

"COMEDY IS HARD!"

FADE IN:

INT. THEATER - NIGHT

A production of "The Staff Meeting" is being performed in a Comedy Showcase venue in New York City's Greenwich Village before a live AUDIENCE.

The author, GERRY GUGGENHEIM, is on stage playing the leading character, a naïve INTERN on the writing staff of a fictitious Television Show. The staff writers are all actors.

The curtain goes up.

The scene on stage is that of a conference room. The STAFF WRITERS of the TV comedy variety show are meeting with their PRODUCER. He is the kind of a man who has a permanent dribble of egg salad from his chin to his lap, totally without taste, class or humor.

He is browbeating his HEAD WRITER over the quality of a script for an upcoming show.

PRODUCER

I don't like this script. It's not funny enough. Rewrite it and make it twenty-five percent funnier.

The head writer is fully aware of how inane the comment is and the dilemma he faces.

HEAD WRITER

(to staff)

Okay... Any ideas?

The staff is dumbfounded, except for the intern who waves his hand enthusiastically.

INTERN

I have an idea.

The Producer, who is about to leave, hesitates a moment as the staff writers focus on the intern, hoping he will save the day.

INTERN

(continuing)

Why don't we put in a scene where the producer, or somebody, calls a staff meeting, or something, because he doesn't think a particular script is funny enough, and then he says something really inane and zombie-like, like

(laughing)

"I don't like this script, make it twenty-five percent funnier."

The writers look at each other not believing what the intern just said. They wince and groan silently, afraid to look at the producer, who just glares with contempt at the intern who rambles on in his stream of consciousness narrative, totally unaware of the gravity of the situation.

INTERCUT BETWEEN THE STAGE PLAY AND THE AUDIENCE THROUGHOUT

The audience chuckles.

The intern becomes more and more animated as he improvises on his theme.

INTERN

(continuing)

Okay, so what do we do?

He has a brilliant idea.

INTERN

(continuing)

How about a long fart?

There are more glances between and among the writers, accompanied by gasps and groans.

There is embarrassing laughter from the audience.

The intern is puzzled at their reaction, still oblivious to the situation.

INTERN

(continuing)

What? Even Aristophanes thought a fart was good for a cheap laugh. Okay, so I'll pretend to doze off... or maybe we can get a fat lady to fart... and while you all ad lib a story conference among yourselves, I'll let out some wind. At first it's just a small "pfit", and hardly anyone notices. Then there's another, only longer and louder. "Pfffffffffffffrt!"

He becomes more and more animated and stricken with the humor of the scene he's creating as he improvises.

The audience laughs louder.

INTERN

(continuing)

Now one or two of you look over at me. It's a little embarrassing. I'm not embarrassed; I'm sleeping. You're embarrassed. But you pretend not to notice. You all keep on talking. Meanwhile, I keep on farting and all the while I have this silly smile on my face.

The audience laughs throughout the piece, the intensity varying from subdued to raucous.

INTERN

(continuing)

Each of you kind of like, take turns interrupting your conference and looking over at me in disbelief, then you return to your ad lib dialogue.

The producer glares at the intern with disgust. The writers stare at him in expressionless disbelief as the intern continues in his own little world, mirroring the reactions in the room without realizing it.

INTERN

(continuing)

Finally, the noise has gotten so loud that it disrupts the meeting. You all stop and stare. First the reaction is disbelief, then a mild horror turning to disgust and then amazement.

As the intern speaks, the writers reflect his descriptions. Their reaction turns from disbelief to mild horror to disgust and amazement.

INTERN

(continuing)

Meanwhile, I just go on, "Pfffffrt." It's unbelievable. Then, one by one, you start to giggle, then chuckle...

One of the writers giggles, then another chuckles, then stifle their laughter.

INTERN

(continuing)

... then you stifle the laughter, and all the while I'm passing the biggest fart anyone has ever heard.

The intern and the audience are laughing in sync with the escalation of his narrative.

INTERN

(continuing)

Then you all burst out laughing.

The writers are deadpanned and deadly silent.

INTERN

(continuing)

I fart, you laugh. I'm fast asleep with a big stupid smile on my face. It becomes hysteria. I just don't let up.

The producer glares at him.

INTERN

(continuing)

The producer, meanwhile, who has no sense of humor, just glares at me. Kind of like in disbelief. Like he doesn't fart?

The audience is laughing hysterically.

The producer is turning red with anger. He slowly but unconsciously crushes sheets of note paper in his fists. The writers are very uneasy.

INTERN

(continuing)

Anyway, now you start to make funny comments, like, "Must have been the burritos", or "I didn't know he was musical", or something like that. We'll think of some potty humor gags. Meanwhile, I just keep on going, "Pffffffffffffrt".

The intern is improvising, searching for dialogue, a joke, anything to punch up the piece, laughing out loud, when another STAFF MEMBER enters the room.

The writers all put their fingers to their lips and make a silent "Shhhhh" to the newcomer.

INTERN

(continuing)

Oh, oh, oh! Then maybe somebody comes into the room while I'm farting. You all point to me and go "Shhhhhhhhh!" You don't want to wake me up.

The intern is laughing out loud. The other are dead silent.

INTERN

(continuing)

"Unbelievable!" Someone whispers.

OTHERS enter the room in response to the intern's laughter. Each falls silent as they realize what's happening.

The producer continues to steam. The universal facial expression throughout the remainder of the scene is one of disbelief.

INTERN

(continuing)

Then one of you goes to the door and yells, in a stage whisper, of course, "Hey, come here, everybody, you won't believe this." "What?" "Longest fart in history!"

By now the room is full, adding fuel to the intern's inspiration.

INTERN

(continuing)

Finally, the whole studio crew, technicians, office staff, everybody in the building is crammed into the room, but nobody's making any noise because you don't want to wake me.

A PHONE RINGS.

INTERN

(continuing)

The phone rings.

The head writer picks it up and lays it on the table without speaking.

INTERN

(continuing)

Someone picks it up and quietly lays it on the table, he doesn't even answer it.

The intern is really into it by now. He is so hyper that he could be a candidate for a straight jacket in a padded cell blabbering to himself.

INTERN

(continuing)

Then one of you says, "Hey, this might be something for the 'Guinness Book of World Records'. We ought to time it.

(MORE)

INTERN (cont'd)  
Anyone have a stopwatch?" Of course, someone does, and you begin to time it.

He closes his eyes and pretends to be sleeping with a big smile on his face.

INTERN  
(continuing)  
Meanwhile, I'm still fast asleep with this really stupid smile on my face, going, "Pffffffffffrt".

He laughs hysterically. The audience laughs along.

INTERN  
(continuing)  
Then someone says, "Hey, get a camera in here. We should get this on tape." So someone begins taping. "It must be five minutes," someone says. "It has to be some kind of record."  
(beat)  
Then suddenly...

He stops abruptly, startling everyone. All are dead silent. The intern whispers seriously.

INTERN  
(continuing)  
... silence! Dead silence. You all lean forward in expectation.

They all lean forward. The audience is silent.

INTERN  
(continuing)  
The fart has ended. It's over. I yawn and wake up to see a room full of people staring at me. I don't realize I had just made history of a sort. I act puzzled.

He acts puzzled.

INTERN

(continuing)

"What?" I ask, innocently, and then...

(loud and exuberantly)

... everyone bursts into a spontaneous and thunderous applause as the camera zooms in on my perplexed expression and we... fade out.

The audience applauds enthusiastically.

The intern looks around the room for a reaction from the writers. All are deadpanned and silent. He doesn't understand why they don't share his enthusiasm.

INTERN

(continuing)

What?

The staff all look tentatively at each other and the producer, waiting for the ax to fall.

The producer has never stopped glaring at the intern.

PRODUCER

I like it.

(to head writer)

But it's only ten percent funnier. Work on it.

The producer exits stage left leaving the intern with a silly grin on his face while the others stare at each other in astonishment as the curtain falls and the audience cheers wildly.

INT. THEATER - BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - LATER

The members of the Showcase and audience gather around Gerry and congratulate him on the show. One of the audience is an aspiring playwright acquaintance, who calls himself MOLIERE.

Gerry is shy and unassertive off stage.

MOLIERE

That was great! You should do stand-up.

GERRY

I'm really not very funny.

MOLIERE

What are you talking about?  
That was funny stuff.

GERRY

I'm just not funny, in person,  
I mean. I can write funny, but  
I don't talk funny. I can't  
even remember jokes.

MOLIERE

You should be on television.  
Your stuff is a lot better than  
the crap that's on now.

GERRY

I don't know where to start. I  
don't know anyone. That's why  
I'm here. What do I do next?

MOLIERE

There's a party tomorrow night  
in the village. Come with me.  
Maybe we'll bump into someone.

He writes down the address and gives it to Gerry.

GERRY

I think I'm free.

INT. APARTMENT IN GREENWICH VILLAGE - NIGHT

Gerry arrives as the party is in full swing. All  
VILLAGE TYPES are there, from fancy dressers to jeans  
and tee-shirts. Moliere is not in sight.

A YOUNG HUNK swishes over and greets Gerry. He is the  
quintessential athlete. Gerry is not exactly the  
picture of physical fitness.

YOUNG HUNK

Hi, my name's Peaches, what's  
yours?

GERRY

Gerry... Guggenheim.

YOUNG HUNK

You're new around here. Where are you from?

GERRY

Straight from the country.

YOUNG HUNK

Oh, straight, that's so cute. You're a funny man. What do you do, Gerry-pie?

GERRY

I write.

YOUNG HUNK

Oh, a writer! I love artistic types. Where do you work out?

GERRY

Out of my apartment.

YOUNG HUNK

Oh, you are so clever with words. Not work out of, work out. Where do you pump up all those special muscle things that need pumping up from time to time? You should iron out those tummy wrinkles.

He lovingly pokes Gerry in the stomach.

GERRY

When I was a kid, my cousin had enlargement of the heart. Mom said it was from lifting weights. Kinda scared me, know what I mean?

YOUNG HUNK

How's your cousin now?

GERRY

Dead. Heart attack. Mom always said it was from lifting weights.

YOUNG HUNK

How about swimming? I know a nice secluded beach.

(MORE)

YOUNG HUNK (cont'd)

We could talk, get to know each other better.

GERRY

Ear infection. Chronic. Hydrophobia, too.

YOUNG HUNK

Tennis, anyone?

GERRY

I can't hit the ball over the net.

(rotating shoulder)  
Bursitis doesn't help.

YOUNG HUNK

How about softball? We have a Village League.

GERRY

I'm not the best hitter. No eye-hand coordination. Doctor says it could be the ear infection, I don't know. Can't throw either.

(rotating shoulder  
and wincing)  
The old bursitis. Can't run.  
(rubs knee)  
Bad knee. Slipped in the bathtub. Water problem, on the knee, that is.

Gerry chuckles and winces again. Peaches is genuinely sympathetic, but growing weary of the conversation.

YOUNG HUNK

Oh, boo-boo. How about a little touch basketball? I'll be gentle.

GERRY

I can't dribble the ball for dick. It's a rhythmic thing, I can't even chew gum at the same time.

YOUNG HUNK  
(confused)  
At the same time as what?

GERRY  
Yeah.

YOUNG HUNK  
We can shoot some baskets.

GERRY  
Can't. I have this real problem  
with depth perception. Can't  
judge the distance to the basket.  
I'm lucky if I can pee in the  
potty.

YOUNG HUNK  
How about running?

GERRY  
Not since I got this hernia.

He holds his groin and winces.

GERRY  
(continuing)  
I walk a little, to keep in  
shape, but if I try to run, I  
feel like my balls are going to  
fall off.

They both wince convincingly. Now all Peaches wants  
to do is get away from him.

GLORIA, a dynamite, super trim and super fit beauty  
wanders into their space sipping a drink.

YOUNG HUNK  
Gloria, this is Gerry... Gerry,  
Gloria. Gerry's a writer, but  
not my type.

He walks away.

GLORIA  
Hi, Gerry.

Gerry brightens up and comes alive.

GERRY

Wow! You look great!

GLORIA

I feel great! Joined a country club and a fitness center. Taking up golf and tennis, although I'm not very good yet, doing some Nautilus and swimming.

Meanwhile, Gerry is trying to keep his tongue from falling out of his mouth and drooling on his chin.

GERRY

Wow!

GLORIA

Do you belong to any clubs?

GERRY

Funny you should ask. I was just talking to Peaches about that.

GLORIA

Oh, so you're into sports?

GERRY

Are you kidding? I almost qualified for the Special Olympics.

GLORIA

(impressed)  
Ooooooh!

GERRY

Maybe I can give you a few hints on improving your form.

They find a quiet corner and chat AD LIB (M.O.S.).

Moliere is on the other side of the room trying to get away from Peaches.

MOLIERE

No, I don't dance, thank you.  
(beat)  
Excuse me, I see a friend.

He heads for Gerry and Gloria.

YOUNG HUNK  
 (calling after  
 him)  
 I hope your rash clears up.  
 (beat)  
 Artistic types! Hate 'em.

Gerry and Gloria are hitting it off nicely.

MOLIERE  
 I see you two have met.

GERRY  
 What luck. Gloria knows a lot  
 of people in the business.  
 She's going to introduce me to  
 a friend of hers who writes for  
 TV, maybe give me a few pointers.

GLORIA  
 That's the least I can do for  
 my new personal trainer.

MOLIERE  
 Wait. You're... her new...

Gerry smiles sheepishly.

INT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

The place is a sublet rathole.

Gerry is at his laptop writing furiously, smiling and  
 wringing his hands with glee.

The PHONE RINGS.

GERRY  
 Hello... Oh, hi, Gloria... You  
 did... Great... Saks' complaint  
 department... I'll go see him...  
 What... no, I can't give you a  
 massage...  
 (rubbing wrists)  
 My carpel tunnel syndrome...  
 Maybe next time.

He hangs up, grabs some of his manuscripts and leaves  
 in a rush.

EXT. SAKS FIFTH AVENUE DEPARTMENT STORE - ESTABLISHING -  
DAY

INT. SAKS FIFTH AVENUE DEPARTMENT STORE - COMPLAINT  
DEPARTMENT - DAY

Gerry gets in line behind a CUSTOMER waiting at a counter with a sign above it reading, "Complaint Department". The store employee behind the counter, ARCHIMEDES TROYANOS, a distinguished looking gentleman, is the so-called TV writer who has graciously agreed to help Gerry at Gloria's request.

CUSTOMER

(irate)

I have a complaint.

ARCHIMEDES

(blasé)

Get in line.

Gerry and the customer look around.

CUSTOMER

There's no one else here.

ARCHIMEDES

Then take a number.

CUSTOMER

There's no one else here but me  
and this guy.

ARCHIMEDES

Stop pushing, you'll get your  
turn.

CUSTOMER

I'm not pushing.

GERRY

I'm not pushing.

ARCHIMEDES

Well, you certainly don't have  
a complaint about having to  
wait in a long line in the  
complaint department, do you?

CUSTOMER

I didn't come here to register a complaint about the line at the complaint department. I'm here to register a formal complaint...

ARCHIMEDES

Oh, puh-lease, there's no need to be formal.

CUSTOMER

... I have a serious complaint...

ARCHIMEDES

Will you stop blabbering and get to the point, we're very busy.

CUSTOMER

Busy? There's no one else here but me and this guy.

Gerry just shakes his head and waves his arms in a confused sort of way.

ARCHIMEDES

That's because we're very good at what we do. Now, your complaint, puh-lease!

CUSTOMER

I didn't like the way I was treated in the men's department.

ARCHIMEDES

(facetiously)  
Oh, no, another one... briefs too tight?

CUSTOMER

You know, I don't like your attitude.

ARCHIMEDES

(mimicking the customer)  
I don't like your attitude.

CUSTOMER

I demand to see the Manager.

ARCHIMEDES

Oh, you do?

CUSTOMER

Yes, I do!

ARCHIMEDES

And complain about me?

CUSTOMER

Yes. I think we have a major attitude problem in this store.

ARCHIMEDES

(aside)

Oh, Mr. Manager, Mr. Manager, we seem to have a major attitude problem in this store.

Archimedes adjusts his tie and cuffs, raises an eyebrow and says

ARCHIMEDES

(continuing)

May I help you, Sir?

CUSTOMER

You're the Manager?

ARCHIMEDES

I am the Manager. Do I understand correctly that you have some kind of a complaint?

CUSTOMER

Yes, I don't like your attitude.

ARCHIMEDES

(chortling)

Oh, well, this is a first.

(musing aloud)

Hmmmm... Now, how shall I handle it? Give myself a good old fashioned talking to, or... hmmmmmm, perhaps send myself a nasty letter?

CUSTOMER

I can see where the personnel in this store get their attitude.

ARCHIMEDES

(annoyed)

Just what exactly is your beef,  
"Mr. Customer is always right"?

Gerry and the Customer are momentarily startled.

CUSTOMER

(hesitating)

You made me forget.

Archimedes gets nastier and more supercilious and mocking as the scene progresses. Gerry shrinks in embarrassment.

ARCHIMEDES

Oh, I made him forget. Why  
don't you go home and take a  
cold shower?

CUSTOMER

That's it! I want to see the  
owner.

ARCHIMEDES

Really? Why?

CUSTOMER

My complaint.

ARCHIMEDES

I thought we forgot our  
complaint. Look, the owner  
doesn't have time to entertain  
malcontented dildos like you,  
get the hell out of here.

CUSTOMER

Dildo? That's it! Now I've  
had it!

ARCHIMEDES

Oh, my. Now we've had it, now  
we've had it. Oh my, oh my.

CUSTOMER

I have really had it with you,  
pal.

ARCHIMEDES  
Pal? Now I'm his pal. I guess  
I'll have to take your name...  
pal!

CUSTOMER  
Name?

ARCHIMEDES  
Identification... where you  
live, work, wife, kids, stuff  
like that.

CUSTOMER  
I'm not giving you my name. I  
want the name of the owner.

ARCHIMEDES  
That's not our policy. You  
have to give us your name.

CUSTOMER  
My name? Why?

ARCHIMEDES  
So we can send our complaint  
adjustment committee to your  
home to verify and resolve your  
grievance.

CUSTOMER  
Adjustment committee?

ARCHIMEDES  
Yes, we take these matters  
seriously. I'll need your name  
and address, your wife's name,  
your employer...

CUSTOMER  
Wife? Employer?

ARCHIMEDES  
Just for our records. The  
owner's a stickler for records.  
Oh, the paperwork I have to do  
for complaints. I could just  
kill!

CUSTOMER

Suppose I don't want to tell you... yeah, like it's none of your damn business?

ARCHIMEDES

Oh, we'll find you. See that minicam up there?

He points above the counter. Gerry and the customer look up at it.

ARCHIMEDES

(continuing)

We'll find you all right, we always do. I belong to the Association of Department Store Complaint Department Managers... we network among ourselves... ferret out chronic complainers like yourself... make the necessary adjustments.

CUSTOMER

The Association of Department Store Complaint Department Managers?

ARCHIMEDES

We'll find you. Children?

CUSTOMER

What do you mean, children?

ARCHIMEDES

Just for the records.

CUSTOMER

Oh yeah... three.

ARCHIMEDES

School?

CUSTOMER

They go to a private country day school up in Riverside.

ARCHIMEDES

(chortling)

Didn't we all? Any pets?

CUSTOMER

Pets?

ARCHIMEDES

Well, actually, vicious guard dogs are the main concern.

CUSTOMER

One Doberman Pinscher, that's all. Any problem with that?

ARCHIMEDES

(laughing out loud)

One Dobie... no problem. How about security systems?

CUSTOMER

Security systems?

ARCHIMEDES

Burglar alarms, intruder detection devices, things like that.

CUSTOMER

Why?

ARCHIMEDES

Well, Mr. Suspicious, in the event our adjustment committee makes a night call... can't be too careful... don't want anyone to fall down and go "boom"! We do have insurance premiums to consider.

CUSTOMER

(nervously)

Ahhhh, on second thought, maybe I'll forget about it.

ARCHIMEDES

But why?

CUSTOMER

I don't want to cause any trouble.

ARCHIMEDES

Trouble is my middle name.

CUSTOMER

No, seriously, forget about  
it... I'm out of here.

The customer leaves in a hurry. Gerry is befuddled.  
The manager calls after him.

ARCHIMEDES

(in a sing-song)  
We'll find you.  
(aside)  
Another complaint successfully  
resolved!  
(to Gerry)  
Terribly sorry about that.  
Some people have no  
consideration. Now, how can I  
be of assistance to you? I  
certainly hope you don't have a  
complaint.

GERRY

No, no, no, no. I'm not looking  
for trouble. Gloria said you'd  
help me find an agent or a  
writing job. I'm...

ARCHIMEDES

Oh, you're the professional  
athlete...

GERRY

Well, not exactly... I write  
comedy.

ARCHIMEDES

... who writes comedy. Call me  
Archie. Come into my office.

He lifts the counter top and they go into a back office.

INT. COMPLAINT DEPARTMENT - OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Archie pours Gerry a cup of frightening coffee.

ARCHIMEDES

I've always been amazed how  
anyone can write comedy. Where  
do you get your ideas?

GERRY

I amaze myself sometimes, I really don't know. Funny things happen all around us all the time. I just take the ordinary and stretch it to the absurd.

ARCHIMEDES

I'm trying to get on the soaps. That's the crap I write. Annoying, whiny, confrontational stuff. Drivel, essentially.

GERRY

So, what do I do next? I have a suitcase full of sketch comedy and nowhere to go. I'm lost. I wish I were the aggressive type. I'd like to sell them, or get a job writing for a show, like "Your New Show Of Shows".

Archie gives Gerry a list of resources.

ARCHIMEDES

I made up a list of books to read, trade publications with production leads, names of producers and agents who rep comedy writers. Now comes the hard part. You have to make the rounds, call, knock on doors, send letters, e-mail, do more showcases. Learn to thrive on rejection. There's no easy way. And don't quit your day job.

GERRY

What day job? I'm running on empty.

A MONTAGE OF SCENES FOLLOW (M.O.S.)

INT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gerry pours over the list that Archie gave him.

He searches through the phone book for numbers and addresses.

He makes phone call after phone call.

A cheerful expression on his face at first, gradually changes to disappointment.

He types letter after letter and inserts his manuscripts.

He gives each one a good luck kiss.

EXT. NYC STREET SCENE - CORNER MAILBOX - DAY

Gerry posts his letters.

INT. AGENT#1 OFFICE - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

A dejected Gerry sits across the desk from a fat cigar smoking AGENT#1 who shakes his head and gives him back his material.

INT. HALLWAY TO GERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Gerry checks his mailbox. It is empty.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. HALLWAY OF AGENT#2 OFFICE - DAY - DAYS LATER

Gerry tries the door which reads "Tyler & Tyler, Talent Agents". The door is locked. He pushes a buzzer under an intercom. A VOICE answers.

GERRY

My name is Gerry Guggenheim.  
I'd like to talk to Ms. Tyler.

VOICE (V.O.)

Do you have an appointment?

GERRY

No, I was in the building and I thought...

VOICE (V.O.)

Well we can't see anyone without an appointment.

GERRY

Can I make an appointment?

VOICE (V.O.)

Send us a query letter.

GERRY

I did. I never got an answer.

VOICE (V.O.)

Did you include a self addressed stamped envelope?

GERRY

Yes, I did.

VOICE (V.O.)

Well, we're too busy to answer all the queries we get.

GERRY

So, what do I do?

VOICE (V.O.)

Get lucky.

GERRY

But I write funny stuff. If you'd only read it... hello...  
(pressing buzzer)  
Hello... hello....

INT. AGENT#3 OFFICE - DAY

An effete SNOB AGENT#3 at a very prestigious artists' management agency chuckles as he hands back Gerry's material.

SNOB AGENT

Come back when you're a star.

GERRY

(still confused)  
But why would I need you when I'm a star?

SNOB AGENT

To justify our existence.

INT. AGENT#4 OFFICE - DAY

This agent is a PURITAN, a Jerry Falwell type who possibly bathes in his undies.

PURITAN AGENT

You call this "Planned  
Parenthood" sketch funny?  
Anatomically correct dolls?  
Explicit and graphic depictions  
of degenerate acts of sex?  
You, sir, are a sick man!

GERRY

It's a parody of educational  
television. It's intended to  
be funny. Admittedly it's not  
for the squeamish or people who  
deny their umbilicals.

PURITAN AGENT

I'm proud of my belly binky!  
And you are a very sick man.

INT. HALLWAY TO GERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY

A dejected Gerry checks his mail box. The box is overloaded with mail. He smiles broadly. He begins opening his self addressed envelopes as he walks up the stairs.

INT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry continues opening his mail. He expression changes from hopeful to dejected again. He shuffles one reject after another as he reads them.

GERRY

"We only read agented material."  
"Material inappropriate." "We're  
moving our office to California."  
"We don't employ freelance  
writers." "We don't read  
unsolicited material."

He throws the letters on his desk and checks his answering machine. He has two messages.

VOICE#2 (V.O.)

This is Bernstein and Karp's Agency. We got your query letter. I'm sorry, but we only represent established clientele.

GERRY

When I'm established and a star, I'll be sure to call you.

GLORIA (V.O.)

Hi Gerry, this is Gloria. I'm still waiting for that massage, but that's not why I'm calling. I just got a job with "Your New Show Of Shows". Call me and meet me for lunch.

GERRY

Wow! Is this my lucky day?

There is a knock on the door. It is the LANDLORD.

GERRY

(continuing)

Who is it?

LANDLORD (O.S.)

Mr. Chow. I like a little money, you know, Mr. Gerry? Have to pay taxes.

Gerry opens the door. An Asian gentleman, enters.

GERRY

You're in luck, Mr. Chow. Look at these letters. All offers of employment. This time next week, I'll be a famous. You'll see my name on television.

LANDLORD

No read English. Money if you please. Tomorrow, maybe?

GERRY

Tomorrow, maybe. Yes. Maybe tomorrow.... maybe.

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD RESTAURANT - DAY - LATER

GLORIA

I got this great job working for, guess who, the Producer! And I told him about you and he said for me to bring in one of your scripts as an audition piece.

GERRY

Oh, glory, glory be! I was going to throw myself out of my window, but I'm only three stories up, and now you have come to my rescue. What kind of a man is he? Like, nice?

GLORIA

He's a typical network executive. No particular talent and no sense of humor. But he makes up for it in charm.

Gerry hands her his script for "The Acting Class".

GERRY

Give him this, it'll knock his socks off.

GLORIA

Come by tomorrow after lunch. That's when he's in his best mood.

INT. CORNER SMOKE SHOP - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Gerry gets in line behind other CUSTOMERS to buy lottery tickets from JOE, the owner.

A DOWAGER is cashing in a winning ticket.

JOE

That sure was a lucky number.

DOWAGER

Yes, I said to my daughter as we were driving back from the funeral, "Look, the clock says 4:14. That was your father's number. I think I'll play it. He would have liked that."

JOE

Hey, you never know.

The dowager leaves and a SLEAZEBAG with a WAIF in tow are next. The waif is as cute as Shirley Temple.

SLEAZEBAG

(to waif)

Pick a number, Sweetie.

The waif thinks with her finger on her chin.

WAIF

One... six... two.

The sleaze gives Joe a dollar.

SLEAZEBAG

Box 162.

JOE

(referring to  
waif)

Your little good luck charm?

SLEAZEBAG

Numbers, horses, the kid don't lose.

They leave and Gerry is next in line.

GERRY

Hi Joe, I feel lucky today.  
Give me a Quickpick.

Joe prints a ticket and gives it to Gerry.

GERRY

(continuing)

Boy, this is an interesting place.

JOE  
Lots of interesting people.  
Watch this next guy.

An EVIL looking MAN enters, dressed in black with smoke billowing from his raincoat. The only things missing are horns and a tail.

EVIL MAN  
(hissing)  
Six... six... six.

He pays, picks up his ticket and leaves as the other customers wave away the smoke.

JOE  
You could write a book.

INT. NAASTIE'S OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY -  
FOLLOWING AFTERNOON

The sign on the door reads, "YOUR NEW SHOW OF SHOWS!".

Gerry sits waiting for his interview with ILIE NAASTIE, the Producer of the show and Gloria's new boss.

Gloria sits at the reception desk, busy with the phone.

Naastie is in his adjacent office, yelling at someone on the phone.

NAASTIE (O.S.)  
He writes like Benny Hill? I  
hate Benny Hill! I wouldn't  
watch Benny Hill if you tied  
and gagged me!

The intercom buzzes and Gloria picks up.

NAASTIE (O.S.)  
(continuing)  
Gloria, make sure the limo is  
booked to pick up my wife for  
the matinee tomorrow. Just  
her, not the kids.

GLORIA  
Yes, Mr. Naastie.

NAASTIE (O.S.)  
Is that writer here?

GLORIA  
Yes, Mr. Naastie.

NAASTIE (O.S.)  
Let's get it over with. Send  
him in.

GLORIA  
(to Gerry)  
He's in a good mood.

Gerry enters Naastie's private office.

INT. NAASTIE'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

With Naastie are a small cadre of TOADIES.

Pictures of Naastie's wife and two children are  
prominently displayed on the walls and desk.

The wife's pictures appear to be in costumes from  
theatrical productions.

The children are a girl, about fourteen and a boy about  
twelve.

NAASTIE  
(to Gerry)  
You like Benny Hill?

GERRY  
Hate 'im.

NAASTIE  
So what's this crap you write?  
This "Acting Class"? This is  
funny?

Naastie reads from the script.

NAASTIE

(continuing)

An actor pretends he's opening a knife that isn't there, then he cuts himself with it, only there's no cut, and he bleeds to death, only there's no blood, and he's really dead and everybody stands around and watches and lets the guy bleed to death, only there's no blood? This is funny?

(to his toadies)

This is funny?

TOADIES

(in unison)

Not funny.

NAASTIE

Where's the blood? How can he cut himself with an imaginary knife? There's no knife. It's ridiculous!

GERRY

It's funny because it's absurd. You see, it's a parody of a sense memory exercise in an acting class. The whole thing is ridiculous. It's totally absurd. That's why it's funny. If it were logical, it wouldn't be funny at all. It wouldn't even be interesting.

NAASTIE

Well, it's not funny. I think I know funny, and this isn't funny. Boys?

TOADIES

(in unison)

Not funny.

NAASTIE

Oh, it's absurd, all right.

(pause)

Look, I don't want to hurt your feelings, Guggie...

He holds the manuscript between his fingers as if it is contaminated and drops it in the wastebasket.

NAASTIE  
 (continuing)  
 ... but it stinks!

Gerry goes postal.

GERRY  
 Funny? You think you know funny?  
 Benny Hill was a comic genius.  
 You dull witted slugs wouldn't  
 know funny if it hit you in the  
 face with a cream pie.

NAASTIE  
 Now cream pies are funny. Boys?

TOADIES  
 (in unison)  
 Cream pies are funny.

NAASTIE  
 (to Gerry)  
 And you seem to have an attitude,  
 Mr. Guggenheim.  
 (into intercom)  
 Get Security.

EXT. NAASTIE'S OFFICE BUILDING - NYC - DAY - MOMENTS  
 LATER

Gerry is literally dragged out through the main entrance by two burly SECURITY GUARDS and thrown on the sidewalk.

The guards go back in while Gerry gets up and brushes himself off.

He looks around with an expression that turns from confused to discouragement to fear to anger.

While he is standing there, a limousine pulls up to the entrance.

The DRIVER gets out and enters the office building, leaving the engine running.

A CAR THIEF passing by, jumps into the limo and races off with it.

Gerry tries to get the attention of PASSERSBY.

He waves his arms frantically, but he is speechless. All he can do is mumble and do flustered doubletakes and tripletakes.

People continue to pass by nonchalantly. No one notices.

The limo disappears in the distance.

Gerry watches, mesmerized.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Gerry wanders down the street aimlessly.

He stops in front of a real estate office.

GERRY'S P.O.V. - THE REAL ESTATE DISPLAY WINDOW

There is a bulletin board with photos and descriptions of residences and businesses for sale and for rent.

One of them is for an estate in Woodstock.

INSERT

"Exclusive Listing. For Sale or lease. Mansion and barn on twenty acres. Immediate occupancy. Price Negotiable."

BACK TO SCENE

Gerry looks into the office.

GERRY'S P.O.V. - INSIDE THE OFFICE

Salespeople are busy with customers. No one seems to notice him.

BACK TO SCENE

Gerry enters the office.





NAASTIE

(continuing)

What do they even bother?

BETTY

... Cocoa Bran, Frosted Bran,  
Swiss Bran, Bran Buds, Cinnamon  
Bran, Bran Squares, Wheat Bran,  
Crispy Wheat Bran with Raisins,  
Rye Bran, Rice Bran, Five Grain  
Bran, or Five Grain Bran with  
Nuts and Fruit?

NAASTIE

They all sound so good. How  
about some raisin bran? Any  
raisin bran?

Mom checks, then answers sheepishly.

BETTY

No.

NAASTIE

Darn.

BETTY

But here's something new that I  
picked up at the Agway Farm  
Store.

She opens a 100 pound drum and scoops up some pellets  
with a feed scoop.

BETTY

(continuing)

Bran Berry Pellets with alfalfa.  
Recommended by Veterinarians!

NAASTIE

Well, if it's good enough for  
America's farmers, by golly,  
it's good enough for my kids.  
Give them a bowl.

CAITLIN

I think I'd rather have some  
stewed prunes.

(MORE)

CAITLIN (cont'd)

Us growing kids need the energy for school and sports and to help our growing bones. And they taste good too, don't they Ted?

TED

Yeah, and the Coach says that the fiber in prunes contributes to a well formed b.m., and thus really helps prevent colon cancer. And you know, you can't play football with a colostomy.

CAITLIN

(sadly)

Yeah, a lot of kids in my class had colostomies. Not to mention the triple by-pass surgeries for clogged arteries.

Mom gives them both some stewed prunes and the pellets to Naastie.

BETTY

There's some leftover liver and onions in the fridge for lunch, children. I'm going into the city to see a matinee with your father, so you'll have to take care of yourselves.

TED

Hmmm, we love liver and onions, don't we, Caitlin?

CAITLIN

We sure do. Not only are they nutritious, they're necessary to replace the iron I lose menstruating.

The doorbell rings.

NAASTIE

That's my limo. I'll send yours out around Noon.

He gives Betty and the kids air kisses and leaves for work.

INT. GERRY'S APARTMENT - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry is dressed in a dark business suit, packing furiously. He throws everything he owns into two suitcases.

There is a knock on the door.

LANDLORD (O.S.)

Mr. Gerry, Mr. Gerry.... you  
here? Mr. Chow here for rent...  
Mr Gerry?

Gerry doesn't answer.

He listens as the landlord's footsteps die out, then he slowly opens the door and slips out, carrying his two suitcases.

EXT. NAASTIE'S OFFICE BUILDING - NYC - DAY - LATER

A man in a dark business suit leans inconspicuously against the building where Naastie has his office.

A newspaper hides his face. Beside him are two suitcases.

A limo pulls up. The DRIVER gets out, leaving his hat in the limo and the engine running.

He enters the office building.

The man in the suit puts down the newspaper. It's Gerry.

He picks up his suitcases and runs to the limo.

He opens the back door, throws in the suitcases, closes the back door.

He gets his coat stuck in the door, opens it again, gets his coat unstuck, closes it again.

He opens the front door, starts to get in when the driver comes out of the building.

The driver yells.

DRIVER

Hey, you!

The driver runs to the car, opens the door and grabs Gerry by the coat.

Gerry engages the transmission and tries to drive off. The driver hangs on.

Gerry is halfway out of the door and hanging on to the steering wheel.

He stretches to reach the gas pedal.

Gerry pulls free of the driver's grasp and drives off.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

He races down the street with the driver running after him.

The light at the intersection turns red. Gerry stops.

The driver runs up to the limo.

Gerry sees him coming in the rear view mirror and locks the door.

The driver tries to open the door. He bangs on the window.

GERRY

(yelling)

Car jacker, car jacker.

Passersby grab the driver and wrestle him to the ground.

Gerry runs the red light, narrowly missing cars crossing in front of him.

He turns a corner on two wheels and knocks over a hot dog vendor's cart.

He jumps the curb and takes down a fruit stand.

Pedestrians scatter in all directions.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW - LONG ISLAND EXPRESSWAY - DAY -  
MOMENTS LATER

Gerry and the limo head for Long Island.

INT. NAASTIE KIDS' BEDROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Betty can be heard off screen, singing as she goes  
about her household business.

Caitlin and Ted are talking about the camp thing.

CAITLIN

I wasn't too crazy about the  
idea at first, but the more I  
think about it, it could be  
great!

TED

What? I don't want to go to  
camp.

CAITLIN

Are you kidding? This is our  
chance to get away from this  
nut house for the entire summer.  
Those two don't even know we're  
alive. I'd be surprised if  
they even knew our names.

TED

Do you think they'd have burgers  
and fries at camp?

CAITLIN

Lots of junk food. Other kids  
eat it all the time. I read  
that.

TED

How bad can camp be?

CAITLIN

How could it be worse?

INT. LIMO - ON THE EXPRESSWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry is rehearsing lines as if he were composing a drama.

GERRY

Hi kids, your father sent me to pick you up... your dad sent me to get you... and bring you to... take you to... he said to have you meet him at... Oh boy, this is harder than I thought.

(pause)

Hi, kids... I'm your dad's new driver? Wouldn't they know that?

Hi, my name's... No, I don't want them to know my name. Oh, darn...

EXT. NAASTIE HOME - DAY - LATER

Gerry drives past slowly. The other limo is there to pick up Mrs. Naastie.

Gerry cruises past and turns the corner. He stops, turns around and waits until the limo leaves.

INT. LIMO - ON THE CORNER - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry continues to rehearse his lines.

GERRY

Hi kids, your father instructed me to pick you up and bring you into the city for a surprise party. Yes, that's it! A surprise party. What kids would question a surprise party? Okay, okay... Hi, Kids... but then... What's the surprise...?

GERRY'S P.O.V. - THE HOUSE AND LIMO

Mrs. Naastie comes out and gets into the limo. It drives off.

EXT. NAASTIE DRIVEWAY - DAY - A MINUTE LATER

Gerry pulls into the driveway and gets out of the car, wearing the chauffeur's hat.

He walks up to the door and rings the bell.

The kids answer.

CAITLIN  
(surprised)  
What are you doing here?

GERRY  
Uhhh... Hi kids, your father...

CAITLIN  
We weren't expecting you for a couple of weeks at least.

Gerry is thoroughly confused.

GERRY  
What? You weren't?

TED  
No, we're not even packed yet.

GERRY  
Huh?

CAITLIN  
No, come on in. We'll only take a minute.

Gerry is a little nervous and skittish, but he goes along with the kids, not knowing what is going on.

GERRY  
Uhhhh... Okay...

He goes in.

INT. NAASTIE HOME - FROM ROOM TO ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The kids show Gerry to the living room.

CAITLIN

Wait here, we'll pack and get out of here. The quicker the better.

GERRY

Uhhh... Okay...

The room is filled with photos of the Naasties with show business celebrities.

Gerry studies them all while waiting.

Upstairs he can hear the noise of the kids scurrying around getting their things together.

He pulls a curtain aside and peeks out a window.

He sits down at the piano and plays "Comedy Tonight", the Overture from "A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Forum" and sings along.

GERRY

(continuing)

Something suspicious, something peculiar, something for everyone, a comedy tonight... tragedy tomorrow, comedy tonight!

The kids come back down with suitcases.

TED

Put the bags in the limo and then get the bikes.

GERRY

What?

CAITLIN

Come on, come on, we haven't got all day. We want to get out of here before our father changes his mind.

GERRY

What?

CAITLIN

The bikes. Get the bikes. My god, man, is this your first day on the job?

GERRY

Well, actually, it is, in a way, you might say.

TED

Well?

Gerry picks up the bags and carries them out to the car.

EXT. NAASTIE'S DRIVEWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry puts the bags in the trunk.

He gets the bikes from the garage and tries to jam them in the trunk, but there isn't any room.

Between his suitcases and the kids, the trunk is full.

CAITLIN

Get some rope and tie them to the bumper or the roof or something. No, wait, we should have a bike carrier in the garage.

Gerry looks around the garage, finds the bike carrier and mounts the bikes on the trunk.

CAITLIN

(continuing)

(to Gerry)

You like liver and onions?

GERRY

Yeeech!

CAITLIN

Then we'll have to stop somewhere for lunch.

They pull out of the driveway and head for the Catskill Mountains.

EXT. LIMO - ON THE EXPRESSWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The limo heads east towards the Throgs Neck Bridge.

EXT. LIMO - THROGS NECK BRIDGE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The limo heads north across the bridge.

EXT. LIMO - ON THE NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The limo heads north towards Woodstock.

INT. LIMO - ON THE NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The kids are getting to know Gerry.

TED

Say, Gerry, where is this camp, anyway?

GERRY

Camp?

TED

Yeah, camp. Where is it? What's the deal? Do they have junk food?

GERRY

Junk food, yeah... it's a specialty.

TED

All right! But like, where is it?

GERRY

Uhhh... It's in Woodstock.

CAITLIN

Oh, cool. Are there still hippies up there?

GERRY

Lousy with them.

TED

Way cool, man. Do you know any?

GERRY

I don't get too close.

They pass a sign indicating a rest area ahead.

CAITLIN

Pull off here, I'm hungry.

Gerry obeys.

EXT. THRUWAY REST AREA - DAY

Gerry parks the limo.

A New York State Police car passes them.

The TROOPERS give the limo a good look.

Gerry slumps down in the seat until they pass.

He parks and they all get out.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

They get in line at the cafeteria. Restaurant WORKERS wait for their orders.

TED

I want a greasy hamburger and some greasy French fries.

CAITLIN

Double that order. And some milk shakes made with real ice cream.

GERRY

I'll have a diet coke.

At the end of the checkout line, a cashier rings up the total for all three. It comes to twenty dollars. Gerry has no money. He is genuinely embarrassed.

GERRY

(continuing)

I don't have any money.

CAITLIN

I'll get it.

She reaches in her pocket and pulls out a wad of fifty and one hundred dollar bills.

GERRY  
Where'd you get that?

CAITLIN  
My allowance.

GERRY  
Oh.

They find an empty table and sit.

They eat like animals while Gerry watches in astonishment.

Two STATE TROOPERS sit down next to them.

Gerry tries to look inconspicuous.

The Troopers eye him suspiciously.

STATE TROOPER  
Hi, kids, how are you doing?

KIDS  
Great!

STATE TROOPER  
Where you headed for?

TED  
Camp.

STATE TROOPER  
Sounds like fun.

CAITLIN  
We hope so.

STATE TROOPER  
Don't forget summer safety rules  
when swimming and biking.

TED  
And a nutritious well balanced  
diet.

EXT. THRUWAY REST AREA - DAY

Gerry hustles them back in the limo looking over his shoulder for the Troopers.

INT. LIMO - ON THE NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY - DAY -  
CONTINUOUS

TED  
(licking his  
fingers)  
Man, was that burger good.

CAITLIN  
Fiber is out and grease is in!

They high five each other in the back seat while Gerry concentrates.

He is not sure where all this is going.

CAITLIN  
(continuing)  
So, Gerry. What's this camp  
like? What kind of activities  
are there?

TED  
I hope we don't have to dress  
like Indians and made stupid  
plaster molds of leaves and  
twigs.

CAITLIN  
Yeah, what's it like?

GERRY  
Uhhh... It's a comedy camp.

CAITLIN  
Wow! A comedy camp.  
(puzzled)  
I never heard of a comedy camp.

TED  
What's a comedy camp?

Gerry improvises as he goes along.

GERRY

Well, you get to write comedy stuff... and you get to act in comedy stuff... you can write, yeah, you can write, you can build sets, you can be stage managers, you can direct plays. The whole shmear.

CAITLIN

Just like Broadway... or TV?

GERRY

Yeah... Yeah! That's it... just like....

TED

Just like the stuff our father does?

Gerry's getting hotter and hotter.

GERRY

Yeah, just like the stuff your father does... only better! You're going to do comedy like your father never dreamed of. You're going to make your father ashamed of himself. All his money and power and influence will not corrupt our mission. Your work will be so innovative that your father's going to wonder where he's been for the past twenty years!

The kids high five each other.

KIDS

(in unison)

Yeah!

CAITLIN

I'm going to change my name to Sigourney... Sigourney Kidman.

TED

Yeah, and I'll be Brad Cruise.

CAITLIN

We are too cool.

They high five each other again.

KIDS  
(in unison)  
Yeah!

EXT. EXIT NINETEEN ON THE NEW YORK STATE THRUWAY - DAY -  
CONTINUOUS

INSERT - EXIT SIGN

That says 'Woodstock'.

BACK TO SCENE

Gerry exits through the EZPass lane.

EXT. HIGHWAY TO WOODSTOCK - DAY

He continues on the way to Woodstock, passing signs  
along the way as they near their destination.

EXT. LIMO - WOODSTOCK BACK ROAD - DAY

The limo approaches a mansion with a "For Sale" sign  
along its driveway.

He pulls into the driveway.

INT. LIMO - GERRY AT THE WHEEL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry checks the photo he took from the real estate  
office with the mansion itself.

GERRY'S P.O.V. - THE MANSION - ESTABLISHING - DAY

This is the place.

BACK TO SCENE

GERRY  
Here we are, kids.

EXT. MANSION DRIVEWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry gets out of the limo and takes down the "For Sale" sign.

GERRY  
(to himself)  
Possession is nine-tenths of  
the outlaw.

He puts it in the front seat passenger's side.

He drives up to the front of the Mansion. A sign over the door says, "EAGLES' AERIE".

The place is overgrown with weeds. It is obviously neglected.

They all get out of the limo.

EXT. MANSION - FRONT PORCH AND DRIVE - DAY -  
CONTINUOUS

CAITLIN  
I hope the caretaker's body  
isn't still lying around.

GERRY  
Uhhh... Well, he was a really  
old guy. Yeah... that must be  
why nobody answered the phone.

TED  
Where is everyone?

GERRY  
I guess we're the first ones  
here.

CAITLIN  
What do we do until the others  
arrive?

GERRY  
We'll have intensive one-on-one  
workshop sessions.

TED

How can we have one-on-one sessions when there's two of us and only one of you?

GERRY

Fortunately, I'm a schizophrenic, you know, dual personalities.

CAITLIN

Which one of you is the weird one?

GERRY

Meanwhile, I suggest we make ourselves at home.

He tries the front door. Of course, it's locked.

He pushes up against it with all the strength he can muster, and forces the door open.

He yells into the emptiness. His voice echoes.

INT. MANSION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry is partially inside the doorway.

GERRY

Hi, anybody home? It's us...  
Gerry and Caitlin and Ted.

They enter cautiously.

The place is musty and just a little spooky.

Everything creaks and all sounds echo.

GERRY

(continuing)  
Why don't you kids find yourselves a bedroom and unpack while I look around?

CAITLIN

Okay, bring in our suitcases and unload the bikes.

GERRY

What?

TED  
Duh? Unload the car, Gerry.

GERRY  
Oh... Yeah.

Gerry leaves to get the bags.

EXT. MANSION - FRONT PORCH AND DRIVE - DAY -  
CONTINUOUS

Gerry mumbles as he unloads the bags and bikes.

GERRY  
I have to get some rope... lots  
of rope... lots of good, strong  
rope.

INT. MANSION - FROM ROOM TO ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

CAITLIN  
This is going to be an  
experience.

TED  
It already is.

They explore their digs.

The place is furnished with old-fashioned overstuffed  
furniture and Adirondack chairs and tables.

They try the spigot on the kitchen sink. The water is  
on.

They flip a light switch. The electricity is on.

There is no phone in view.

They find a suitable bedroom upstairs and plop on the  
beds.

They are puzzled.

CAITLIN  
Oh boy, camp!

TED  
Boy, oh boy, oh boy!

EXT. MANSION - FRONT PORCH AND DRIVE - DAY -  
CONTINUOUS

Gerry unloads the limo and puts the bags and the bikes  
on the porch.

He spots an outbuilding, an old barn and heads for it.

EXT. BARN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry tries to look in a window but it is too dirty to  
seen in.

He tries the door. It too is locked. He forces it  
open and enters.

INT. BARN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

He looks around.

GERRY'S P.O.V. - INSIDE THE BARN

The interior is a theater of sorts.

It has a thrust stage surrounded by a few hundred seats  
in tiers on three sides with a small office behind a  
ticket window opening to the front porch.

BACK TO SCENE

His face brightens. He is having an epiphany.

GERRY  
Glory be... A comedy camp!

INT. MANSION - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry bursts into the mansion, yelling.

GERRY  
Kids, kids. Wait until you see  
the theater, you're going to  
love it!

The kids come running down the stairs.

GERRY

(continuing)

Wait till you see it, this is better than if I had planned it.

CAITLIN

What do you mean?

GERRY

Oh... Well... I've never been here before. I was sent here just like you.

CAITLIN

Just what exactly is your job here?

TED

Yeah? We're campers... you're...?

GERRY

I'm like your tutor, your counselor, producer, director, head writer...

CAITLIN

So you're not just a chauffeur?

GERRY

No, that's just a day job. Well, let's get busy cleaning up.

TED

What, no maids, no cleaning service?

GERRY

Oh... oh, no... You're like interns. Yeah... Interns do it all, cook, clean, build sets, write, act... grass roots stuff, learn by doing.

CAITLIN

Our father's rich. Hire someone.

GERRY

He wanted you to understand the discipline of the entertainment industry. Every journey begins with that first step.

The kids look at each other.

CAITLIN

Oh, boy, camp.

INT. MANSION KITCHEN - NIGHT

Gerry and the kids are eating dinner.

GERRY

Oh, boy. Macaroni and cheese. I love macaroni and cheese, don't you kids?

CAITLIN

Lucky we found a box in the cupboard. Maybe tomorrow we can have real food?

GERRY

I should have asked your father for a credit card. I don't know what I was thinking.

CAITLIN

I have a credit card.

GERRY

What?

CAITLIN

Sure, I can charge anything we want.

Gerry looks to heaven.

GERRY

Thank you!  
(to Caitlin)  
How would you like maid service?

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - DAY - NEXT DAY

Everyone is up and about.

GERRY

I'm going into town to check on  
other campers and counselors.  
I'll be right back.

(to Caitlin)

Oh, better let me have that  
credit card, just in case.

She gives him the card. He gets in the limo and leaves.

EXT. WOODSTOCK - ESTABLISHING - DAY

EXT. WOODSTOCK - MAIN STREET - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry drives down the main street.

INT. LIMO - GERRY AT THE WHEEL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

He is looking for a busy store or some other place to  
post a notice.

GERRY'S P.O.V. - THE VILLAGE GREEN

He spots a community bulletin board on the Village  
Green.

BACK TO SCENE

He parks the limo and gets out.

EXT. VILLAGE GREEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry writes a note on a 3 by 5 index card and posts  
it on the bulletin board.

INSERT

"COMEDY SHOWCASE THEATER LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEER TALENT -  
EXPERIENCE NOT REQUIRED - NO PAY, LOTS OF FUN -  
AUDITIONS ALL DAY TODAY - IN PERSON - EAGLES' AERIE."

BACK TO SCENE

GERRY  
(to himself)  
Should I put in a date? Nah.

He gets back in the limo as a marked police car passes.

The COPS eye him suspiciously.

He makes a mental note to himself.

GERRY  
(continuing)  
Get rid of the limo!

EXT. WOODSTOCK - GROCERY STORE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

He comes out of a store pushing a cart loaded with bags of groceries.

He puts them in the limo and returns to the mansion.

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

The kids are busy sweeping and dusting.

Gerry is amazed at their cooperation.

GERRY  
Good work. I'm going over to  
the theater to straighten up.  
Things should be buzzing around  
here soon.

INT. BARN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry starts cleaning up. He whistles the theme from "Snow White And The Seven Dwarfs" as he works.

He walks in rhythm with the whistling as he picks up one piece of furnishing and carries it to the other side of the theater.

Then he picks up another piece and carries it back to the other side, walking backwards and turning as he goes back and forth, repeating this routine.

He picks up a broom and sweeps from one side of the theater to the other.

He holds the broom like a partner and dances back and forth like Fred Astaire.

He is accomplishing very little, but enjoying every minute of it.

EXT. MANSION DRIVEWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A marked Sheriff's Patrol car pulls up into the driveway cautiously.

A female Deputy Sheriff, JILLIAN JORDAN, stops behind the limo and gets out.

She looks the car over carefully, checking the license plate.

She approaches the mansion carefully, her hand on her service revolver all the time.

EXT./INT. MANSION FRONT PORCH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

She looks in the windows.

There is no one in sight.

INT./EXT. MANSION - LOOKING OUT - CONTINUOUS

She is looking in the windows.

EXT. MANSION DRIVEWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Deputy walks over to the barn, her hand still on her gun.

As she approaches we can hear Gerry whistling.

EXT. BARN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

She creeps up to a window and looks in.

DEPUTY'S P.O.V. - GERRY

Gerry is dancing around, sweeping and whistling while he works.

BACK TO SCENE

The Deputy slowly opens the door, her hand still on her gun.

INT. BARN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

She steps inside leaving the door open behind her.

Gerry continues to whistle and clean unaware of her presence until he swings around and almost bumps into her.

He is startled.

JILLIAN  
(in a draw stance)  
What's going on?

GERRY  
What? You mean the kids? I  
can explain...

JILLIAN  
What kids?

GERRY  
Oh, you mean what am I doing?

JILLIAN  
That's a start.

GERRY  
I leased the place. For the  
summer. I'm opening a comedy  
camp of sorts. A comedy theater  
showcase... for aspiring writers  
and performers.

The Deputy is relieved. She relaxes a little.

JILLIAN  
I saw the limo in the driveway  
and I thought I stumbled onto a  
burglary or something.

GERRY

Oh yeah, the limo. I have to get it back to the city.

JILLIAN

This place hasn't been occupied for some time. I thought I'd better investigate.

GERRY

Thanks. I feel a lot better knowing you're on the job, Sheriff.

JILLIAN

Deputy... Jordan, Jillian Jordan. We never sleep. See you around.

The Deputy leaves Gerry to his cleaning. But he isn't whistling. He's thinking.

GERRY

(to himself)  
Get rid of the limo!

INT. NAASTIE KITCHEN - DAY - NEXT MORNING

Betty Naastie is dancing around the kitchen singing a show tune while Ilie reads the morning paper.

BETTY

I see where David Merritt is holding auditions for a National Tour of "Annie, Get Your Gun". Oh, how I'd love to do that show again.

She sings a song from the show.

BETTY

(continuing)  
Anything you can do I can do better, I can do anything better than you...

NAASTIE

(in tune)  
Can you fix me breakfast faster than I can?

BETTY

(in tune)  
Yes, I can.

NAASTIE

Well then, why don't you?

BETTY

You know, I could have been a star today if I hadn't married you.

NAASTIE

(while reading  
the paper)  
Living in a one bedroom apartment in the Bowery with an out-of-work actor husband and three screaming kids. Don't blame me.

BETTY

Speaking of kids, have you seen the children?

NAASTIE

No, why?

BETTY

Just wondering, they've been awfully quiet.

NAASTIE

Children shouldn't be seen or heard.

BETTY

What if they're experimenting with their new found sexual awareness?

NAASTIE

As long as they don't fight.

EXT. BARN - DAY - A LITTLE LATER

There is a swarm of men and women ACTORS of all types and ages gathered by the sign posted on the front of the barn waiting for auditions.

INSERT - A SIGN

That says "AUDITIONS HERE"

BACK TO SCENE

Gerry and the kids come over from the mansion. Gerry opens the barn and the crowd rushes in and sits in the audience.

Gerry goes up on the stage and quiets them down.

GERRY

Good morning. I'm Gerry Guggenheim. I'll be the producing director of this summer season of comedy showcases.

He hands out pages of a script to the actors.

GERRY

(continuing)

Today I just want to get an idea how you sound and look, so each of you read a line as we go around the group. This is one of the sketches we'll be performing. I call it "Six Angry Critics". It's what jury deliberations might sound like if a trial were reviewed by movie critics. It's a parody of that great movie, "Twelve Angry Men".

He points to six hopefuls in the first row.

Curiously, the actors all resemble real critics: JUROR#1, Gene Siskel; JUROR#2, Roger Ebert; JUROR #3, Rex Reed; JUROR #4, Gene Shalit; JUROR #5, Joel Siegel; and JUROR #6, Katheen Carroll.

GERRY

(continuing)

We'll start with you six. I'll read the stage directions.

(reading the script)

A jury has just finished hearing evidence in a trial.

(MORE)

GERRY (cont'd)

The jury consists of six  
celebrity movie critics. The  
Foreman speaks.

Gerry nods to the first auditioner who begins reading  
the script.

JUROR#1

All right, it's been a long  
day, it's hot. I think the  
first thing we should do to  
save time is take a vote on a  
possible verdict.

GERRY

You all AD LIB in unison...

ALL

Yeah. Let's get this over with.  
It's hot. I want to go to an  
air conditioned movie.

JUROR#2

I think we should vote by secret  
ballot.

GERRY

You all AD LIB in unison again...

ALL

Why? Come on, let's get this  
over with. Stop wasting time.

JUROR#1

No, no, the chubette wants a  
secret ballot, we'll vote by  
secret ballot. Thumbs up or  
thumbs down?

GERRY

They vote "secretly" by covering  
their thumbs so they can't be  
seen.

(aside, to the  
group)

The audience recognizes this as  
silliness, but you play it dead  
serious.

(MORE)

GERRY (cont'd)  
None of you know how any one of  
you voted, but the audience, of  
course, saw that only Juror#2  
voted thumbs up.

JUROR#1  
It looks like five for Guilty  
and one Not Guilty.

JUROR#3  
All right, who's the holdout?  
We have a right to know.

JUROR#1  
I think I know. It was the  
over-stuffed chair.

JUROR#2  
(enthusiastically)  
I loved that trial this  
afternoon. It was one of the  
best I've seen in a long time.  
I can't wait to see it again on  
video. A definite thumbs up!

JUROR#4  
Well, I wouldn't recommend it  
to anyone. It was written for  
a brain dead teen audience.  
Too much gratuitous violence.  
Too many chases.

JUROR#5  
I agree about the chase scenes.  
Seems like the prosecution threw  
them in as filler. They didn't  
make any sense.

JUROR#4  
Too many clichés.

GERRY  
(to the group)  
You all AD LIB in unison  
throughout, don't wait for me  
to tell you.

ALL  
Yeah, too many clichés.

JUROR#6

The story line was poorly structured and hard to follow. You can't be jumping back and forth in time with that flashback style of testimony and expect to maintain a continuity of plot.

JUROR#1

Right, I've always said that. Flashbacks can be a good story telling device... when they work.

JUROR#3

This time they were overdone.

JUROR#4

Just a little.

JUROR#5

Too much. The result was confusion.

JUROR#2

Well, I'm not compromising my verdict because the rest of you have no taste.

JUROR#3

Taste? You accuse me of having no taste? You who dresses like an English Sheep Dog?

JUROR#2

Rex, honey, there's more to taste than walking around on tippy toes in Mom's pumps and talking sissified.

JUROR#4

Let's stop the caterwauling and get on with the deliberating so we don't miss dinner.

JUROR#1

Oh, by the way, just in case we do have to order in, we have some menus to pass around.

GERRY

The foreman passes around the menus during the dialogue that follows and the jurors write down their choices and pass them back to the foreman.

JUROR#1

Write down your order so I can give it to the bailiff.

JUROR#2

I thought we saw some astonishing performances during this trial. What about the acting? Oscar® stuff? Or what?

JUROR#3

All quite distinct and different.

JUROR#4

But with some sameness.

JUROR#5

Was it good casting, at least?

JUROR#2

Best yet in this Court. I liked that young prosecutor, I think she has a lot of potential.

JUROR#1

But not enough to save an awful script.

JUROR#3

An understatement. The character of the coroner was simply not credible.

JUROR#4

Was it the dialogue or the direction?

JUROR#5

Whoever wrote the script doesn't understand forensic pathology.

JUROR#6

I don't think the defendant was very convincing, either. I just didn't believe her story.

JUROR#4

Just because the femme fatale sports thick tendrils of ebony hair and dreamy ice blue eyes...

JUROR#2

I like that... thick tendrils, ebony hair, ice blue eyes...

JUROR#4

... thank you... but it doesn't make her believable.

JUROR#2

I'd like to get to know her better anyway.

JUROR#1

Show up in Court tomorrow, maybe she'll be there.

JUROR#3

And the special effects... the scars... phony!

JUROR#5

What about plot? Or should I say "plod"? How many times have we seen the same old story?

JUROR#1

A love triangle... bisexual...

JUROR#3

... with interracial overtones...

JUROR#4

... ending with a smoking gun...

JUROR#5

... in the U.S. Senate Chamber...

JUROR#2

... It's got everything...

JUROR#3  
... It's trite...

JUROR#4  
... It's been done

JUROR#1  
... Right, the studio factory  
formula...

JUROR#2  
... But full of surprises...

JUROR#3  
... Too predictable..

JUROR#4  
... A mess of a melodrama...

JUROR#5  
... You could almost lip-sync  
the dialogue...

JUROR#2  
I think the defendant did rather  
well considering the inept script  
and the poor rehearsing. Her  
performance saved the trial.

JUROR#1  
(to Juror#2)  
You know, Roger, I swear your  
brain is clogged up with millions  
of tiny globules of fat. This  
plot was doomed right from the  
beginning.

JUROR#3  
The prosecutor telegraphed every  
plot twist...

JUROR#4  
... I knew from the opening  
remarks who did it and why.  
What's left to guess?

JUROR#3  
I am so upset.

(MORE)

JUROR#3 (cont'd)  
Glamorous Hollywood crime trials  
like these have anaesthetized  
the public towards beautiful  
people like myself.

JUROR#4  
... and I didn't appreciate the  
attempt at comic relief with  
the exploitation of a black  
shoe shine boy tap dancing on  
the Capitol steps. It had no  
probative value at all.

GERRY  
A Bailiff KNOCKS and enters.  
I'll read the Bailiff's  
part..."The Judge wants to know  
if you've reached a verdict, or  
do you want to order dinner?  
(beat)  
The Foreman reads the dinner  
orders and tabulates them as he  
reads.

JUROR#1  
Let's see here... five broiled  
fish with fresh steamed garden  
veggies... One Yankee Pot Roast,  
corn on the cob, bread and  
butter, extra mashed potatoes,  
heavy on the gravy...

GERRY  
The Foreman gives Juror#2 a  
dirty look.

JUROR#1  
... five diet gelatin desserts...  
one chocolate chip brownie with  
mocha almond fudge ice cream...

GERRY  
All the jurors glare at Juror#2  
who sits with his hands folded  
across his belly and a big grin  
on his face.

JUROR#1  
... five decaffeinated coffees,  
no sugar, no cream... one double  
chocolate malted...

GERRY  
The Foreman throws up the dinner  
orders in disgust.

JUROR#1  
It's going to be a long night.

ALL  
(to Juror#2)  
What's the matter with you?  
You jerk. You idiot. You don't  
have any taste. You call  
yourself a critic?

GERRY  
Juror#2 just shakes his head  
and smiles, giving two "thumbs  
up" to the audience as the  
curtain closes.

The group breaks out in a big round of applause.

Gerry takes a bow.

JUROR#1  
This is funny stuff.

JUROR#2  
Why aren't you on television?

GERRY  
I expect to be, soon.  
(to the group)  
All right, let's go through it  
again with you next six people.

Caitlin and Ted look at each other and indicate that  
they should bug out of there.

EXT. BARN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ted and Caitlin walk over towards the Mansion.

CAITLIN

Let's ride into the Village and  
look around.

TED

Good idea.

INT. BARN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

One of the auditioning actors approaches Gerry.

ACTOR#1

Gerry, I have to catch a bus to  
New York City this afternoon,  
could I audition tomorrow?

GERRY

You're going to the City?

ACTOR#1

Yeah, sorry, I really want to  
audition though.

GERRY

Tell you what... I'll save you  
the bus fare if you can do me a  
favor. Return the limo for me?

ACTOR#1

Oh, hey, great, no problem.

Gerry writes down the address and gives it to the actor.

GERRY

Here's the keys. Just leave  
the limo in the 'No Parking'  
space with the keys in the  
ignition.

ACTOR#1

Is that safe... leaving the  
keys like that?

GERRY

Don't worry. They have cracker  
jack security.

EXT. WOODSTOCK BACK ROAD - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The kids are riding their bikes into the Village.

EXT. WOODSTOCK - ESTABLISHING - DAY

The kids ride up the main street.

EXT. VILLAGE GREEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

They park their bikes in a bike rack and walk around the Village green.

All sorts of PEOPLE mill around, from the odd to the ordinary, locals and obvious tourists.

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The kids spin a revolving rack full of post cards.

CAITLIN

Maybe we should send Mom and Dad a post card.

TED

Why?

CAITLIN

Kids usually do that from camp.

TED

Think they miss us?

CAITLIN

I bet they don't even know we're gone.

They pick out and pay for some cards and write notes on them.

CAITLIN

(continuing;  
writing)

Having a great time.

TED  
(writing)  
Me too.

They walk over to the Post Office.

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

They buy some stamps from a machine and mail the cards.

EXT. VILLAGE GREEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

They buy some ice cream from a vendor, sit on a bench and people watch.

VAL, a nice boy Caitlin's age, parks his bike next to hers, buys an ice cream and sits on the same bench.

He smiles at Caitlin. Caitlin smiles back. The boy introduces himself.

VAL  
Hi, my name's Val.

CAITLIN  
I'm Caitlin, I'm an actress.  
My stage name is Sigourney.  
This is my brother, Ted.

TED  
Call me Brad.

They smile at each other while they talk AD LIB (M.O.S.) and eat their ice cream.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Deputy who investigated Gerry's appearance at the Mansion reads a printout from the teletype. Among other stolen vehicle reports is included this.

INSERT - STOLEN VEHICLE COMPUTER PRINTOUT

That says "2001 LINCOLN TOWN CAR LIMOUSINE, SILVER, NY  
LIC# YNSOS3"

BACK TO SCENE

Jillian folds it up and puts it in her pocket.

She puts on her hat, checks her service revolver and heads out the door.

EXT. MANSION DRIVEWAY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The Sheriff's patrol car slowly drives up to the Mansion.

The limo in nowhere in sight.

JILLIAN'S P.O.V.

Gerry is saying goodbye to the actor hopefuls.

He heads over to the Mansion.

He sees Jillian and waves.

BACK TO SCENE

Jillian gets out of the car as Gerry approaches.

GERRY

Hi, Deputy.

JILLIAN

Hi, yourself, handsome. How'd the auditions go?

GERRY

Great, why weren't you here?

JILLIAN

I'm more of a writer than a performer.

GERRY

Really? I'd like to see some of your stuff. Maybe we can work it into the schedule.

JILLIAN

Deal. By the way, what happened to your wheels? No one stole it, I hope?

GERRY

Oh, the limo? No, I returned it.

EXT. NAASTIE'S OFFICE BUILDING - NYC - DAY - LATER

The actor pulls the limo up in front of Naastie's office building and parks in a "No Parking" space as instructed.

The actor gets out and walks away, leaving the keys in the ignition.

Seconds later, the driver from whom the limo was stolen by Gerry comes out of the building.

He sees the limo, does a double take, looks around and scratches his head.

Whoever returned it is gone.

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Gerry is busy writing ransom notes. He tries and tries, but he can't seem to get the right words.

The waste basket slowly fills with his rough drafts.

GERRY

You call yourself a writer?  
You can't even write a ransom note.

(in a high pitched voice)

I've never done this before.

He tries again.

GERRY

(continuing)

You Nasty Bastard... No, too much on point... Needs more subtext... What do I want? Money? That's so crass, not to mention predictable. Ah... Oh, oh, oh... Open auditions for new writers... that's it! He'll never know who wrote it.

(MORE)

GERRY (cont'd)  
There'll be a thousand writers...  
wait... That makes my chances a  
thousand to one... better than  
nothing...

He throws the last draft in the waste basket and drafts  
a new demand.

GERRY  
(continuing)  
Oh thou damned cur! Thou cursed,  
damned cur! For the sake of  
your progeny I demand that you:  
1- publish an apology to the  
People of America acknowledging  
your tastelessness, 2- hold  
open auditions for aspiring  
writers, 3- permanently abstain  
from the vilification of those  
under your corruptive influence.

He reads it over to himself.

GERRY  
(continuing)  
I think that about says it.

He folds it, puts it in a envelope, addresses the  
envelope to Naastie's office and puts the letter in  
his pocket.

EXT. MANSION DRIVEWAY - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

The kids and Val come riding up the driveway as Gerry  
is leaving the house.

Caitlin calls out to him.

CAITLIN  
Gerry! This is Val. Guess  
what? Val wants to be an actor.

GERRY  
Caitlin, this is Woodstock.  
Everybody wants to be an actor.

CAITLIN  
We want him to be in our shows.

GERRY

He can't be in the shows. I've cast all the parts.

CAITLIN

Then give me back my credit card.

GERRY

(to Val, shaking his hand)

You'll be a fine actor, young man, and a credit to this company.

(to the kids)

I'm walking into town to mail a letter. Behave yourselves until I get back.

TED

Like there's lots of trouble to get into?

Gerry walks down the driveway towards town.

EXT. WOODSTOCK - MAIN STREET - EARLY EVENING

Gerry walks up the main street to the Post office and mails the ransom letter.

EXT. VILLAGE GREEN - EVENING - CONTINUOUS

He buys an ice cream and sits on a bench on the Village Green.

A Sheriff's Patrol car pulls up.

Jillian is driving.

She yells over to Gerry.

JILLIAN

Hey, pal, you have any means of support?

GERRY

You mean like Jockey shorts? No, I'm a free man.

JILLIAN

I might have to run you in for  
vagrancy.

He walks over to the car.

GERRY

Can I expect a strip search?

JILLIAN

You men are such pigs!

GERRY

You got me, G-man.

JILLIAN

Get in the back on the floor.  
You are now in my official  
custody.

Gerry gets in the back of the Patrol car. She drives  
off.

INT. JILLIAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The two are in bed, luxuriating after presumably having  
had some kind of sexual experience.

JILLIAN

Okay... So, now what?

GERRY

I don't know, do you smoke?

JILLIAN

No, do you?

GERRY

No. So, I guess we can forget  
the cigarettes.

JILLIAN

So, do you like me?

GERRY

Of course I like you. What  
kind of a silly question is  
that? You're beautiful.

JILLIAN

Do you really like me?

GERRY

I'm crazy about 'cha, baby.

JILLIAN

Yes, I know that! What I mean is, do you really and truly like me... deeply... emotionally?

GERRY

Yes, you're beautiful...

JILLIAN

Yes, but... well, what if I weren't beautiful?

GERRY

But you are... and I'm stuck with it.

JILLIAN

But what if I weren't?

GERRY

What the heck are you talking about?

JILLIAN

Well, I was reading in COSMO about how real love transcends physical beauty. Like if I suddenly changed... like if I was in an accident?

GERRY

Yeah, and?

JILLIAN

And my face was scarred? Would you still like me?

GERRY

Scarred? How bad?

JILLIAN

Real bad. Lots of stitches.

GERRY

How many?

JILLIAN

Lots... like a baseball. You  
couldn't count them all.

GERRY

I think I could handle that.

JILLIAN

What about if I gained a lot of  
weight?

GERRY

Like Roseanne?

JILLIAN

Yes. I know you fell for me  
because I was slim and you like  
slender women.

GERRY

Well, I suppose I could sit in  
the shade in the summer and  
turn down the heat at night in  
the winter.

JILLIAN

You'd still like me?

GERRY

Yeah, sure, what's the problem?

JILLIAN

I just don't want to be liked  
as a sex object or a pretty  
face or something less than who  
I am inside.

GERRY

Is this the worry du jour?

JILLIAN

We worry about things like that.

GERRY

So, watch what you eat and don't  
get in an accident.

(continuing)

For crying out loud, you don't  
have a weight problem, you have  
small bones, don't worry about  
it.

JILLIAN

What if I developed a glandular problem? Something rare... and my eyes bulged out?

GERRY

Like a frog?

JILLIAN

Yes, like a frog. Would you still like me?

GERRY

What about warts?

JILLIAN

Something for the Guinness Book of Records.

GERRY

We could tour with a circus. It could open up a whole new world of economic opportunities.

JILLIAN

But would you still like me?

GERRY

Look, it's going to take a lot more than a pituitary problem to make me stop liking you.

JILLIAN

What if I was in an industrial accident?

GERRY

Now, that's a real danger for a Deputy Sheriff.

JILLIAN

Just say, for example, that I was working in a chemical plant, and I fell into a vat of sulfuric acid...

GERRY

No!

JILLIAN

... yes, and not only was I badly disfigured, but the acid ate the flesh off my face and you could see my bare skull?

GERRY

What about the scars?

JILLIAN

What scars?

GERRY

From the accident, you know, the baseball?

JILLIAN

Gone. Eaten away.

GERRY

Whew! This is a tough call.

JILLIAN

See! I knew it. If you really liked me you would say it without any hesitation.

GERRY

All right, so I don't fit the COSMO profile of the perfect mate. Give me a minute here.

JILLIAN

You shouldn't have to think about it.

GERRY

Well, I've never had a lover fall into a vat of acid before.

JILLIAN

I knew it... all you want me for is sex.

GERRY

Okay, so now you're the Cryptkeeper... what about the warts?

JILLIAN

What warts?

GERRY

The warts from the rare pituitary disease.

JILLIAN

Burned off.

GERRY

Some good comes from everything.

JILLIAN

But would you still like me?

GERRY

Realistically, what are the chances of something like that happening? It's ridiculous.

JILLIAN

That's not the point. It has nothing to do with logic. It's emotional.

GERRY

Okay, okay. Yes, I would still like you! All right?

JILLIAN

You're not just saying that?

GERRY

No, I would like you whatever.

JILLIAN

What if I got a rare gum disease and all my teeth fell out?

GERRY

(exhausted)  
Now there's a fantasy.

JILLIAN

I knew it! That's all you want me for.

GERRY

No, no, no! Jeez! You worry about the damndest things. You have beautiful teeth. You have the body of a teenager.

(MORE)

GERRY (cont'd)

You look years younger than you are.

JILLIAN

Yes, but I just want reassurance that you like me for who I am.

GERRY

I'm beginning to think that who you are is NUTS!

JILLIAN

Well, maybe I am. What if I'm nuts... say a... schizophrenic... with multiple personalities?

GERRY

I'd like all of them!

JILLIAN

What if we... I mean, what if I fell in front of a subway train and I lost a leg?

GERRY

Why not both of them?

JILLIAN

All right, both legs.

GERRY

You'd still have your arms to hold me.

JILLIAN

What if I lost my arms too?

GERRY

Now you're a quadruple amputee?

JILLIAN

Yes, would you still like me?

GERRY

I would not only like you, I would scratch your back, pick your nose, wipe your...

JILLIAN

And I had a colostomy... Would you still like me?

GERRY

I would like you all the more.

JILLIAN

And the antibiotics gave me chronic diarrhea?

GERRY

I don't even see the problem.

JILLIAN

No problem? An incontinent quadruple amputee, no face, no flesh, no teeth?

GERRY

Love is blind.

JILLIAN

I'd have you in a nursing home in a minute.

GERRY

Don't ever turn into Roseanne.

INT. BARN - DAY - THE DAYS FOLLOWING

A MONTAGE OF SCENES FOLLOWS (M.O.S.)

Members of the local comedy company check to see if their names are on the list of successful auditioners.

Gerry rehearses with his cast members.

They read from scripts, laughing out loud.

He directs and blocks the stage movement.

Caitlin, Ted and Val play kids' roles. They are having a great time.

Jillian and Gerry prompt each other from scripts.

Caitlin, Ted and Val help older people build sets.

They clean the theater. Set up the box office.

They enjoy communal meals during rehearsals. The laughter never stops.

Caitlin and Val hold hands and smile at each other while they work.

Jillian reads her comedy sketches to Gerry. He chuckles a little and shakes his head. She raises an eyebrow.

The kids swim in a fresh water stream. They have a great time.

Caitlin and Val pack a picnic lunch and head off on their bikes.

They ride up a long mountain trail to the summit.

They unpack their lunch and sit on the edge of a cliff and bathe in the beauty of the Hudson River Valley.

They are captivated by the wonder of it all.

MONTAGE ENDS

CAITLIN

God, I feel like I'm at the center of the universe.

VAL

(looking at her)

We are.

They kiss tenderly and innocently.

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Caitlin arrives home alone.

Ted is ready for bed after a long day playing and swimming.

CAITLIN

Oh boy, camp!

TED

Boy, oh boy, oh boy!

CAITLIN

I never want to leave this place.

TED

Me neither.

INT. NAASTIE KITCHEN - DAY - NEXT MORNING

Betty is singing and dancing around the kitchen.

Naastie reads the paper.

BETTY

I auditioned for Annie Oakley.

NAASTIE

That's good, dear.

BETTY

I think I have a good chance of getting it.

NAASTIE

That's good, dear.

BETTY

If I get it, I'll be touring for most of the coming year.

NAASTIE

That's good, dear.

BETTY

I surgically removed your testicles while you were sleeping. I'm preparing them just the way you like them, lightly sauteed with a hint of tabasco sauce.

NAASTIE

That's good, dear.

She picks up the morning mail and reads some post cards.

BETTY

Do we know anyone in Woodstock named Sigourney or Brad?

NAASTIE

I don't think so.

BETTY

Well, they're having a great  
time, whoever they are.

NAASTIE

That's good, dear.

BETTY

I haven't heard much from the  
children lately.

NAASTIE

That's good, dear.

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Caitlin and Ted are cleaning up a little.

Caitlin empties the waste basket and finds the draft  
copies of Gerry's ransom letters.

Her eyes widen as she reads them to herself.

CAITLIN

Ted... Ted... listen to this...  
we've been kidnapped!

TED

By who?

CAITLIN

By Gerry!

She shows him the letters.

TED

How come he never said anything?  
How come we're not tied up?

CAITLIN

There's something funny about  
this whole comedy business.

TED

You can say that again.

CAITLIN

Maybe we should call the police.

TED

Why call? Yell upstairs, she's in Gerry's room.

CAITLIN

We have to do something.

TED

Like what? Go home? I don't want to go home.

CAITLIN

Neither do I. I've never had so much fun in my life... Hey, maybe we'll never have to go to school again...

TED

... And I can smoke cigars and drink whiskey... yeah, and...

CAITLIN

... Yeah... And grow long ears and a tail...

TED

So... What do we do?

CAITLIN

Say nothing to anyone. We may be able to use the situation to our advantage.

TED

Like Bobby Franks?

INT. MANSION - GERRY'S BEDROOM - DAY - LATER

Gerry is reading and criticizing Jillian's manuscript.

GERRY

This just isn't funny. A Jewish family celebrating Thanksgiving in 1621? Uncle Abe coming in from the suburbs? He's indignant because they cut the turkey before he got there...? This isn't funny.

JILLIAN

Who are you to be so judgmental?  
You don't write the funniest  
stuff.

GERRY

It's different. I'm the  
producer, I've got a big  
investment in this operation.  
I have to be selective.

JILLIAN

You're insulted because someone  
tells you your work stinks, but  
I shouldn't be insulted when  
you tell me my work stinks.

GERRY

I didn't say it stinks. It's  
just not that funny. Martha  
Stewart's staff bending her  
over the kitchen sink and giving  
her an enema with crème brûlée,  
now that's funny.

JILLIAN

You know funny.

GERRY

I think I know funny, and this  
isn't funny.

She picks up one of her other scripts.

JILLIAN

How about "The Philosophy  
Hotline"? Funny?

GERRY

Clever... A hotline for people  
to call with questions about  
the essence of good and evil,  
the efficacy of their place in  
the universal scheme of things...  
But not all that funny...  
Nobody's going to get the  
Cartesian twist.

JILLIAN

Well, Mr. Funny, like your  
"Famous Last Words" is a show  
stopper?

GERRY

Now, that's funny. An execution  
turning into a quiz show...  
(laughing)  
... that is funny!

JILLIAN

Okay, here's the deal. Either  
you produce my sketches, or Mr.  
Funny doesn't get to dress up  
as Deputy Gal with my badge and  
gun and play 'Horsie' anymore.

INT. BARN - DAY - THE NEXT DAY

Gerry is beginning rehearsals. Present are the members  
of his comedy showcase actors, including Jillian,  
Caitlin, Ted and Val.

Gerry passes around the scripts.

GERRY

These are some of the sketches  
we'll be doing opening night,  
two weeks from today. My "Acting  
Class" and "Famous Last Words",  
and two works of my discovery  
and protégé, the very funny,  
Jillian Jordan... "The  
Philosophy Hotline", and "A  
Krichinsky Thanksgiving".

A MONTAGE OF SCENES FOLLOWS (M.O.S.)

INT. BARN - DAY - CONTINUOUS OVER THE NEXT TWO WEEKS

Gerry cues lines and blocks the stage movement.

Everyone laughs as they rehearse.

Cast and crew erect a scaffold for "Famous Last Words".

Gerry plays the condemned man uttering famous last words while the prison staff try to guess who said them.

Everyone works the phone banks answering questions in "The Philosophy Hotline".

Val and Caitlin smile at each other a lot.

INT. NAASTIE HOME - KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Betty whirls around the kitchen dressed like Annie Oakley, singing and dancing.

Naastie reads the paper.

INT. BARN - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Cast and crew paint and put the finishing touches on the set.

All eat communal lunches and laugh constantly.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. NAASTIE'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Naastie is reading his mail.

NAASTIE

What the hell is this? More  
hate mail? Who are these people?  
Me, Mr. Nice Guy, a cur? I  
don't even own a progeny. I  
wouldn't be seen in one of those  
cheap imports.

He throws Gerry's letter in the waste basket.

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - DAY - LATER

Gerry is rehearsing some lines. He tries disguising his voice.

GERRY

It's eleven o'clock, do you know where your children are?  
(beat)

No, no... If you want your children unharmed, you'd better...

(beat)

No, no... I haven't seen any ads about open auditions... Yeah, that's it... You think I'm kidding?... No, no... I don't want this to sound like a threat, but...

He finally picks up his cell phone and dials.

INT. NAASTIE'S OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The phone RINGS. Gloria answers.

GLORIA

This is "Your New Show of Shows"!

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Gerry disguises his voice as he speaks.

GERRY

Mr. Naastie, please.

INTERCUT BETWEEN GERRY AND GLORIA AS THEY SPEAK

GLORIA

Gerry? Is that you?

GERRY

Huh? Gerry who?

GLORIA

Gerry Guggenheim?

GERRY

Huh... no, this is someone else.

GLORIA

Oh, you sound like a friend of mine, only with a cold.

GERRY

No, this is definitely someone else. I don't even know you... or your friend... whatever his name is...

INT. NAASTIE'S OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Naastie passes Gloria's desk as she speaks.

GLORIA

... Gerry Guggenheim.

NAASTIE

The writer? He stinks!

Naastie goes back into his office.

GLORIA

Hold on, please, while I transfer your call.

Gloria puts Gerry on hold and buzzes Naastie on the intercom.

Naastie picks up the phone.

GLORIA

(continuing; to herself)

Gee, that sounded just like Gerry.

Naastie bursts out of his office yelling.

NAASTIE

Call the Police. Call the FBI. My kids have been kidnapped.

INT. NAASTIE'S OFFICE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

DETECTIVES are interviewing Naastie.

DETECTIVE

When did you last see your children?

NAASTIE

Two, maybe three weeks ago.

DETECTIVE

And you just now figured out they've been kidnapped?

NAASTIE

Well, yeah. The kidnapper just told me. I thought my wife sent them to summer camp.

DETECTIVE

And your wife never missed them either?

NAASTIE

She's an actress.

DETECTIVE

Oh.

NAASTIE

So, what do we do next?

DETECTIVE

It's rather strange that a kidnapper wouldn't demand ransom, especially from a multimillionaire. Even kids faking their own kidnapping would demand some amount of money. We'll put out an APB. In the meanwhile, we suggest you comply with his demands. That should be easy enough.

NAASTIE

Are you kidding? You know what kind of crap I'll have to read?

Naastie shows the detectives out.

INT. NAASTIE'S OFFICE - RECEPTION AREA - DAY -  
CONTINUOUS

GLORIA

Didn't the kidnapper tell you not to call the police? That's what they usually do.

NAASTIE

No, he was a little sketchy on the details... Run a notice in the trades that we're holding open auditions for comedy writers.

GLORIA

Oh, great. Maybe Gerry can get another chance...

NAASTIE

Forget it... he stinks!

EXT. MANSION - FRONT PORCH AND DRIVE - DAY - LATER

Three marked Sheriff's cars pull up the driveway with their lights flashing and sirens screaming.

Gerry's knees begin to quiver.

Caitlin and Ted give each other nervous glances.

Six burly DEPUTIES get out and move towards Gerry menacingly.

Gerry throws up his hands and yells.

GERRY

Don't shoot! Don't shoot! I can explain everything!

KIDS

(in unison)

We can explain everything.

DEPUTY#1

What are you talking about? We just want some tickets for tonight's show. Jordan says it's a pip.

GERRY

Oh... no problem, Officer.

He pulls some freebies out of his pocket and gives them to the Deputy.

DEPUTY#1

Much obliged.  
(to the kids)  
Say, what are your names anyway?

CAITLIN

Sigourney Kidman.

TED

Brad Cruise.

DEPUTY#1

Oh... Hey, break a leg tonight.

The Sheriff's cars pull out in more dust and screaming sirens.

Gerry looks at the kids.

GERRY

What did you mean, you can explain everything?

CAITLIN

Um, like we know.

GERRY

You do, huh?

CAITLIN

We found your ransom letters. But we wouldn't have told. We would have made something up.

TED

But you better treat us right anyway, or it's Alcatraz for you.

GERRY

Oh yeah, you'd better behave or it's back to the Naasties for you.

KIDS

No, no, please, not that.

GERRY

Do we have an understanding?

KIDS

Okay, okay.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

A fairly large crowd of theater-goers congregate around the box office on opening night, waiting for the show to start.

The porch lights blink off and on, warning the crowd.

The audience moves into the theater.

INT. BARN - ON STAGE - NIGHT - A LITTLE LATER

The lights dim and go up again to reveal the cast on stage for the opening number, "The Acting Class".

An ACTING COACH addresses his CLASS.

COACH

Okay... sense memory... let's  
see what we've learned.  
Volunteers?

The entire class raises their hands. The Coach picks one.

A STUDENT ACTOR gets up and faces the class. He begins a deliberate and well thought presentation of sensing the opening of a pocketknife,

First reaching into his pocket, taking out the knife,

Holding it in the palm of one hand while examining its form, shape and texture with the other.

He is very good. The class is attentive.

INTERCUT BETWEEN THE STAGE AND THE AUDIENCE THROUGHOUT

The audience is quiet.

He opens the blade and gingerly runs his thumb over what he makes appear to be an extremely sharp edge.

He pricks his thumb, sensing the pain.

COACH  
(continuing)  
Good... good... class?

The students raise their hands and AD LIB the answer in unison.

CLASS  
It's a knife. A pocketknife.

AUDIENCE  
Oooh... Ahhh....

COACH  
Good... good... keep it going.  
Risk it. Let's see where it  
goes...

The student, now overconfident and a little cocky, begins his shtick.

He picks his fingernails nonchalantly while he lip syncs whistling.

The he flips the knife around his back and over his shoulder a few times, drawing stifled laughter and murmurs of approval from the class.

Suddenly he grasps his forearm in pain.

COACH  
(continuing)  
Good... good... I like it.  
Keep going...

The student senses excruciating pain.

The knife has severed his radial vein and artery.

He holds his arm tight, stopping the flow of blood momentarily.

The he lets off the pressure for an instant and imaginary blood spurts all over.

He mimes watching each spurt of blood as it arcs out of the wound.

The blood splatters his face. He tries to wipe it off.

It covers the floor. He slips and slides in it, taking a pratfall.

He mimes taking off his belt while all this is going on and with one end of the belt in his mouth, desperately tries to tie a tourniquet around his bleeding arm.

ALL  
(in unison)  
Ooooh... Ahhhh.

COACH  
Good... good... go with it...  
don't be afraid to risk it...

The student actor is now in agony.

His eyes roll back in his head as he senses weakness and utter distress from loss of blood.

His lips silently call for help as he slumps lifeless to the floor.

The class AD LIBS enthusiastically.

ALL  
Bravo... wonderful...  
magnifico...

COACH  
Good... good... nice work...  
how'd it feel?

The student does not answer.

His body lies still.

The audience is fidgety.

There are murmurs of concern from the class.

ALL  
Gee, why doesn't he get up?  
What's wrong? Somebody do  
something.

The Coach kneels beside the body and feels for a pulse.

COACH

Oh, no! Somebody. Quick, call  
for an ambulance.

ALL

Help... somebody... emergency...

The class huddles around the body as they continue to  
AD LIB.

ALL

(continuing)

How is he? What's wrong? Give  
him some air. Does anyone know  
CPR?

A uniformed EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN just happens  
to be sitting in the first row of the audience.

The EMT jumps on stage.

EMT

What's the problem?

The EMT sees the nonexistent blood all over the floor  
and the body.

EMT

(continuing)

Good God, what happened?

COACH

(bewildered)

I don't know... It was the most  
brilliant sense memory exercise  
I've ever seen... he had this  
knife... and then he... cut his  
arm... and...

EMT

(indignant outrage)

... and you all just sat there  
and watched him bleed to death?

They look at each other guiltily, but confused, unable  
to understand what has happened... as the stage lights  
dim.

INT. BARN AUDIENCE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The audience is dead silent. They look at each other with quizzical expressions on their faces. They shrug shoulders.

INT. BARN BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

It is so quiet you can hear a pin drop.

GERRY

(seething)

What's the matter with these dumb clucks? This is funny stuff!

JILLIAN

Could be the audience demographics.

GERRY

They can't all be from a nursing home.

INT. BARN - ON STAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A MONTAGE OF SCENES FOLLOW (M.O.S.)

The show goes on with the other sketches.

On stage is a condemned man with a noose around his neck.

He recites famous last words from literature and real life.

The GUARDS and a PRIEST guess who said the lines.

They all laugh.

The audience laughs along with them, a little at first.

Then they laugh hysterically.

On stage PILGRIMS act out a Thanksgiving dinner.

The audience is out of control. They love it.

On stage, OPERATORS answer telephones at the Philosophy Hotline.

The audience is wild.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. BARN - ON STAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

We join "The Philosophy Hotline" sketch in progress.

The phones never stop RINGING.

OPERATOR  
Hello, Philosophy Hotline.

CALLER  
I'm having a little difficulty  
resolving a philosophical  
problem. Can you help?

OPERATOR  
That's what we do.

CALLER  
Oh, great. I think...

OPERATOR  
(interrupting)  
... therefore, you are!

CALLER  
I am?

OPERATOR  
You definitely are.

CALLER  
Are you sure?

OPERATOR  
You have my word.

CALLER  
Oh, wow. Thanks. I was a little  
doubtful. I...

OPERATOR  
No, no! Never, never do that!  
Never doubt your existence.

CALLER

Why?

OPERATOR

Trust me. Just don't.

CALLER

Oh, okay.

The Caller hangs up.

OPERATOR

Whew! That was close.

The phone RINGS.

OPERATOR

(continuing)

Hello, Philosophy Hotline.

(beat)

You have a question about the noncollisionary course of cosmic debris in the context of the 'Big Bang' theory of creation.

(beat)

You should really be calling the Physics Hotline. I can give you that number.

(beat, emphasizing)

No, we're Metaphysics... It's different... No, I can't give you that information. We're only licensed by the FCC to discuss Philosophy... I could lose my job. Please don't call back.

He hangs up. The phone RINGS.

OPERATOR

(continuing)

Hello, Philosophy Hotline.

CALLER

It's me again... I'm still confused.

The Operator puts his hand over the mouthpiece and whispers to his SUPERVISOR.

OPERATOR

It's the Cartesian again. Could  
be big trouble... still doubts  
her existence...

(to Caller)

You still there?

CALLER

I... don't think... so...

There is a big SPFX PUFF OF SMOKE. The Caller  
disappears and the phone goes dead.

OPERATOR

Hello... hello...

He jiggles the receiver, shakes his head and hangs up.

OPERATOR

(continuing; to  
Supervisor)

... looks like we lost another  
one... Poof!

SUPERVISOR

(melodramatically)

They'll never learn...

OPERATOR

Some of them just can't handle  
it.

The Supervisor clenches his jaw, and shaking his fist  
back through time, says very seriously as the stage  
lights dim,

SUPERVISOR

Damn you, DesCartes!

INT. BARN AUDIENCE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The audience is on its feet, yelling and applauding as  
the cast takes curtain call after curtain call.

INT. BARN BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

GERRY

(to Jillian)

I think I owe you an apology.  
The audience has voted on it...  
your stuff is superior to mine.

JILLIAN

Your stuff is just as good...  
My audience is better than yours.

GERRY

Is that it?

JILLIAN

That simple.

GERRY

I need a more intelligent  
audience.

JILLIAN

Much more intelligent.

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - DAY - A FEW DAYS LATER

The 'family' is together, relaxing.

Gerry is reading the New York Times.

GERRY

Holy Glorioski! We got reviews.  
We actually got reviews... and  
they're good.

They all gather around Gerry and read over his shoulder  
as he reads excerpts out loud.

GERRY

(continuing)

"The new comedy showcase in  
Woodstock promises some fresh  
new faces both on and off  
stage... the writing is  
refreshing in an otherwise  
stagnant and uncreative New  
York atmosphere... " Holy cow!

JILLIAN

See. I told you so... Mr. Funny.

GERRY

(to all)

I couldn't have done it without you. We are truly a team. No man is an island, etc... yeah, yeah...

(pause)

That was yesterday. Tonight is tonight. Every audience is different. Let's not think we're too wonderful or we'll be talking to ourselves.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT - THE NEXT PERFORMANCE

Another fairly large crowd of theater-goers congregate around the box office waiting for the show to start.

They AD LIB among themselves about the reviews in the papers.

They are a more sophisticated, urbane group than the one on opening night.

Warning lights flash and the crowd begins to move into the theater.

INT. BARN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A SERIES OF SHOTS OF SCENES FROM EACH OF THE SHOW'S SKETCHES FOLLOW

INTERCUT BETWEEN THE STAGE AND THE AUDIENCE THROUGHOUT

The student mime in "The Acting Class" is doing his sense memory exercise.

He picks his fingernails nonchalantly while he lip syncs whistling.

The he flips the knife around his back and over his shoulder a few times, drawing stifled laughter and murmurs of approval from the class.

Suddenly he grasps his forearm in pain.

The audience gasps in mock horror.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The EMT emerges from the audience as "The Acting Class" wraps up.

EMT  
(indignant outrage)  
... and you all just sat there  
and watched him bleed to death?

They look at each other guiltily, but confused, unable to understand what has happened... as the stage lights dim.

The audience goes wild.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

"Famous Last Words" is in progress.

The CONDEMNED MAN is stalling for time.

CONDEMNED MAN  
Okay, who's this?  
(mugging Cagney)  
"Hey Ma, look at me... I'm on  
top of the world."

GUARD  
Jimmy Cagney, "White Heat".

The execution entourage applaud, but the PRIEST seems disconsolate.

CONDEMNED MAN  
I can see you're going to be a  
tough audience.  
(to Priest)  
What's the problem, Padre?

PRIEST  
I don't get to the movies much.  
How about art and literature?

CONDEMNED MAN

Hmmm. How about this one?  
(in an affected  
voice)  
"Either that wallpaper goes, or  
I do."

The entourage murmurs and looks at each other. They haven't a clue.

The Warden guesses, but is dead serious.

WARDEN

Sherwin Williams?

The condemned man laughs out loud. The Warden is not amused and the entourage doesn't say a word.

CONDEMNED MAN

Come on, Warden, lighten up.  
It was Oscar Wilde. Okay, here's  
another.  
(very British)  
"Dying is easy... comedy is  
hard."

They AD Lib among themselves.

ALL

Groucho? No... Gleason? No...  
Benny? Who? Berle? No... he  
ain't dead yet.

CONDEMNED MAN

(impatiently)  
Come on you guys... It was Edmund  
Kean... only the greatest  
Shakespearean actor who ever  
lived. Gee...

The audience really gets into it and laughs like crazy.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BARN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The audience applauds and laughs as we join in the end of "The Philosophy Hotline" with the Supervisor shaking his fist in the air.

SUPERVISOR

Damn you, DesCartes!

INT. BARN AUDIENCE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The audience is on its feet, yelling and applauding.

The cast takes curtain call after curtain call.

INT. BARN BACKSTAGE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The cast and crew pat each other on the back for another successful show.

Some members of the audience come backstage to congratulate the performers.

Among them are Betty and Ilie Naastie. The kids see them but not soon enough to escape.

Naastie approaches them and Gerry confused.

NAASTIE

What the hell is going on?  
What are you kids doing here?

GERRY

What? You don't know? This is  
comedy camp.

NAASTIE

Comedy camp? I never heard of  
such a thing.

GERRY

You didn't send them up here?

NAASTIE

No, I thought they were  
kidnapped.

GERRY

Well, obviously, they haven't  
been kidnapped. Here they are.

BETTY

You were wonderful.

A Broadway theatrical AGENT is in the crowd of well-wishers. He congratulates the three kids.

AGENT

You kids were good enough to be on Broadway. You ever want an agent, you come and see me.

NAASTIE

I still don't get it. Who sent me that letter? Who made the phone call?

CAITLIN

We did, Dad. We felt like we weren't getting enough attention from you and Mom and it was our way of protesting.

NAASTIE

What do you care about comedy writers? Why should I audition every hack garbage writer who wants to be on my show?

CAITLIN

It's a social injustice we want rectified. Where would we be if it weren't for the comedy of guys like Dandy Devine and Dell Artay?

TED

Yeah. Gerry and Jillian are great writers. We want you to give them a chance.

NAASTIE

Who wrote that Thanksgiving piece and that philosophy hotline bit?

JILLIAN

I did.

NAASTIE

You're good. You want a job writing for me, you got it. Who wrote that thing with the mime?

GERRY

I did.

NAASTIE

I hate mimes. You... have we met? Wait a minute... Guggenheim... yeah... I thought that mime crap was familiar. You still stink!

Betty gets the children aside while Naastie rages on.

CAITLIN

Mom, this is Val, my friend. Ted and I do not want to go home. We want to stay here for the rest of the summer.

BETTY

I think that's a wonderful idea. And guess what? In the Fall, I start a tour as the lead in "Annie, Get Your Gun" and I might have an even bigger surprise for you. Maybe even Val. But your father doesn't know yet.

An ELDERLY MAN comes over to Val and shakes his hand.

ELDERLY MAN

You did quite well, Val. I am impressed.

VAL

Thanks, Grandpa. I want you to meet my friends, Caitlin, her brother Ted, Gerry and Jillian.

ELDERLY MAN

Nice to meet you all.  
(to Gerry)  
This is quite an operation you have going here. I'm impressed at your ingenuity. You should become a very successful promoter with your chutzpah.

GERRY

Thank you... I think.

ELDERLY MAN

Tell me, how did you come to establish your troupe here?

GERRY

I leased the place for the season.

ELDERLY MAN

Get a good deal, reasonable rent?

GERRY

Better than most, I'd say.

ELDERLY MAN

Theater overhead can kill you. That's why I got out of the business.

GERRY

Oh, whereabouts?

ELDERLY MAN

Right here. My place.

GERRY

Uh... When you say 'your place', you mean, like... this is...?

The man nods and smiles.

GERRY

(continuing)

Uh, oh.

ELDERLY MAN

I've been out of the country. I was quite surprised to see all the goings on when I returned. And quite pleased. Something brought my grandson out of his shell. I hope you can stay and make a go of it. I'll give you an option to buy if you want.

GERRY

I can't think of anything I'd like better...

(MORE)

GERRY (cont'd)  
(to Jillian)  
Jillian, sweetheart... I can...  
we... can buy the place if...  
we... want. But what about  
Naastie's offer? It's a great  
opportunity.

JILLIAN  
A country girl like me in the  
city? Please.

Gerry and Jillian shake hands with the elderly man.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - MONTHS LATER

Gerry and Jillian sit by the fireplace drinking  
champagne.

The summer season is over. They are wearing wedding  
bands.

They toast the vagaries of show business.

GERRY  
Here's looking at you, kid.

They tip their glasses and drink.

JILLIAN  
I wonder how the kids are doing?

GERRY  
If I know them, they're having  
a grand time.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A THEATER - ON STAGE SOMEWHERE - NIGHT - AT ABOUT  
THE SAME TIME

A performance of "Annie, Get Your Gun!" is in progress.

On stage are Betty Naastie as Annie Oakley, and Val,  
Caitlin, and Ted as the local kids.

The show is ending. They take curtain calls to thunderous applause.

They all smile broadly at each other.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

JILLIAN

I'm so happy for Mrs. Naastie. She had the courage to leave that tasteless, ill mannered man.

(beat)

I wonder what he's up to. The trades say he hasn't been around micro-managing his television show. No one has seen him for a while.

GERRY

Who knows? Who cares?

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MANSION ROOT CELLAR - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Cobwebs and dust cover old furniture and tools, years of accumulated junk. The stuff no one ever throws out.

Dust covered jars of preserves line old wooden shelves.

Some antique tools gather rust.

A single bare light bulb hangs from a cord in the center of the cellar.

A mouse runs along the floor and disappears into a hole in the wall.

There is a flickering of light and faint, muffled sounds coming from a dark corner.

A television is playing a video tape, not too loud, but loud enough to be heard within a few feet of the set.

It is a tape of "The Best Of Benny Hill".

The tape plays continuously, twenty four hours a day.

In the dim light of the TV a man sits, gagged and bound to a chair.

His clothes are disheveled, soiled with sweat and dried, dribbled spots of food.

His body convulses in agony.

He squeezes his eyes shut and shakes his head, trying to block out the sound.

Barely recognizable beneath his unkempt beard is Ilie Naastie.

His muffled cries beg for mercy.

Dying is easier.

NAASTIE  
Uhlp.... uhlp.... uhlp....

FADE OUT:

THE END