R US. DAY.

Arthur excitedly explains his plan to Roy and Lisa. He
removes the bag and shows a small cage with two rescued mice
in it.

LISA
Oh Arthur! You're taking this
video thing too far--

ARTHUR

It'll work! I know it will work!
This will be my hundred thousand
dollar winner!

LISA

Well, okay. But it's going to cost
you.

Lisa holds up Am Way catalogues.

INT. CARPETS R US. DAY.

Arthur has elaborately designed the set. A director's chair sits near a cluster of lights and his camera appears on a moving pod. Finally ready, he motions to Lisa, who wears a blue silk shirt with two pockets over the breasts. She turns her back and begins making adjustments to her shirt. Arthur motions to Roy, who nods.

Roy's voice comes over the loud speaker.

ROY

Attention! Will Sherlock please
come to the office immediately.
The management committee has a
special surprise just for you.

Sherlock drops the long boxes of finished carpet he was loading and brushes his hands on his coveralls before moving toward the office. Arthur motions to Bob, who nods back. Bob steps in front of Sherlock and hands him a giant cup of coke, which surprises Sherlock.

BOB

Here Sherlock. I got this for you.

SHERLOCK

Gee thanks, Bob.

Arthur motions to Lisa, who steps in front of the group.

LISA

I've got a big surprise for you
boys today.

Sherlock grins and moves forward.

LISA

(continuing)

It has to do with the objects of
your affection.

Lisa gently cups her breasts, then points to her breast pockets. The men move in, flabbergasted, confused and excited.

LISA
(continuing)
I got something happening here.
Something you'll all want to see.

Sherlock just about passes out. He leans forward, mesmerized by Lisa's breast pockets, which seems to be wiggling, moving. A little mouse pops out of one pocket, then the other mouse from the other pocket.

Sherlock screams. The coke flies up in his face, he stumbles backward, falls and picks himself up, and runs away as if chased by a monster of his imagination.

The men laugh uproariously. Lisa gently removes the two mice from the pockets and curtsies.

ARTHUR
Cut and print! I got it! I got
it! My one hundred thousand dollar
winner!

EXT. PARK. DAYLIGHT.

Humiliated, Sherlock sits on a park bench, hands shoved in his pockets and staring dejectedly at his booted feet. Arthur finally finds him there and approaches, sitting alongside his friend.

SHERLOCK
That was a mean thing to do, boss.

ARTHUR
No, no, I didn't mean to be mean.
Well okay, it seems as if it was
mean but really, it was so funny!
(Laughing:)
You should have seen the look on
your face...

The look on Sherlock's face quiets Arthur's laughter.

SHERLOCK
Lisa probably thinks I'm a stupid
jerk now.

ARTHUR
She always thought you were a stu--

The pained expression on Sherlock's face stops Arthur cold again.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
Ah, actually she thought you were
such a good sport about it that
she, well, I think...

Sherlock stares with sudden intensity.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
She mentioned that maybe she would
like to go out with you now.

INT. OFFICE OF CARPETS R US. DAY.

Roy sits at the computer. Roy's glasses reflect the computer screen: rockets firing on a monster.

ROY
You really blew it, Art.

ARTHUR
He's okay now.

LISA
And how's that?

ARTHUR
I told him you changed your mind
about going out with him.

LISA
That I'd go out with him?

ARTHUR
(Whispers:)
And show him your tatoo.

Lisa grabs her bottom as if to shield her tatoo.

LISA
Arthur! No one sees my tatoo. No
one. I'm saving it for my marriage,
for my knight in shining armor.

ARTHUR
It made him so happy! Please Lisa.
Just once.

Lisa's gaze narrows angrily but she pulls out her Amway catalogues. She presents these to Arthur, smiling...

INT. MANN'S HOUSE. KITCHEN. DAY.

With the vacuum cleaner near-by, obviously cleaning the house, Mandy holds up a box of concentrated cleaning formula as Arthur gets a drink of soda and a packaged cheese croissant from the refrigerator.

MANDY

How much are these bottles?

Arthur mumbles nervously into the refrigerator.

MANDY

(continuing)

What?

ARTHUR

Forty nine dollars.

MANDY

Forty nine dollars!

She looks at the box.

ARTHUR

It's concentrate! It'll last a life time!

MANDY

And how many boxes did you buy?

Arthur mumbles nervously into his cup.

MANDY

(continuing)

Thirty? Oh Art, we can't afford that! Arthur you have got to stop this. We're falling further and further behind--

Arthur takes Mandy into his arms.

ARTHUR

I know it sounds like a lot, honey but as soon as I win, I'll be able to pay off all our debts with plenty left over--

Mikey and Boomer walk into the kitchen, both limping conspicuously. Arthur looks at the very large dog.

ARTHUR
 (continuing)
 For dog food.

MANDY
 (Worried:)
 I hope so, Art.

Mandy takes the vacuum away. Boomer greets Arthur by sniffing his crotch. The dog really gets his nose up Arthur's shorts.

ARTHUR
 Boomer really likes me.

MIKEY
 Boomer likes everyone, Dad.

Granny comes in on her walker.

MIKEY
 (continuing)
 He especially likes Granny.

Boomer greets Granny in a similar, very friendly fashion, only he gooses her from behind.

GRANNY
 Get him away from me!

Boomer's nose spurs Granny's speed of movement. The old woman practically leaps over the floor, reaching her pills in record time.

GRANNY
 (continuing)
 Should have named him Harold, after my first husband. That man! Followed me everywhere from behind. Couldn't bend to save my life without a big surprise poking me from behind...

ARTHUR
 Mikey, I need to talk to you.

MIKEY
 Yeah, Dad?

Mikey leans on his crutch. Boomer leans on three legs and conscious of this, Arthur throws his cheese croissant into the toaster oven, presses a button and directs Mikey into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Mikey sits on the couch, listening.

ARTHUR

Boomer is a nice dog and all but see, the thing is, he doesn't seem to be learning any of the tricks I'm trying to teach him. Dumb, I guess.

MIKEY

He's not dumb, dad.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Boomer wanders into the kitchen, and sniffs the microwave toaster. Leaping up on the counter and using his mouth, Boomer manages to open the toaster oven, remove the cheese croissant, and drops it on the floor. Boomer gobbles the treat up in a giant gulp. The toaster bings. Arthur appears in the kitchen to get his treat. Boomer limps into the living room.

ARTHUR

You see, the problem is Boomer just isn't funny.

Arthur opens the toaster and reaches in, but it is empty. With confusion, he peers into the toaster oven. Scratching his head, thinking he made a mistake, he goes to the refrigerator, removes another one and pops it in the toaster oven before returning to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Boomer stands beneath the table, scratching his back by lifting slightly up and rubbing.

ARTHUR

He's a great dog to look at and I just know he is capable of being funny. I'm hoping you could help me with him.

MIKEY

Like what, Dad?

ARTHUR

Like, I don't know, think of something funny he can do that I can film.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Boomer springs up on the counter, opens the toaster oven, and drops the croissant to the floor again. He gobbles up the treat.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

MIKEY

I can't really think of anything
funny, Dad.

Boomer appears in the living room.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

The toaster bings and Arthur appears in the kitchen and opens the toaster oven. It is empty. He looks inside. Very confused, he shakes the toaster oven.

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY.

Mandy begins vacuuming in the living room, and when she reaches Boomer, she starts vacuuming the dog as if he was a carpet. No one realizes how funny this is. Arthur appears from the kitchen, scratching his head in confusion.

ARTHUR

The toaster oven is eating the
food.

Mandy finishes vacuuming the dog.

MANDY

Don't be ridiculous, honey.

ARTHUR

No, really, I put--

Arthur stops midsentence as Boomer, satiated from his food, dispenses with the two long lines of droll by shaking his head. The droll flies up to the ceiling.

ARTHUR

(continuing)

Oh that's disgusting!

Boomer shakes his jowls again and this time he hits Arthur across the face with droll. Mikey laughs as he gets up.

MIKEY

Now, that's funny.

Arthur removes a handkerchief and wipes his face of slime just as Joy bounces down the stairs. Much changed, she now wears all black: black levis, black boots, a sheer black shirt over a black tee--shirt, thick black eye liner. The only color variation appears in her dark purple lipstick.

JOY

I'm off to the mall.

Arthur stares in shock at his daughter, watching as she flies out the door.

ARTHUR

Did I miss something?

INT. AUDITORIUM OF LARGE HOTEL. DAY.

Mandy and six other women, including LYNN LOVESWEPT, a middle aged writer, overweight and topped with big hair, busily go about decorating tables for four hundred participants in the large auditorium. Arthur stands on a ladder, putting up a giant sign that reads: ROMANCE 2000 AWARDS. JACK, Lynn's middle aged husband, stands beneath him, helping.

ARTHUR

So, does your wife own a bookstore?

Using a staple gun, Arthur hangs that side of the sign and climbs down the latter.

JACK

No, my wife is a writer.

ARTHUR

Yeah? What's her name?

JACK

Lynn Loveswept. Well, really it's just Kim but--

ARTHUR

(Stops and turns to Jack:)
Lynn Loveswept? No?! She's my favorite!

JACK

(Pleased;)
Yeah?

ARTHUR

Her last book? That scene in the teepee, you know where--

JACK
 (Nodding, bashful:)
 I helped write that scene.

ARTHUR
 It was the best! Mandy and I tried
 it out like three times. We were
 up so late, we slept right through
 the alarm the next day. We were
 all late for work, and school--
 (Laughs:)
 I'll never forget that scene.

Arthur and Jack move the ladder to the other side to finish hanging the sign.

ARTHUR
 (continuing)
 So, what kind of work do you do?

JACK
 Research. I'm Lynn's research
 assistant.

Arthur laughs, nods as he staples the other side.

ARTHUR
 Now that's a job for a man...

INT. HOTEL AUDITORIUM. DAY.

Mandy and the other women busily go about decorating tables as Arthur and Jack stand by, arms folded, talking. A group of two well dressed body guards appear, checking out the place. Cell phones in hand they begin inspecting the premises.

JACK
 Look at that.

ARTHUR
 Who are they?

JACK
 Fabio's people, I bet. Checking the
 place out for his big appearance.
 (Sarcastically:)
 The big master of ceremonies.
 He'll be giving out all the awards
 and crowning all the queens.

ARTHUR
 Mandy goes nuts over that guy.

JACK
My wife's royalties doubled after
they put him on the cover.

ARTHUR
No kidding? Doubled?

JACK
I don't get it. What's so special
about him?

ARTHUR
Just a pretty face with muscles.

JACK
And hair. The guy's got a lot of
hair.

Both men rub their thinning heads of hair subconsciously.

JACK
(continuing)
I really hate that guy.

Arthur nods.

JACK
(continuing)
Did you hear about his ah, little
run in with the goose?

Arthur starts laughing.

ARTHUR
Smashed up his face pretty bad, I
heard.

JACK
Lynn read this article in Romantic
Times about how he has nightmares
about geese now. They say he's
seeing a shrink to get over it,
this big fear of flying geese.

Arthur and Jack chuckle, amused.

ARTHUR
Imagine being afraid of a stupid
little bird.

JACK
A real wimp.

Arthur freezes as the idea strikes him.

ARTHUR
Terrified people are funny.

INT. LYNN LOVESWEPT'S HOUSE. DAY.

This is an opulent upper middle class house--ever since Fabio appeared on the covers of Lynn's novels. The phone rings. Jack, wearing an apron that reads: I LUV MY VIXEN and holding a broom, answers the phone.

JACK
Loveswept's residence.

INT. MANN'S HOUSE. LIVINGROOM. DAY.

ARTHUR
Jack! Arthur. Guess what? The girl at the pet store made some arrangements. I had to drive way out in the boonies but I got him. I got 'im!

EXT. LYNN LOVESWEPT'S HOUSE. DAY.

JACK
(Laughs:)
Way to go!
(Pause:)
What do you mean he's got to wear red?
(pause:)
Like a bull?
(pause:)
I know! I'll say it has to do with the publicity photos. I'll call the romance headquarters and get them to contact Fabio's people.

Jack laughs as he hangs up.

JACK
(continuing)
Red...

EXT. HOTEL ENTRANCE. TWILIGHT.

The Ford Escape drives up to the front of the hotel. Mandy, wearing a pretty ball gown, starts to get out as the valet opens the door.

ARTHUR
Oh honey, I forgot something.

MANDY
What?

ARTHUR
Your corsage.

Mandy softens her expression.

MANDY
That's so sweet. But I don't mind--

ARTHUR
No, no. I spent an hour picking it out.

(Smiles:)
I wanted it to match your beautiful dress. It'll just take a minute or two--

MANDY
But--

ARTHUR
Go on without me. I'll be back within the half hour.

MANDY
Okay, if you..

Too late, Arthur has driven off.

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM. NIGHT.

Mandy and Lynn Loveswept sit at one of many tables near the stage, surrounded by book store owners, fans and romance writers and their spouses. All the woman wear elaborate, slightly garish ball gowns, lots of sparkles, big hair and red lipstick.

LYNN
If you win, you not only get the award and the crown but you get publicity photo's with Fabio on his throne!

MANDY
Oh! To be that close!

LYNN
I'm as nervous as a bride on her
wedding night!

MANDY
I hope you win!

Waiters set dinner plates before them. Mandy looks at her
watch.

MANDY
(continuing)
What is taking Arthur so long? He
said it would just be a half hour?

INT. FORD ESCAPE. NIGHT.

With a look of determination and madness, Arthur drives. A
large goose sits in the back seat. With ruffled, agitated
feathers, the goose gets on the very edge of the seat and
starts pecking at Arthur's head...

ARTHUR
Hey! Hey! Cut it out!

The goose pecks him again but Arthur laughs.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
You are a mean son of a gun!

INT. HOTEL BALLROOM. NIGHT.

Lynn looks around, searching the premises.

LYNN
Speaking of husbands... I've seem
to have lost mine.

MANDY
Not that you need him tonight!

The women laugh, not noticing Jack emerging from under the
stage with a hammer in hand. The spotlight suddenly shines
on him and at first he panics but then he bows and quickly
places the hammer behind him just before the spotlight
adjusts upwards, and stops on the stage where an older woman,
the ANNOUNCER steps to the podium.

ANNOUNCER
And now, ladies and gentleman, the
moment you've been waiting for.

It is my pleasure to introduce our master of ceremonies who will crown our queens of romance. You all know who he is! The one, the only, the incredible, Mister Romance himself, the fabulous... Fabio!

Fabio appears on the stage, wearing a red tuxedo and matching red silk shirt.

EXT. HOTEL. NIGHT.

The Ford Explorer pulls up in front of the hotel. Jack rushes up to Arthur's car.

JACK
Did you get him?

ARTHUR
Oh yeah.
(Rubs head:)
Take a look.

Jack opens the back door of the explorer.

JACK
He's a beaut!

The goose pecks Jack on the nose.

ARTHUR
I just need to set up my equipment now.

JACK
I rigged the stage just right...

ARTHUR
We need to blind-fold the goose. You know, to get him all worked up into a frenzy for the big moment.

The two men laugh like school girls.

INT. BALLROOM. NIGHT.

Arthur appears at Mandy's table.

MANDY
Where have you been?

ARTHUR
I got stuck in traffic.

MANDY
Traffic? But it's a Saturday?

ANNOUNCER
And the winner of best dark haired
vixen with amber eyes in a pirate
novel is...

MANDY
And where's my corsage?

ARTHUR
(Confused:)
Your corsage?

INT. STAGE. NIGHT.

Jack hides in the curtain, holding the blindfolded goose, who pecks furiously at his head.

INT. BALLROOM. NIGHT.

ANNOUNCER
And now, the moment we've been
waiting for...

Arthur gets up.

MANDY
Honey, where are you going?

ARTHUR
I have to go to the men's room.

MANDY
Now? Can't you wait? This is it!
The Queenie awards.

ARTHUR
I'll be right back.

INT. STAGE.

Arthur and Jack hide in the curtains. Arthur sits on a mobile chair, surrounded by lights and equipment. He dons his baseball cap and sunglasses. Jack tensely holds the goose, who seems to be pecking even harder.

INT. STAGE.

FABIO stands regally beside the Announcer.

ANNOUNCER

And now the moment we've been waiting for. Fabio's crowning of our queens.

The audience rustles with excitement.

ANNOUNCER

(continuing)

The envelope please.

A muscular young man, wearing a Viking outfit, approaches with the envelope. The announcer rips it open.

ANNOUNCER

(continuing)

And the winners are Susan Star and Lynn Loveswept.

The audience roars with approval and excitement as the music strikes up.

JACK

My wife! She won!!

Jack drops the goose in his excitement. The goose walks wildly in circles, honking as Arthur leaps from his director's chair and frantically tries to catch it. Realizing what he did, Jack too, joins the effort to catch the goose.

INT. STAGE.

Lynn Loveswept and Susan Star appear on stage to accept their awards. A muscular man in an Indian Chief costume and another muscular man in a Pirate costume approach with the crowns as the audience continues applauding. Lynn Loveswept and Susan Star kneel before the men as they place the crowns on top their heads. Fabio sits on the throne. A look of alarm crosses his face as he imagines hearing a goose honk. He shakes his head as if to rid himself of the hallucination.

Jack catches the goose. Arthur quickly returns to his director's chair and takes up the camera.

ARTHUR

Ready...

Lynn Loveswept and Susan Star sit on Fabio's lap.

ARTHUR

(continuing)

Action!

Jack removes the goose's blindfold. The goose takes one look around and spots Fabio's red tux. Wings spread, the goose attacks Fabio. Fabio screams and jumps up, knocking both women to the ground and pushing back the throne to the place where Jack rigged the stage. The goose strikes at Fabio, pecking furiously. Screaming, with the goose flying at his face, Fabio's arms motion like windmills as he tries to regain his balance but fails and falls crashing down as the stage collapses.

Arthur and Jack laugh like crazy until, horribly, they realize the silence in the room emanates from the auditorium full of people, staring angrily at them.

INT. BELOW STAGE.

Fabio sits up, the goose triumphantly perched on his head, still pecking.

FABIO

Damn it! They never give me a speaking part.

EXT. MANN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

The Ford Escape pulls into the driveway. Mandy gets out of the car, slams the door and furiously walks into the house.

Arthur is still laughing.

INT. KITCHEN. MORNING.

Granny, Art, Mandy, Joy, wearing all black all the time now, Mikey, Boomer and AJ all sit at the kitchen table eating breakfast. All bran cereal sits alongside chocolate sugar bombs and Grape Nuts. Arthur reads a book: COMEDY SECRETS by Melvin Helitzer. Drinking her morning coffee and carefully spooning up the All Bran cereal, Granny lines up her medication, preparing for another day. A clock hanging over the stove reads seven forty-five.

AJ

The burger place is hiring.

MANDY

Joy, tell your father to tell your brother he's too young to get a job.

JOY

I'm not speaking to Dad, either.
(Angrily:)
After what he did to me.

ARTHUR
Joy, it was funny.

JOY
It was embarrassing.

AJ
(Exasperated:)
All kids practice kissing in the
mirror, Joy.

JOY
But their fathers don't send the
film into a National TV show!

AJ
(Angrily:)
At least that's better than making
you and all your friends into
laughing stocks.

ARTHUR
You guys might not be talking to me
now, but I bet that changes when
Americas Funniest Home videos call
to say I'm a winner.

MIKEY
I'm still talking to you, Dad.

AJ
I was saying, mom. I want to get a
car.

MANDY
You're just too young. Joy, aren't
you eating anything this morning?

JOY
And get fat? Get real, mom.

GRANNY
Fat is a big killer. Heart
attacks, cancer, you name it and
the culprit is fat. Sherry
Langsome, now that's fat. Look
what happened to her. Heart just
exploded like a bomb--

INT. GRANNY'S BEDROOM. ARTHUR'S IMAGINATION.

Arthur imagines Granny blowing up, getting fatter and fatter
until she bursts like a balloon.

INT. KITCHEN.

ARTHUR

Not a bad way to go.

The doorbell rings and Boomer barks and looks anxiously to the door but his proximity to food keeps him firmly at Mikey's side.

ARTHUR

(continuing)

That'll be the tree trimmers, I bet.

GRANNY

Finally! Maybe I'll get some sleep now and won't be so tired all the time. Dr. Ober said it wasn't my blood pressure medicine after all--

INT. MANN'S HOUSE. MORNING.

Arthur answers the door. The tree trimmers stand on the porch: AL, short, his slightly over weight frame in coveralls and holding an electric saw and FRANK, younger, tall and slim. Frank holds an extension cord and a ladder.

AL

Al and Frank's Professional Tree service. I'm Al.

FRANK

And I'm Frank.

ARTHUR

Great. It's just a limb, round in the back. Here I'll show you.

Arthur leads the two men around the house and through the backyard gate.

AL

You're in luck. We just got these new electric saws. Works like a charm. Cuts service time in half.

ARTHUR

I don't suppose a branch will cost too much.

FRANK

Got to see what nature has provided and what ya want us to cut away.

EXT. BACKYARD. MORNING.

There is a lawn, bushes and a patio, decorated with traditional patio furniture: chairs and a table with an umbrella. Arthur points to the tree. A branch of a giant maple hangs over the roof.

AL

I'd say we're looking at fifty bucks worth of limb.

FRANK

Oh yeah. That'll be a fifty all right.

ARTHUR

Fifty bucks?! Just for that tiny little branch?

AL

We do the business right, Mister.

FRANK

Oh yeah.

AL

That's the difference between our company and others. Frank and me, we're professionals.

Franks nods.

FRANK

Been at it for years.

AL

Ever seen what happens when folks don't use professionals?

ARTHUR

Well, I--

AL

They butcher 'em! Mutilate 'em!

FRANK

These poor, butchered trees-- nothing but bare mutilated limbs.

AL

Weakens the roots.

FRANK

Whole tree can topple in a storm.

AL

That's what happens when you give unskilled labor a chain saw.

FRANK

We do a professional job.

AL

But if you've got a problem with that, we've got a forest waitin' to meet our new electric saws, Mister.

Mumbling incoherently, Arthur removes his wallet and slowly counts out the fifty bucks. Once done, Al pockets the money. Arthur holds his wallet upside down. It is empty.

Frank appears excited by the tree cutting prospects.

FRANK

Show me the juice!

ARTHUR

You expect refreshments, too?

FRANK

I mean an outlet, Mister. We need a plug.

ARTHUR

Oh!

Arthur looks around and spots the bathroom window that over looks the backyard.

ARTHUR

(continuing)

There's a plug just inside that window--

Arthur stops with sudden inspiration.

ARTHUR

(continuing)

Wait a minute.

Arthur checks his watch.

ARTHUR

(continuing)

Five minutes. That's all I need.

He looks to Al and Frank.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
How about some orange juice, huh?
And maybe some donuts? You guys
look hungry.

Al and Frank exchange confused glances as Arthur rushes back into the house. Boomer appears and sniffs out each man's crotch, who chuckle nervously trying to get away.

AL
That's one cold nose.

FRANK
And wet, too.

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Arthur rushes into the kitchen. Granny sits alone at the table now, surrounded by her medicines, checking her watch. She takes another sip of coffee, checks her watch.

ARTHUR
How do you feel today, Granny?
Normal?

GRANNY
As well as can be expected, I
suppose. There's something wrong
with my feet, though. Edema
sometimes starts in the feet, you
know--

Arthur hurriedly prepares a tray full of donuts and two glasses of orange juice.

ARTHUR
Good, good.

He rubs his hands together with excitement and rushes out to get his video equipment set up.

Boomer comes into the kitchen and sniffs out the donuts. Boomer lifts up on the counter, grabs a donut and drops it on the floor.

GRANNY
That dog doesn't seem to be limping
as bad as he was.

She removes her glasses and rubs her eyes.

GRANNY
 (continuing)
 Could just be my eyes playing
 tricks on me. I don't see so well
 any more...

Mikey hobbles into the kitchen and spots the mess on the floor: crumbs and slobber. He takes the other donut.

MIKEY
 Bye, Granny.

GRANNY
 Hi yourself, young man.

Mikey and Boomer leave.

Arthur rushes in and grabs the tray and the drinks, not noticing that there are only crumbs now. In his haste much of the juice splashes out of the cups.

EXT. BACKYARD. MORNING.

He rushes outside, and sets the plate and cups down on the table.

ARTHUR
 Here. Just give me...

He glances back at, Granny, still sitting at the table.

ARTHUR
 (continuing)
 Oh... two minutes. Now, here's your part. In two minutes, poke your head through that window there.

Arthur points to the bathroom window.

ARTHUR
 (continuing)
 The plugs on the right hand side.
 Okay?

He rushes away. Al and Frank stare at the plate full of crumbs and the half full glasses of orange juice.

AL
 A real cheapskate, that one.

FRANK
 Nice dog, though.

Al looks at the wet spot on his trousers.

AL

If you can get past the slobber.

Frank fingers up one of the remaining crumbs.

INT. KITCHEN. MORNING.

Mandy begins clearing the table.

GRANNY

Is everyone out of the bathroom?

MANDY

The boys all ran off and Joy's in her room.

GRANNY

Here she goes!

Granny makes her way to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM.

Arthur hides in the shower with a perfect view of the window and the toilet. His video camera pops out between the shower curtain and the wall, filming everything.

Granny enters and with some effort sits on the toilet.

Al's head pops in the window, his hands cupped to peer inside.

Granny sees his face in the window and screams. Frank sees Granny and screams.

INT. ENTRANCE HALL. MORNING.

Ambulance attendants carry Granny out on a stretcher.

EXT. MANN'S HOUSE. MORNING.

Still holding his camera, Arthur stands alongside of Mandy, Joy, Al and Frank as the ambulance attendants try to revive Granny. They hit her chest. Granny pops up, sitting up on the stretcher.

GRANNY

Stop that!

Granny passes out again.

The ambulance attendant hits her chest again. Granny pops back up.

GRANNY
(continuing)
Stop it!

Granny passes out again. Again, they hit her chest. Granny wakes up finally, sitting up and taking stock of the situation.

GRANNY
(continuing)
Keep your cotton pickin' hands off
me, young man!

MANDY
Oh Granny, you're all right!

The ambulance attendants step back.

Mikey and Boomer hobble up from down the street as fast as they can. AJ rides up on his skateboard, picks Mikey up and zooms him to the action. Boomer follows as quickly as he can. Joy, Mandy and both her brothers stand opposite Arthur, staring. Boomer reaches their side and barks with worry. Mandy and the kids stare at the video camera still in Arthur's hand, collectively condemning him.

EXT. ROY'S APARTMENT. DAY.

Arthur's stuff surrounds him: all his video equipment, a small suitcase, and a sleeping bag. He knocks on the door. Roy answers.

ARTHUR
Can I stay with you for a while?

INT. ROY'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

It is dark. Arthur sleeps on the floor. A small crate that holds a TV, a long desk populated with three different computers and their screens and a rolling chair, that's all. Empty pizza and coke cans litter the small kitchen.

Arthur bolts upright in his sleeping bag, his expression revealing he has a brilliant idea.

EXT. STREET. MORNING.

A frosty morning. Arthur finds Joe sleeping in an alley way. He wakes him up. Joe wakes up groggily.

ARTHUR

Joe, Joe, wake up. Wake up!

JOE

Arthur, what are you doing here?
Ah geez, were you worried about me?
The shelter turned me away last
night. The cold. It brings all the
homeless guys out of the woodwork
but hey, I always manage to get by.
I found this great vent--

ARTHUR

No, no. I didn't even think of
that. Joe, I've got a great idea!
A big winner. You see, before I was
thinking small; I was thinking mice
and okay, it was funny and if that
was funny, why not go for broke,
for bigger, for possibly the
funniest thing that's ever been on
TV?

He rubs his hands excitedly.

JOE

What are you talking about?

ARTHUR

Rat, Joe! A big fat rat!

EXT. PET STORE. MORNING.

Arthur and Joe enter the pet store.

INT. PET STORE. MORNING.

HEIDI

How's it going? More dog food?

ARTHUR

No, not today.

HEIDI

How are those little mice?

ARTHUR

(Confused:)

The mice?

(Remembers:)

Oh, fine, fine. At least I think
they are. Fact is my wife kicked
me out yesterday.

JOE
He's free! He's homeless!

HEIDI
That's too bad. New pets can be quite a strain on a marriage. It's like having a baby: there's feedings, naps, poops, training, lots of stressful work--

Arthur shakes his head as she speaks.

ARTHUR
Nothing like that. It's complicated but this will make up for it. I need a rat. A big, fat rat.

HEIDI
A rat? Are you sure? If your wife is strung out from the little mice, are you sure she'd like a rat now? They make the nicest pets but--

JOE
It's not for his wife. It's for me. For my pocket.

Joe nods as if this is just the right thing.

JOE
(continuing)
Hey Art, maybe we ought to get two of 'em. One for each pocket. A double whammy: Boom, boom.

He removes his hands from his pocket, demonstrating.

ARTHUR
Two? That's it.
(He laughs like a madman:)
Two rats!
(To Heidi:)
Show us the rats!

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE A BUSY RESTAURANT. DAY.

Patrons eat their lunch in the upscale restaurant.

Wearing his director's gear: levis, work shirt, baseball cap, glasses, and now sporting a full beard, Arthur sets up his equipment, which has grown to include a mobile camera stand, more lights, a larger, fancier, more elaborate camera, a small mike and head phones in which he can communicate with Joe.

Joe stands near-by, wearing an over sized rain coat, hand thrust in pockets.

ARTHUR
Testing, testing. 1,2, 3.

JOE
Roger, Art.

ARTHUR
Okay. Now remember, select only visually interesting people. Mostly haughty, beautiful women. No men--

JOE
Unless they're arrogant looking.

ARTHUR
Right. No homely people. We don't want to bore our audience.

JOE
Babes, and pricks. Gocha.

ARTHUR
Right. Okay now. Quiet on the set. Ready. Set. Action.

EXT. STREET.

Hands in pocket, Joe stands on the street corner, sizing up dozens of people passing by, searching for his first victim. From down the street, Joe spots a young, haughty woman wearing a pretty dress and carrying a matching purse and a number of shopping bags. Joe looks innocently about as he waits for her to come close. Just as she passes, Joe thrusts the rat in her face. The young woman screams and drops all her bags.

A couple of patrons in the restaurant start laughing.

EXT. STREET.

A lovely, professional type woman walks down the street, nose firmly in the air.

Joe reaches in his pocket and thrusts the rat in the woman's face. The woman screams, drops her briefcase. Joe removes the other rat, holding it up at eye level. The woman screams again and panicked, she runs away.

More patrons start laughing.

EXT. STREET.

A young, very pretty woman, with long blonde hair, wearing jeans and a jacket approaches Joe. Joe acts nonchalant until she reaches his side. He thrusts the rat in the woman's face.

EXT. STREET.

The young woman pets the rat in Joe's hand, cooing softly with delight. The shirt under her jacket reads: PETA.

People begin crowding the window in the restaurant.

EXT. STREET.

An old woman carrying an oversized bag, slowly makes her way down the street. Joe presents her with the rat. Angry and not at all afraid, she whacks Joe good with her bag and again and again, until Joe is crouching on the ground, arms over head, trying to protect himself and the rat.

Restaurant patrons howl with laughter.

EXT. STREET.

A pretty woman pushing a baby in a stroller approaches Joe. Joe thrusts the rat in her face. The woman strikes Joe hard across the face. The rat flies into the street and lands in brand new red beamer, stopped at the signal at the corner.

INT. BEAMER.

The rat appears on the dashboard, directly in front of the beautiful woman driver. She takes one looks and screams. The rat, perched on the dashboard, and standing on his two back legs, appears to scream as well.

EXT. BEAMER.

Arthur films this whole thing. Joe leans over the driver's side and looks in the beamer.

JOE
Lady, that's my rat.

EXT. STREET.

A man parks his Lamborghinis recklessly at the curb and gets out, locking it automatically with his keys. He moves towards the restaurant. Well dressed in an Italian suit, he reeks of arrogance.

Joe thrusts the rat in his face and he screams. Joe thrusts the other rat in his face and he collapses in a faint.

Patrons laugh with delight. Someone passes a collection can. Patrons generously fill it.

EXT. STREET.

Joe presents a nice looking young woman first one rat, then the other rat. She does not scream. Quicker than Jesse James, a revolver manifests in her hand and she shoots at the rat, just missing him. Startled, Joe tosses both rats into the air. The rats land near the building, where in desperation to escape, they flee to the door, which just happens to open at that moment. The rats disappear inside the restaurant.

INT. RESTAURANT.

Joe and Arthur rush inside after the rats. Arthur still holds his camera.

INT. RESTAURANT.

A waiter carries a tray filled with plates covered with silver steam lids. A rat climbs up his leg, up his back and slips through the steam hole to land in a warm dark place piled with food.

INT. RESTAURANT.

At another table an overweight man and WOMAN, the latter wearing a wide rimmed sun hat decorated with ribbons and bows, sit at a table, enjoying their coffee and deserts. The other rat runs up the chair's leg and on to the woman's back. The woman shimmies with the strange sensation. The man peers at her curiously. The rat tickles her and she laughs, reaching nonchalantly behind her for the source of the strange sensation. The rat uses a ribbon as a ladder and climbs to the top of her hat.

INT. RESTAURANT.

Arthur and Joe stand near the cashiers desk, searching the floor for their rats.

INT. RESTAURANT.

The waiter sets the tray down in front of a party of business men. He carefully sets the plate in front of a man and removes the lid. The man doesn't notice. Startled, thinking he must be dreaming, the waiter slams the lid back down, smiling at the business men who eye him curiously. He removes the lid again. He screams.

The businessmen scream and in their haste to get up, they knock over the table.

INT. RESTAURANT.

Arthur and Joe orient to the sound of the screams.

INT. RESTAURANT.

The man stares in mounting horror at the rat on the woman's hat. She notices his alarmed look. She hurriedly wipes her mouth, then her nose. She inspects her bosom. The man is pointing, speechless with fright.

The woman stands up in alarm. Their waitress comes over and sees the rat as well. She too, steps back in alarm, drops her small tray and screams. The woman becomes frantic.

WOMAN

What is it? What is it?

In a panic the rat slips inside the woman's dress.

The woman starts screaming.

INT. RESTAURANT.

In a panic the other rat disappears.

All the patrons of the restaurant now watch but certain it is a continuation of the show outside, they laugh uproariously, applauding.

Upon noticing the mayhem, a chef comes out.

CHEF

What's going on? What's happening?

WAITER

Oh it's a director, like, you know, that famous one, Stephen Spielberg, directing this hilarious show! A comedy with some rats.

CHEF

A comedy?

In a panic the other rat climbs on the Chef's shoe and disappears up his pant leg. The chef shakes his leg, to rid himself of the weird sensation.

CHEF

(continuing)

Rats?

Abruptly he realizes the rat is in his pants and he screams, dancing frantically about with the woman who has the rat in her dress. Arthur swings back and forth between the two rat invested people. Joe tries to aid the people, but his efforts only seem to make things worse.

The chef hurriedly takes off all his clothes, and soon he is naked but for his shorts when he realizes the rat is in his tall chef cap. He slowly reaches up to snatch the rat but once his hands are around it, he panics and throws the rat across the room.

The rat lands in a child's bowl of ice cream. The little kid laughs with delight.

Joe promptly picks up the rat and using a napkin, wipes him off before slipping him back into his pocket.

JOE

I got one, Art!

Arthur searches the area.

ARTHUR

Where'd the other one go?

The woman finally gets her hands around the other rat and she screams, gets a bad case of the willie nillies and tosses the rat into the air.

Always peering through the lens of the camera, Arthur watches as the other rat flies straight into his lens, then clings to it in desperation.

EXT. STREET.

Four police cars surround the outside of the restaurant. Two policemen hold each of Joe's arms, arresting him.

ARTHUR

Don't worry, Joe! I'll get you out somehow!

JOE

Are you nuts! I've been trying to get arrested for months now. I'll get three squares a day, a bed and shower for a couple of days.

The policemen lead Joe away. Joe calls back over his shoulder.

JOE

(continuing)

You're going to win, Art! You're one heck of a funny guy...

Waving goodbye, Arthur grins, nods in agreement and starts laughing. He suddenly feels something wiggling up his back...

EXT. MANN'S HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

The family gathers in the backyard: Mikey, Boomer, AJ, Joy and Granny. Mandy carries out a tray of lemonade, setting this on the table. Joy tans herself, wearing a bikini, dark sun glasses and purple lipstick. AJ studies the CA driver's manual. His skateboard lays discarded at his feet. Mikey tosses treats to Boomer, who catches them on the fly.

MIKEY

Dad doesn't even know what's happened, Mom.

MANDY

(Hurt:)

I know.

GRANNY

I don't know what happened either. One minute I was fine and the next minute I'm feeling dizzy and breathless--

MIKEY

Granny, I'm talking about Boomer's leg and now mine, how the doctor thinks there's hope. You know! The doctor put me in intensive physical therapy--

GRANNY

I always thought he needed therapy, that one. The way he likes to terrorize mom's, little animals and old women.

Of course in my day, we didn't have fancy doctors and all this laying around on couches. We had stiff spines instead. And thank God for that--

MIKEY

Granny, I'm talking about Boomer and I, how we're getting better!

JOY

Boomer fetches now.

She tosses a tennis ball and Boomer retrieves it.

MIKEY

And I can put weight on my leg now.

JOY

It's like well, Boomer was sent to you, to show you the way.

AJ

First he shared your pain and then he helped you overcome it.

JOY

What's that called again?

MIKEY

Anthropomorphism. Just don't ask me how to spell it.

(To Mandy:)

Dad would want to know, Mom.

MANDY

I'm still mad, sweetie.

JOY

Me too. I'll never be able to show my face if the mirror if that thing goes on TV!

AJ

He's just went way overboard.

MANDY

If he would just stop making those ridiculous videos long enough--

The phone rings. Mandy jumps up and runs to it.

INT. KITCHEN.

MANDY

Hello?

(pause:)

American's Funniest Home Videos?

Oh my God...

EXT. STREET. DAY.

Arthur finds Joe snoozing in a card board box. He shouts the news. Joe jumps out and together they dance in happy circles of excitement.

INT. CARPETS R US. DAY.

Arthur jumps for joy, overwhelmed by his fortune. He swings Lisa around, slaps Roy on the back, shakes his hand, ends up hugging him. He leaps on Sherlock like a little kid.

INT. MANN'S HOUSE. DAY.

Laughing, hysterical with joy, Arthur picks Mikey up and swings him around. He embraces Joy full force and tightly hugs AJ. He bends Mandy over backwards and kisses her passionately. He presents Boomer with a giant bone and pets his head affectionately. Granny moves slowly into the living room. Arthur sweeps her off her feet and carries her like a little baby to a chair, where he leans over and plants big kisses all over her face. Granny smiles, laughs at this rare, once in a lifetime show of affection.

MIKEY

Dad, Dad, there's even better news!

Arthur sets his hands on Mikey's shoulders. The family crowds around Mikey, all smiles and excitement.

ARTHUR

More good news? What could be better than American's Funniest Home Videos?

MIKEY

I'm learning how to walk without my brace. And Boomer too! He hardly has a limp anymore!

Arthur kneels down to be eye level with his son. At first he seems speechless.

ARTHUR

You're kidding?

Mikey shakes his head.

MIKEY

Here, I'll show you.

ARTHUR

Wait, wait this is something I have
to film. For us. For prosperity.

INT. MANN'S HOUSE.

Arthur has set up his video equipment. The family watches from the sidelines. Mikey has removed his brace. Arthur films as Mikey takes a few tentative steps without his brace.

Arthur pauses and looks over to the kitchen counter where he spies a fruit bowl. A bunch of bananas sit in the bowl. He manages to resist the temptation there...

INT. AMERICA'S FUNNIEST HOME VIDEOS SET. NIGHT.

Arthur, Mandy, Joy, AJ, Granny, Mikey and Boomer sit in the front row, poised, excited, ready to win the big prize.

TOM

So who will our one hundred
thousand dollar winner be? Frogs
and diapers?

TV shows a video of a little three year old girl who stuffed her diaper with four large bull frogs. She takes them out one at a time. The last one seems to be stuck.

TOM

(continuing)
Or... Windy Day...

TV shows video of two girls walking on a pier holding umbrellas. You guessed it. The wind picks up and the two girls are blown into the water.

TOM

(continuing)
Or Granny's big surprise...

TV shows Arthur's video of Granny in the bathroom on the toilet. Al peers into the window. Both scream and Granny faints.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

This is a conventional apartment, but packed full of various Amway products, piles of catalogues and decorated with Amway posters. Lisa sits on the couch, watching AFVs. Sherlock sits beside her, staring at her low cleavage.

INT. ROY'S APARTMENT. NIGHT.

Roy looks up from his computer screen to stare at the AFV's on the TV.

INT. TV STORE.

Joe stands in front of fifty TV screens, all showing AFV's.

INT. AMERICA'S FUNNIEST HOME VIDEO SET.

TOM

And our second place winner is...

Arthur closes his eyes tight and squeezes Mandy and Joy's hand.

TOM

(continuing)

Granny's Big Surprise!

Arthur's eyes pop open. He looks around, his shock and disbelief change to outrage.

TOM

(continuing)

And the winner is Diapers and Frogs!

Arthur leaps to center stage.

ARTHUR

Are you nuts!? You think that piece of two bit footage of smashed frogs in a diaper is funnier than the Granny's big surprise?

Tom steps back, alarmed. Two armed body guards move onto the set to remove Arthur.

ARTHUR

(continuing)

That's a piece of crap! They shot it with an old hand held digital 8mm, for God sake! The lighting is all wrong and that kid is ugly!

And stupid! Frogs? I can't believe
you people think frogs are funnier
than Granny!

The body guards carry Arthur off stage.

ARTHUR
(continuing)
It's a grainy, shaky, piece of
crap, I tell you...

Boomer whimpers. Mandy and the kids hide their heads in
embarrassment.

INT. LISA'S APARTMENT.

Lisa and Sherlock laugh like crazy.

LISA
That's the funniest bit. When
Arthur loses it. And they know
it's the funniest bit; this is the
forth re-run.

SHERLOCK
(Nodding:)
Art, he's special. He's funny.

LISA
I thought I was special?

SHERLOCK
Oh yeah...

LISA
And my tatoo?

SHERLOCK
The most special...

INT. MANN'S BEDROOM. DAY.

Mandy enters the bedroom to find Arthur lying on the bed, a
wet cloth over his head and a mask over his eyes. Laughter
comes from downstairs as the re--run of AFV's concludes.
Granny's high pitched cackle is the loudest.

MANDY
Okay Arthur, it's over.

Arthur grunts in pain and rolls on to his side, putting his
back to Mandy. Mandy sits on the bed.

MANDY
 (continuing)
 Come on, honey. That's it. They
 swore this was the last time they'd
 show the re-run.

Arthur mumbles something unintelligible.

MANDY
 (continuing)
 Oh Arthur... I know you're still
 disappointed about losing the big
 prize, but after all you did win
 ten thousand. Honey, maybe you can
 put this whole thing behind you if
 we take a vacation...

At first Arthur gives no reaction, but he finally turns over.

ARTHUR
 A vacation? Like where?

MANDY
 We probably can't afford Hawaii but
 I don't know, maybe Southern
 California? We could go to all the
 sights: Disneyland, Sea World,
 Universal Studios. If Granny
 doesn't feel up to going, I was
 thinking maybe your friend Joe
 could lower his standards and stay
 with her for a week or two...

Arthur is struck with another inspiration.

ARTHUR
 Southern California...

EXT. SO CAL FREEWAY. DAY.

Ford Escort moves slowly along on the 405, turning off on an
 exit sign.

INT. FORD EXPLORER. DAY.

Arthur drives. Mandy reads a romance novel in the passenger
 seat. Joy paints her nails black. AJ reads Car and Driver
 magazine. Mikey studies a map. Boomer smears the back window
 with dog drool.

MIKEY
 Dad, you took the wrong off ramp.

ARTHUR
I might as well tell you now.

MANDY
Tell us what?

ARTHUR
I've got a meeting.

MANDY
A meeting? What kind of a meeting?

ARTHUR
With a producer.

MANDY
What do you mean a producer?

ARTHUR
A movie producer. He does funny
movies. Comedies.

AJ
What are you meeting him for, Dad?

ARTHUR
He's interested in my story.

JOY
(Skeptical:)
Dad, why would anyone be interested
in your story?

Arthur laughs like a madman.

ARTHUR
Because it's pretty darn funny,
that's why.

EXT. SO CAL FREEWAY. DAY.

The Ford Escort zips on to an off ramp that reads HOLLYWOOD
CA.

MIKEY VO
Oh my God. Here we go again.

THE END

EXT. WILDERNESS AREA.

Arthur, the Director and Boomer appear on a cliff overlooking
a vast wilderness area.

Arthur and the Director hold three cages between them: one cage of mice, another of rats and one with the goose in it. With great care, they release the rodents and goose into the wilderness. Boomer barks approval. A sign appears that reads: No animals were harmed during the filming of this movie. The rodents quickly scatter, the goose honks once before taking to the air. Arthur waves at the camera, turns and begins climbing up.

Rocks slide, the earth rumbles and an avalanche ensues.