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7-10 Split

By Michael G Wilmot

CHARACTERS:

Earl (40's)

Brenda (Earls' wife): (40's)

Larry (Brenda's brother): (late 30's)

Crown Prince Gustaf (mid -late 20's)

Setting: A mobile home in the Green Gables Trailer Park

The set is a typical mobile home interior with furniture that's out of date and has seen better days. The television is one of the old console types. There's a full laundry hamper somewhere on stage. Time: Late morning.

Act1

EARL is working at the computer, BRENDA is at the window.

BRENDA: *(looking out the front window)* I don't like the look of this. I don't like this one little bit. They're still there Earl.

EARL: *(not paying attention)* That's nice....

BRENDA: It's been over twenty minutes now....

EARL: I'll alert the authorities.

BRENDA: Over twenty minutes and I can't see nothing happening.

EARL: Well, then maybe nothing *is* happening.

BRENDA: I still don't like it.

EARL: Brenda, you're the only person I know who can *not* like something that *isn't* happening.

BRENDA: This is important, I think we're being sur-veiled!

EARL: We're being what?

BRENDA: You know, watched!

EARL: Looks to me like you're the one doing all the watching.

BRENDA: How do I know if they're watchin us unless I'm watchin them?

EARL: Ok fine... who's watchin you watchin them?

BRENDA: *They* are.

EARL: Brenda, get away from the window. Ever since I hooked up that TV cable you been watching too many cop shows and it's affected your brain. You're paranoid.

BRENDA: But it's a cable TV truck. It's just sittin' across the road.

EARL: So there's a cable TV truck on our street. Big deal.

BRENDA: They can tell, I know they can. *(picks up the phone)* Hello.... Hello?? *(checks the cord connections)* Cheap piece of crap! Earl, the phone's dead! *(Earl pays no attention)* Earl!! Are you listening to me? I said the phone's dead

EARL: For cryin out loud, can't you see I'm busy!!

BRENDA: Did you pay the phone bill?

EARL: Is it plugged in? Try jiggling the cord.

BRENDA: I've tried that and I'm telling you... it's dead.

EARL: So we're being sur-veiled and now they've cut our phone off.

BRENDA: *(panicked)* You think they cut our phone lines!?

EARL: I don't suppose they're hiding behind a grassy knoll are they? No they haven't cut the phone lines!

BRENDA: Then why won't the phone work all of a sudden?

EARL: Will you please just give me a little peace and quiet? I'm working on something important here.

BRENDA: But this is serious, I need to use the phone.

EARL: Then go next door and use the Barnesdales' phone.

BRENDA: That's who I'm trying to call!

EARL: Then I guess you've got a problem.

BRENDA: I wanna see if those cable guys are checkin' up on their cable too.

EARL: They don't have illegal cable. They have illegal satellite.

BRENDA: *(tries the phone again)* Hello, Hello!! When's the last time you paid the phone bill?

EARL: I didn't actually pay it, I experimented with it.

BRENDA: How do you mean?

EARL: I sent it back marked "deceased". I didn't think they'd have the heart to cut off a dead persons phone.

BRENDA: You didn't really think that through, did you Earl. Anyway, I think we should disconnect our cable for a while, just to be safe.

EARL: Forget it... no way. I'm busy.

BRENDA: Busy? All you've been doing is sitting at that computer all morning!

EARL: Listen, I'm not climbin' that pole again, I'll get electrocuted or radiated or somethin'.

BRENDA: *(peeking out of the curtains)* But they're parked right in front of Larry's place.

EARL: *(suddenly attentive)* Larry's place? *(goes to the window)* What's that big dummy up to now.

BRENDA: I wish you wouldn't call him that.

EARL: He is what he is. Not your fault your brother got all the dummy genes. *(peeks out curtain)* Ha! I knew it! He's gettin' TV cable installed. Installed!! That means he's

payin' for it! If that doesn't prove he's a big dummy, I don't know what does. *(pause)* I wonder if he's gettin' the movie channels?

BRENDA: I think they're checkin' up Earl! I heard they have these electronic gizmos that can tell if you've got illegal cable, just by drivin' past your house. They're probably scanning us right now!

EARL: Maybe we should wrap our heads in tin foil so they can't read our thoughts.

BRENDA: Do you think they can?

EARL: Sure, then they climb back into their starship and blast off for Planet High Def.

BRENDA: Fine, make fun, but if they find out you hot-wired the cable and take away our TV, it's all your fault.

EARL: No, it'll be your brothers fault for bringing the cable company here and making them suspicious! I'll bet he's done it on purpose, he's still out to get me!

BRENDA: Don't start on that. He is *not* out to get you.

EARL: Oh he's out to get me alright. And ... you don't hot wire TV cable, you hot-wire cars.

BRENDA: Well it's all illegal, isn't it.

EARL: *(still peeking out the window)* Yeah well if they show up sniffin' around here, I'm tellin' them about that remote control box he never returned then sold at a garage sale!

BRENDA: You mean the one you bought and used for two years?

EARL: I haven't paid him for it yet so it's technically still his. *(peeks out the curtains)* Ok... They've come out of Larry's place... act natural.

BRENDA: What are they doing?

EARL: They're just sitting in their truck.

BRENDA: See I told you, I bet they're scanning us, I bet they can see right under my clothes! *(she starts rummaging through the hamper).*

EARL: What are you doing?

BRENDA: Looking for my good undies!

EARL: Wait... somethings happening.

BRENDA: What.. What??

EARL: *(in mock panic)* Oh no, they've got a huge antenna with sparks coming out of it!

BRENDA: I knew it! *(rushes to the kitchen drawer and takes out a roll of tin foil)*

EARL: They're pointing it right at our trailer!

BRENDA: Oh my god... I told you! *(trying to wrap her head in tin foil)* Don't just stand there, help me!

EARL: Relax, relax, they're driving away.

BRENDA: Oh thank goodness. I feel funny. Do you think they x-rayed us?

EARL: What do you think? If they'd x-rayed us we'd both look like skeletons, wouldn't we? Jeez Brenda, you gotta think these things through. Anyway, I got more important things to think about. I'm workin on something here that'll solve all our problems.

BRENDA: Oh great, how many times have I heard that?

EARL: This time it's different, this time everything is...

BRENDA: *(interrupts)* You're right Earl, I have to hand it to you. At least you never come up with the same dumb plan twice in a row. We need money, we can't eat those pies in the sky you keep chasing.

EARL: No sky pies here Brenda, I'm daring to dream!

BRENDA: You've got the dreaming part right anyway. Maybe it's time you actually looked for a job.

EARL: Well if you brother hadn't screwed me around, I wouldn't have to look for a job would I?

BRENDA: Like that was the only job in the world.

EARL: You know I'd go back to work in a second if I could find something that matched my unique qualifications.

BRENDA: Fair enough, but I think the job market for "ex almost pro bowler" who "dares to dream" is pretty thin right now.

EARL: You call it "dreaming", I call it "creative strategizing".

BRENDA: Actually, *you* called it dreaming.

EARL: Potato, potato. (*he pronounces "potato" the same way both times*)

BRENDA: Whatever you call it, it sure ain't paying the phone bill is it?

EARL: Leave it to me Brenda, I have this all under control.

BRENDA: Oh sure, like the last time!

EARL: Don't start!

BRENDA: Two thousand dollars worth of surplus Fudgsicles you bought and said we could make a fortune on! My feet are still sticking to the floor

EARL: And that's my fault? They coulda told me they weren't supplying the freezer!

BRENDA: Then there was...

EARL: (*interrupting*) Don't dwell on the negatives! If you can't talk about my successes, don't say anything at all.

Brenda stands silently staring at Earl.

EARL: (*repeatedly presses keyboard keys*) Damn the internet is slow. The kid next door must be playing on-line games again. Doesn't he have anything better to do than sit at the computer all morning? I wish I had somebody else's password.

There's a couple of seconds of silence, then Earl looks at Brenda, they stare silently at each other for a few seconds.

EARL: ...What? ...What? (*the penny finally drops*) Oh very

funny!!

BRENDA: Earl, if this is another one of your hair-brained get rich quick schemes I swear I'm walkin right out that door and you'll never see me again!

EARL: You wouldn't dare!

BRENDA: Oh yes I would!

EARL: Where would you go?

BRENDA: I dunno, maybe I'd stay with Larry.

EARL: You mean you'd walk out the door and clear across the road?

BRENDA: That's right

EARL: Then how would I never see you again if you're only across the road?

BRENDA: Never mind that, at least he has a phone that works!

EARL: Good! Then you can call me when I'm lounging on the Riviera after my ship comes in!

BRENDA: The only way you'll get on a ship to the Riviera is if you put on a giant rat costume and crawl up a mooring rope!

EARL: Just you wait, this is all going to work out. It's a legitimate business deal!

BRENDA: It's not more Fudgicles?

EARL: No

BRENDA: It's not three hundred pounds of black market lobster left in our driveway?

EARL: How was I supposed to know they'd go bad so fast?

BRENDA: You mean this is all above board?

EARL: Totally.

BRENDA: Totally?

EARL: *(pause)* Mostly

BRENDA: What is it this time? Tell me. I'm tired of your crazy schemes. I can't live like this anymore... this place is falling apart! The roof leaks, it needs paint and that front door lock has been busted for months.

EARL: Come on baby, I'm doin' my best.

BRENDA: And now the cable company is after us!

EARL: No they're not baby, they were just installing cable for your brother.

BRENDA: But I just feel like givin' up sometimes.

EARL: I know that kitten, that's why I'm doin' all this. It's for you, it's always been for you. You gotta have faith.

BRENDA: Tell me it's gonna work this time. Guarantee me it's gonna work!

EARL: I can guarantee it won't make your feet stick to the floor or make the driveway smell bad.

BRENDA: I'm serious Earl.

EARL: I know baby. I just want to make you proud of me. I know I'm not the smartest guy in the drawer. I can't buy you diamonds or take you on fancy trips or even buy you brand new stuff but that doesn't mean I'm gonna stop trying. All I ever wanted was for us to be happy and for you to be proud of me.

BRENDA: *(softening)* Ohh I love my Curly Early.

EARL: You're the only one who still calls me that.

BRENDA: My Curly Early.

EARL: It used to be good didn't it, back when I was Curly Early... I'd walk into the bowling alley and everyone would know me. "Hey Curly. .got another perfect game in ya today?" "Hey Curly, when ya joinin' the tour?"

BRENDA: "Hey Curly, where's that twenty bucks ya owe me?"

EARL: But you were proud of me then, weren't you?

BRENDA: I sure was baby and I still am, it's just that we need money. We really do.

EARL: That's what I'm workin on baby! In the meantime we just have to make do. How about your souvenir spoon collection, we could sell that.

BRENDA: No way! But I'll tell you something else we could sell.

EARL: No!!

BRENDA: You don't even know what I'm going to say!

EARL: Yes I do and the answer is no!

BRENDA: Alright, what was I going to say?

EARL: I can't say it.

BRENDA: Then I will. We have a fancy expensive bowling ball that's just been sitting in the closet for the last twenty years. Why don't we sell *that*?

EARL: Why don't we just sell my soul!!

BRENDA: Because we need more than a buck and a quarter!

EARL: That ball stays where it is.

BRENDA: But it's useless.

EARL: I'll pretend you didn't say that.

BRENDA: You never use it anymore!

EARL: And we both know why!

BRENDA: Don't start!

EARL: I'm not selling my ball and that's that!

BRENDA: But it's just a stupid bowling ball!

EARL: Whoa! Did you hear what you just said?? Just a stupid bowling ball!? I think you, of all people would know the significance of that ball and the legend it represents!

BRENDA: It's just a stupid bowling ball!

EARL: It's a Lane Master Black Diamond Limited Edition ball, that's what it is! That's the Cadillac of balls! It's computer balanced, diamond polished and specially drilled to fit my hand, nobody else could possibly appreciate it. Besides ...it has "Curly Early" engraved on it.

BRENDA: Baby, you're still *my* Curly Early but nobody else's. Those days are gone.

EARL: I've still got it, it's in my blood. Sometimes at night I even dream about it. I can hear the crash of the pins and see the lanes glistening with oil. In my right hand... the Black Diamond nestles like it was born there ...my left hand caresses "Curly Early" embroidered on my shirt. The backswing, the delivery, the ball rolls, I pose...pins fall. I am one with the lanes.

BRENDA: *(pause)* Maybe you should be one with a shrink.

EARL: Sure, make fun but I'll bet they still talk about me down at Fred's Bowl-a-Rama. I can still curl that ball down the lane and take out a 7-10 split with my eyes closed

BRENDA: *(to herself)* Just like back in the day...

EARL: Just like back in the day. Back when I coulda turned pro!

BRENDA: Well you didn't.

EARL: But I coulda!

BRENDA: If ifs and buts were candies and nuts..

EARL: And we both know why I didn't turn pro don't we?

BRENDA: Oh so it's my fault because I got pregnant!

EARL: Well it wasn't me that got pregnant was it?

BRENDA: *(pause)* I'll give you a second to realize how dumb that sounds.

EARL: *(pause)* I'm sorry baby, I didn't mean anything by that. You and little Earl are the best things that ever happened to me. If I had to choose all over again I'd do

the exact same thing. Besides, we've had twenty good years since I hung up the two-tone shoes haven't we? We've done ok, Little Earl turned out good and now he's all grown up and moved out.

BRENDA: I miss him....

EARL: Me too, but he's a career man. He's gotta go where his career takes him.

BRENDA: He's living the dream.

EARL: Yeah, I was so proud the first time I saw him work. Standing up there, so professional, so confident, his hands on the controls. I got tingles all up and down my spine the first time I heard him say it

Brenda and Earl look at each other and say the next line in unison like a carny ride operator.

BRENDA & EARL: Ya wanna go fasterrrrrrrrr!!!!

(They both laugh)

BRENDA: Nobody runs the Tilt-A-Whirl like our little Earl!

EARL: I m gonna get him a t-shirt for Christmas that says Tilt-A-Whirl Earl It's good to see him make it. It's all been worth it baby.

BRENDA: I know hon, but sometimes I wonder if things coulda been different. Maybe you'd have really hit the big time.. been on one of those Saturday morning TV bowling shows.

EARL: I was good wasn't I? Did you know I got a call from the Dr. Scholls people once? They were talkin' about me endorsin' their line of special rental shoe anti-bacterial foot powder. I even came up with my own catch phrase. "Take it from Curly Early, my feet are so clean you can eat off them!"

BRENDA: That's good. That's real good.

EARL: I woulda been on TV and everything. We coulda been set up with free foot powder for life.

BRENDA: I coulda used it last summer.

EARL: But I chose you over the glamour of big time bowling.

BRENDA: Oh Early! *(she hugs him)* .

EARL: You're still my little pin bunny, aren't you?

BRENDA: I love you Early...

EARL: I love you too.

BRENDA: *(pause)* So, do you wanna?

EARL: In the middle of the day?

BRENDA: Not that! I mean the tour!

EARL: What?

BRENDA: Little Earl has moved out, it's just us again. You could go back, turn pro. I could go on tour with you.

EARL: You really mean that?

BRENDA: Why not?

EARL: Yeah!! Why not? The tour's even bigger than it was back then. There's tons of dough to be made.

BRENDA: And you're just the man to make it!

EARL: "The Return of Curly Early"!

BRENDA: Like you said baby, you've still got it!

EARL: Polish up that brass ring cause I'm about to grab it!

BRENDA: Oh baby, grab me too!!

EARL: I will baby, I will! But first.... go get my ball!
(inhales deeply) I smell a freshly oiled lane!

Brenda takes a bowling bag out of a closet, Earl reverently removes the ball, and holds it in front of him, striking a bowling pose

EARL: It's been a long time. A long time since I held this ball and it still fits perfectly. Like a glove...a big round really heavy glove.

BRENDA: You look good baby, real good!

EARL: I can feel it. I can feel the energy running up my arm. Kinda like that time I shorted out my power drill.

BRENDA: I can feel it too... all through my body! Kinda like the time I shorted out my...

EARL: *(interrupts)* Don't bring that up again! The tour! Why didn't I think of this before? But I'd need you there with me baby, it'd be too dangerous for me to go out there alone, pro bowlers are chick magnets.

BRENDA: I'll be right beside you!

EARL: Right! I gotta get the feel back again. Gotta start practicing and... I want you to take all my bowling shirts to the laundromat and use extra Bounce, I don't need them chafing. And make sure those little holes in the armpits are clear, ventilation is very important.

BRENDA: So you're going back!

EARL: Back to Fred's Bowl-a-Rama. I haven't been back since the day little Earl was born and we moved away The day I cleaned my ball for the last time. Lots of memories in those lanes. Things I ain't thought about in years. Pass me my bag.

Brenda passes him his bowling ball bag and he takes out a small towel. It's filthy and black with lane oil and grime.

EARL: Look at this... my personalized lucky bowling towel. I'll bet it still smells like lane oil. *(he sniffs it)*

BRENDA: Hasn't that been in your bag for twenty years?

EARL: Yeah... that wasn't a good idea.

Brenda looks in the bag and takes out a small silver bell, the type used on retail counters

BRENDA: What's this?

EARL: Just a little souvenir I took from Fred's.

BRENDA: Why on earth would you take a bell?

EARL: Because a kid was growing up too fast.

BRENDA: I don't understand.

EARL: It was Fred's boy. He was only six and he got caught in the middle of something he didn't understand and I thought I should do something about it.

BRENDA: You're being mysterious and that usually means you're up to something.

EARL: No I'm not baby, really. It's just that the kid needed my help.

BRENDA: So you helped him by stealing the counter bell.

EARL: That's about it.

BRENDA: That's my Earl, man of action. So, what was going on?

EARL: It's complicated. Besides, it was a long time ago now.

(computer sfx indicating mail has arrived)

EARL: An email... this could be it! *(puts the ball, bell and towel back in the bag, hands it to Brenda)* Put this back in the closet. If this is what I think it is we won't have to sell the ball or anything else ever again. *(he goes to computer)* Alright, look at this, what I was tellin' you about! The Crown Prince guy just got back to me!

BRENDA: Crown Prince guy?

EARL: Crown Prince Gustaf.

BRENDA: Sounds like he's out of a Disney movie.

EARL: He's foreigner, they all have names like that. *(reading from the screen)* "Please stand by for further communication"

BRENDA: Further communication?

EARL: He's got people.

BRENDA: Who is this guy?

EARL: He's a genuine Crown Prince who needs to get a hundred and fifty million out of his country because the Visigoths had taken control of the government and he was going have to exile himself to an island somewhere but they've frozen his assets.

BRENDA: Why would they want to freeze his....

EARL: *(interrupting)* It means he can't get at his fortune and he needed someone with financial smarts to help him.

BRENDA: Oh. So who's the person with financial smarts?

EARL: Me.

BRENDA: You?

EARL: Yeah!

BRENDA: Oh.

EARL: You see, he's stuck over there in one of those foreign countries with a weird name... "something-stan", "rama lama ding dong-stan", I dunno. So he needs me to grease the wheels for him and as soon as he can get his fortune safely out of the country he says "thank you" with a huge wad of cash.

BRENDA: So how exactly do you "grease the wheels"?

EARL: His money is all tied up by the Visigoths that have taken over his country, but he needs cash so he can bribe them into releasing his fortune.

BRENDA: So you grease the wheels with cash.

EARL: Yep.

BRENDA: But, if they already have his fortune, why don't they just keep all of it?

EARL: *(pause)* It's not that simple. Besides, there are some things it's best I don't know about. Too much knowledge can be dangerous.

BRENDA: Then you must be just about the safest man in the world.

EARL: You can't be too safe.

BRENDA: And where is the "wheel greasing" cash coming from?

EARL: It's all taken care of.

BRENDA: *(threateningly)* If my spoons are...

EARL: I didn't touch your spoons, it's all taken care of, don't worry about it.

BRENDA: But honey, if you're going back on tour, you don't need this.

EARL: I can't ignore this, it's big, real big. Bigger than anything I've ever done before!

BRENDA: Why didn't you tell me about it?

EARL: Because until it panned out I wanted to keep it hush hush.

BRENDA: Why? In case it blew up in your face face?

EARL: Go ahead... mock. This is the real deal. As soon as I hear from the Crown Prince that everything is a "go", we've got it made.

BRENDA: *(hopefully)* Really? Then maybe we can get nice things like everyone else!

EARL: Our things are just as nice as anybody else's around here.

BRENDA: What about Larry, he has real cable TV...

EARL: Aw will you shut up about Larry!

BRENDA: And the Bannerman's just got a whole set of seven dwarfs garden gnomes!

EARL: They got 'em half price 'cause there was no "Grumpy" and two "Bashfuls"

BRENDA: But still.

EARL: Look, you gotta have patience, these things take time. But trust me, the money's gonna come. It'll be like bananas from heaven.

BRENDA: Maybe we can get them collection agencies off our back. I'm tired of climbing out the bathroom window every time they show up.

EARL: Leave it propped open in case they come back, it'll kill two birds with one stone.

BRENDA: So this Crown Prince is really gonna come through?

EARL: You bet.

BRENDA: I just wanna be sure baby, Larry says those internet guys are scam artists.

EARL: If Larry had a brain like mine, he wouldn't say that. In fact, if he hadn't messed me around I might even let him in on it but... I don't want to talk about him right now, I don't want anything to spoil this moment.

BRENDA: What moment?

EARL: The moment when you realize your man has finally come through.

BRENDA: But it hasn't happened yet.

EARL: But it will, just wait and see. It's all for you Brenda, everything I've ever done has been for you!

BRENDA: Like when you burned down our first trailer?

EARL: That wasn't for you, that was for the insurance but once this comes through, we'll have tons of dough. What do you want?... anything!

BRENDA: Maybe we can get a new flat screen TV, you know, one you don't have to put a doily on top of... and cable, hooked up properly so it's not all fuzzy... like Larry has....

EARL: Aw, will you stop goin' on about Larry!

BRENDA: Come on Earl, he's my brother.

EARL: By the way, now he has cable, remind me to go over there tomorrow night to watch the hockey game.

BRENDA: I thought you didn't want anything to do with him.

EARL: I'll be watchin' the game! Doesn't mean I have to talk to him.

BRENDA: Why can't you just try to be nice to him?

EARL: 'Cause he stole my job *and* he thinks he's better than me!

BRENDA: He doesn't think he's better than you, he likes you.

EARL: Then why's he showin' off, tryin' to make me look bad? (*looks through the curtains*) That's what he's doing, getting TV cable installed just to make me look cheap.

BRENDA: So much for "the moment". Forget about Larry, come and have some lunch.

EARL: I'm not hungry.

BRENDA: Well I am (*Brenda exits to kitchen*)

EARL: I can't think of food at a time like this. I'm tryin' to concentrate on the Crown Prince and getting back on the tour and he's across the road eyeballin' me like that. When I'm rich I'm gonna hire someone to eyeball *him*, see how he likes it.

BRENDA: (*returns with a tin of Chef Boy-ar-dee ravioli, eating it with a spoon*) This stuffs really goodwant some?

EARL: I told ya I'm not hungry.

(during the next segment, they each carry on their own side of different conversations, oblivious to the fact that the other isn't listening)

BRENDA: Boy-ar-dee. Do you think he's any relation to Boy George?

EARL: (*peeking out the window*) ... Mr. Big Deal thinks he's king of the trailer park.

BRENDA: I love Italian food.

EARL: Sitting there like he owns the place...

BRENDA: It's good right out of the tin. They make it that way so you've got options.

EARL: Ever since he stole that job, he's been lordin' it over me!

BRENDA: For instance, what if your microwave's busted? You can eat it cold and it's just as good. See? Options.

EARL: He's really beginning to get on my nerves Brenda!

BRENDA: ...and if you don't finish it, you can put the tin upside down on a plate and it's like you never opened it.

EARL: And, he's drinkin' *Corona!* I can tell by the clear bottle! What's wrong with "50" all of a sudden? I tell ya, he's really puttin' on airs.

BRENDA: Some even have those little pull tab openers so you can eat it right there in the grocery store.

EARL: Thinks he's Mr. Fancy Career Man. He's just a night watchman in an apple warehouse.

BRENDA: It's even good in a sandwich.

EARL: An apple warehouse. Big deal!

BRENDA: It even comes in it's own ketchup.

EARL: He's a friggin' Apple Cop!

BRENDA: Who's an apple cop?

EARL: Your brother!

BRENDA: He's not an Apple Cop, he's a Night Security Supervisor.

EARL: *(peeking out the curtains)* Look at him there... Mr. Hot Stuff thinks he's so cool.

BRENDA: Make up your mind.

EARL: Apple cop. Big deal.

BRENDA: But isn't that the job you wanted?

EARL: *(pause)* Yeah... but he turned it stupid.

BRENDA: Larry really likes you, Earl...he does. He's never said a word against you, you know that. He's family and you're gonna treat him like family.

EARL: I do treat him like family. Didn't I borrow a hundred bucks from him just last month?

BRENDA: That's not what I mean. As far as I'm concerned he's welcome over here anytime and I told him that.

EARL: Oh no you don't! He's not setting foot inside this trailer again!

BRENDA: Oh yes he is!

EARL: *(pause)* Okay... but he can't stay long.

BRENDA: Earl, he's lonely. He doesn't have anyone to talk to.

EARL: Maybe he would if he coulda held on to his wife!

BRENDA: It wasn't his fault!

EARL: Then whose fault was it?

BRENDA: Nobody's!! How was he supposed to know the car door was going to fly open?

EARL: He shouldn't have taken the turn so fast!

BRENDA: All she had to do was hang on to something.

EARL: She did... but that plastic Jesus snapped off the dashboard like a dry twig. Bad mojo follows that guy around like pickled egg stink.

BRENDA: That was no reason to leave him.

EARL: Maybe he shoulda gone back to pick her up.

(SFX computer mail, EARL goes to computer)

Hey it's the Crown Prince! *(reading)* "Am happily joyous to be again making your fine acquaintance".

BRENDA: Why does he talk so funny?

EARL: Cause he's a foreigner. I told ya, he lives in one of those foreign countries, you know one of those that are even worse than France. *(reading from computer)* "Am happy to report agreed upon sum from your kind self is sufficient to release funds"

BRENDA: You sent him money?

EARL: It's the wheel greasing cash.

BRENDA: But...

EARL: No buts! This thing is happening! Look at this...
(*reading from the screen*) "I am in receipt of your ten thousand dollar check to "expedite paperwork" and will soon release funds to you in amount of fifteen million dollars. Yours truly, Crown Prince Gustaf" I don't believe it! Did ya hear that Brenda!! Will soon release funds! Fifteen million! Yahooooo!

BRENDA: But Earl....

EARL: (*dancing around the room singing, celebrating etc*) It worked! It worked!! Fifteen million! I told you we'd be in the money!

BRENDA: Earl, wait a minute...

EARL: Proud of me now baby?!

BRENDA: I dunno Earl

EARL: (*yells out window*) Eat your heart out Larry Loser!
(*starts dancing around again*) We're in the money, we're in the money!!

BRENDA: But EARL....

EARL: (*dancing*) I'm rich, I'm rich, I'm stinkin' stinkin' rich. I'm rich, I'm rich, I'm stinkin' stinkin' rich!

BRENDA: (*louder*) EARL!!

EARL: What... what!!??

BRENDA: You wrote him a check for ten thousand dollars?

EARL: Of course I did!

BRENDA: But we don't have ten thousand dollars.

EARL: Of course we don't!

BRENDA: Then what's going to happen when....

EARL: Nothing's gonna happen!

BRENDA: Earl, this is gonna blow up in your face , just like the Fudgsicles!

EARL: They didn't blow up, they melted!

BRENDA: I just know something bads gonna happen!

EARL: Believe me baby, nothings gonna happen. Nothing! I've got it all worked out. He said they'll release his money as soon as they get the check. Now this is where the plan gets truly beautiful... I used a check from an account I closed last year! So by the time they discover there's no such account, they'll have already released his fortune and he'll send me the fifteen million!

BRENDA: How can he release the funds to your account if your bank account doesn't exist?

EARL: Because he's not releasing the funds to my account, I told him to mail me a check...do ya think I'm an idiot?

BRENDA: You're sure that's going to work?

EARL: What could possibly go wrong?

BRENDA: Well, what if his check bounces, or they want to wait until the check clears before they release his fortune or...

EARL: Stop thinking so much Brenda! Sometimes you just gotta let it unfold. I've ruined too many perfect plans by thinking too much, this time, it's just unfolding.

BRENDA: How is that different from unravelling?

EARL: I'm letting the process happen naturally. It's orgasmic. (*Brenda looks puzzled*) Orgasmic... you know, like orgasmic farming. (*pause*) Oh never mind, it would take too long to explain.

BRENDA: I'd like to see you explain it to the farmers.

EARL: Farmers? Why would I have to explain anything to farmers? Jeez Brenda, try to focus will ya?

BRENDA: I'm just worried baby, it all seems too good to be true.

EARL: You mean, so good it *has* to be true! Check this out.

(he hands her a file folder from beside the computer)

BRENDA: *(she opens the folder)* What are these?

EARL: Testimonials. Testimonials from people just like me who have helped other rich guys in the same country in exactly the same situation.

BRENDA: *(reading)* "My five thousand dollars turned into eight million overnight, now my financial freedom is assured" Where did you get these?

EARL: The Crown Prince sent them to me.

BRENDA: *(still reading)* "I'm writing this testimonial from the Bahamas on board my own personal luxury yacht". *(pause)* Oh my God I don't believe it!

EARL: Believe it baby! Proud of me now?

BRENDA: Bursting! *(sits down)* Fifteen million dollars. I can't even count that high, we can have everything we've ever wanted

EARL: We can have things we don't even know we want, like... like... well, I don't know.

BRENDA: A pool?? Can we have a swimmin' pool?

EARL: You bet.

BRENDA: With that fancy water that turns red if somebody pees in it!

EARL: Oui oui!

BRENDA: *(puzzled)* Was that a joke?

EARL: Yeah, it's French.

BRENDA: Oh baby... you're already gettin' classy!

EARL: You're gonna see a whole new me! When you're rich, everything changes. People look at you different. For one thing, you don't get hassled at the variety store when you ask for change for the laundromat, Big changes are comin' Brenda. Didn't I tell you I'd come through?

BRENDA: You came through baby, did you ever come through....

EARL: And it's all for my kitten....my sexy kitty!

BRENDA: (sexily) ooohh, you're kittys guy aren't you?

EARL: You know it baby!

BRENDA: oooh, you're my filthy rich kittys guy....my filthy dirty filthy rich.....

(they draw closer)

EARL: I'm so filthy rich I'm gonna take a shower in hundred dollar bills... wanna join me?

BRENDA: Oh, baby, your sexy kitty's heart's beating like crazy, can you feel it?

(puts his hand on her chest)

EARL: Oh baby, can I ever...

BRENDA: Say it baby... it would be so hot if you said it.

EARL: Say what baby?

BRENDA: Your catch phrase, just like you woulda on TV.

EARL: My feet are so clean you can eat off them.

BRENDA: Oh baby!!

Just as they kiss, there's a knock on the door, actually sounds more like someone kicking the door

(Brenda and Earl shoot each other a look then run and hide on either side of the door)

EARL: We expecting anybody?

BRENDA: No

EARL: Crap!

BRENDA: Did you pay the gas bill?

EARL: No. Did you pay the hydro bill?

BRENDA: No. Did you pay the water bill?

EARL: No. Did you pay the tax bill?

BRENDA: No. Have we paid anything?

EARL: Not exactly, no.

BRENDA: So we owe everybody.

EARL: Pretty much.

BRENDA: So it could be anybody.

EARL: Right. *(pause)* Did you prop open the bathroom window?

BRENDA: I thought we were millionaires?

EARL: Well we don't have it yet, do we? So we have to stall them until we do.

BRENDA: *(calling out)* Who is it?

EARL: Shhhhhhhh!!!! Don't let them know we're home!

LARRY: It's me, Larry.

EARL: Oh great... the Apple Cop.

BRENDA: Earl!!

LARRY: Come on, open the door, I've got my hands full!

EARL: We're closed! *(approaches Brenda)* Now where were we....

BRENDA: Later Earl... now open the door.

EARL: Ah come on baby...

BRENDA: I said later...

EARL: Just give me five minutes...

BRENDA: The door!

EARL: *(tries to be sexy)* My feet are so clean...

BRENDA: *(interrupting)* Will you open the door!

EARL: Why don't you show me your 7-10...

BRENDA: *(threateningly)* Earl!!

LARRY: Hurry up, this is getting heavy.

EARL: *(moves away from the door)* Fine, open the door before he starts to cry. First he steals my job, now he interferes with my... my... husbandlyness!

Brenda starts to open the door

EARL: Don't say a word to Larry about the fifteen million!

BRENDA; Why not?

EARL: 'Cause he'll blab it all over the park, then everyone will want in on it!

BRENDA: Okay, Fine.

Brenda opens the door, Larry enters carrying a bushel basket of apples.

LARRY: *(handing basket to Brenda)* Here ya go Sis.

EARL: Apples huh?

LARRY: That's what I like about you Earl, sharp as a tack.

EARL: So what happened Apple Cop? Did they escape?

LARRY: What?

EARL: Are they your prisoners?

LARRY: What are you talking about?

BRENDA: Oh never mind him, just make yourself at home.

EARL: Yeah, it's right across the road.

BRENDA: *(gives the basket to Earl)* Here, make yourself useful.

EARL: Did you give us all the bruised ones?

LARRY: They're overstocks, if they have too many we can take some home... I thought you guys might like some.

EARL: They look kinda puny.

BRENDA: Earl, why don't you take the apples to the kitchen and get Larry a beer.

EARL: Can't he get his own, he just lives across the road.

BRENDA: Earl!!!!

EARL: Okay, Okay (*heading to the kitchen*) Apparently I have to get you a beer. Oh, and what if these apples escape again? Should I call you?

BRENDA: EARL!!

EARL: Okay, okay. (*takes apples into the kitchen*)

BRENDA: And don't forget the beer! (*sits beside Larry*) I'm sorry, he's just being an asshole.

LARRY: What's with calling me "Apple Cop"?

BRENDA: That's just what he's decided you are at the warehouse because you're the Night Security Supervisor.

LARRY: Oh I get it. Look, maybe I should leave, this isn't working out, I thought the apples would soften him up.

BRENDA: He loves anything free, he just won't admit it. Don't worry, he'll come around, it's just going to take some time.

LARRY: Time? It's been almost a year! How many more "anonymous" bags of flaming dog crap am I going to find on my front step?

BRENDA: (*pause*) He's still doing that huh?

LARRY: Yep

BRENDA: We don't even have a dog, I've no idea where he's getting it from. *Brenda and Larry look at each other.*

Larry changes the subject

LARRY: I don't know what to do Brenda, I've tried being nice to him, I've tried ignoring him but nothing seems to work. He's acting like a ten year old. An *immature* ten year old.

BRENDA: Earl marches to his own kazoo player.

EARL: *(from the kitchen)* Help Larry... help!!

BRENDA: What the...

*An apple comes sailing through the air out of
the kitchen*

EARL: *(from the kitchen)* Oh no....an apple just escaped!

BRENDA: Oh for crying out loud!

LARRY: What's he talking about?

Another apple comes sailing into the living room

EARL: Look out Larry, they're making a run for it!! Arrest them, arrest them!!

A third apple comes sailing out of the kitchen

LARRY: Earl, cut it out!

EARL: Fine. Some apple cop you turned out to be.

BRENDA: *(to Larry)* Just ignore him.

LARRY: It's kinda hard...

BRENDA: Earls a proud man. He was really upset when they gave you that job.

LARRY: That's just it, they gave it to me, I didn't steal it. It would have been his if he bothered to show up for the interview. Besides, he could've still had his old job there if he hadn't walked out in a snit.

BRENDA: I know.

LARRY: All I know is, he's still mad and he's still taking it out on me.

BRENDA: You think you've got it bad? I have to watch him try every get rich quick scheme out there.

LARRY: This place still smells like Fudgsicles

BRENDA: Tell me about it.

LARRY: Then he bought what he said was Egyptian real estate.

BRENDA: That would be the pyramid scheme.

LARRY: What about that truckload of designer sunglasses?

BRENDA: You mean the "Ray-Bobs"?

LARRY: That was a classic.

BRENDA: He's a decent man Larry, a little misguided but he means well. *(calling to the kitchen)* Earl, where's Larry's beer?

EARL: Coming... just as soon as I warm it up!

BRENDA: Oh Larry, maybe you're right, maybe I shouldn't have asked you over here, he's just not ready yet to be civil to you.

LARRY: Actually I'm kinda glad you did, there's somethin' come up at the warehouse that he's gonna be interested in. I didn't want to mention it until...

BRENDA: *(interrupting)* I don't think he'd be too interested in a job right now....

LARRY: Why, does he have a new job?

BRENDA: No, not exactly. But let's just say we won't be needing money anymore.

LARRY: What, Earl's decided to become a homeless nudist who doesn't eat?

BRENDA: No, it's just that. Well... I'm not supposed to say anything so you have to promise you won't tell anybody.

LARRY: I have a feeling I won't want to tell anybody.

BRENDA: We're getting fifteen million dollars!

LARRY: What? Where... how?

BRENDA: It's still a secret, but Earl is going to help a Crown Prince get his money out of his country and he's getting paid fifteen million!

LARRY: Let me guess. He heard about this on the internet, right?

BRENDA: Well, yes.

LARRY: Oh Brenda, I told you those guys were scam artists!

BRENDA: But he has testimonials.

LARRY: It's another get rich quick scheme. Only someone with a turnip for a brain would fall for that.

EARL: *(entering from the kitchen)* Who has a turnip for a brain?

BRENDA: Nobody's has a turnip for a brain!

EARL: *(points at Larry)* It's you isn't it! You're saying I have a turnip for a brain!

BRENDA: No he isn't.

EARL: You're rubbin' it in again about the lobsters aren't you? You know very well it was the hottest day of the year and besides, they were supposed to be alive.

LARRY: Oh, it would have been so much better to have a pile of live lobsters dumped in your driveway!

EARL: That's no reason to say I have a turnip for a brain!

LARRY: You were listening to us!

EARL: I was not! You can't eavestrough in your own house!

LARRY: Don't you mean eavesdrop?

EARL: Of course I do.

LARRY: No, wouldn't want to sound stupid would you?

EARL: Oh, so now I not only have a turnip for a brain but I'm stupid!!

LARRY: So you mean up until this point, your head contained a reasonably intelligent turnip?

EARL: Don't you try and put a turnip in my head.

LARRY: I wouldn't think of it.

EARL: Then who's the turnip brain?

LARRY: Certainly not you.

EARL: Good.

LARRY: That would be insulting to turnips.

EARL: Aha!! I knew it! You see Brenda? You see what he thinks about me!!? Well, let's see what he thinks about this!

Earl runs into the kitchen and returns with the basket of apples, picks one out which he holds up and shows Larry

EARL: What do you think about this huh??? *(He proceeds to frantically smash the apple with his fist until it's pulverized then triumphantly holds it up to Larry's face)* There!! How about that huh? What do you think about that?

LARRY: *(pause) (calmy)* You smashed an apple.

EARL: Yeah, but it's *your* apple!

LARRY: No it isn't, I gave it to you. It's your apple.

Earl looks at the apple, then at Larry, then methodically smears the smashed apple all over the front of Larry's shirt.

EARL: There! How about that!

LARRY: *(pause while Larry stares incredulously at his apple smeared shirt)* Why did you do that?

EARL: To show you I don't need you tryin' to impress me with your stupid apples.

LARRY: I'm not trying to impress anyone! I just got some apples from work and thought...

EARL: *(interrupting)* Oh yeah... from work!! Here we go again. Rub it in why don'tcha Mr. Apple Cop.

LARRY: I just thought you might like some free apples, what's wrong with that?

EARL: Look, I don't care about your apples and I don't even care about that stupid job anymore 'cause starting today, I'm fryin' a fish that's a whole lot bigger than you!

LARRY: *(Larry and Brenda exchange looks)* Another one of your get rich quick schemes?

EARL: Wouldn't you like to know!

LARRY: Not really.

EARL: Yeah? Well just wait til I'm eatin' fish and you're eatin'... somethin' else.

LARRY: Bon appétit, go eat your fish, I'm happy for you.

EARL: I'm not gonna be eating fish, it's a simile, smart guy.

LARRY: Don't you mean "metaphor"?

EARL: Don't try to trip me up! All you need to know is that I don't care about that stupid job anymore, I'm in business with someone who's gonna make me some real money.

LARRY: His name wouldn't be "Ponzi" would it?

EARL: No, and it's none of your business what his name is. And by the way just to prove that money is no object to me anymore, here's ten bucks towards that hundred I owe you.

(hands Larry a twenty dollar bill)

LARRY: This is a twenty.

EARL: I need change.

LARRY: Oh for cryin out loud! *(searches his pockets)* I don't have my wallet.

EARL: Okay, then you owe me ten.

LARRY: What? I don't owe you ten, you owe me eighty!

EARL: You see that Brenda, there he goes, turning everything around so it suits him. Isn't that just typical. Tell you what, have it your way, you keep that ten you owe me, so now you owe me twenty.

LARRY: Look, Earl the only reason I came over here was to tell you about an opportunity down at the warehouse. Things have changed and...

EARL: *(interrupting)* Hello! Ground control to Major Larry!! How many times do I have to tell you, the last thing I need right now is a stupid job at that stupid warehouse! So you can take your stupid job, your stupid apples and your stupid stupidness and stick it somewhere stupid!

BRENDA: Somebody oughta write that down.

LARRY: So if you don't care about the job, why are you so upset?

EARL: What?

BRENDA: Good question Earl, why are you so upset?

EARL: Upset?

LARRY: You smashed an apple.

EARL: I didn't smash an apple I made a point.

LARRY: Who makes a point by smashing an apple? You make a point with reasoned argument and relevant facts, not by pulverizing fruit and smearing it all over someone!

EARL: Don't get fancy with me! Ya know, you got some nerve, sitting here in my house, braggin' about that job that shoulda been mine, all the time wearing my apple!

LARRY: You know damn well you coulda had that job.

EARL: And now you try to buy me off with a bunch of scabby stolen apples.

LARRY: Don't insult my apples!

EARL: Scabby Applethief.

LARRY: What!?

EARL: That's your new name... Scabby Applethief.

LARRY: What's wrong with you?!

EARL: Scabby.

LARRY: Brenda will you do something about...

EARL: Scabby. Scabby Applethief.

LARRY: Will you grow up!!

EARL: No!

LARRY: You've lost it Earl, you really have.

EARL: Talk to the hand!

LARRY *(to Brenda)* Is he serious?

BRENDA: Yep.

LARRY: Who says that anymore?

EARL: Whatever you say is gonna go in one ear and straight out the other.

LARRY: Because there's nothing there to stop it, not even a turnip!

EARL: You hear that Brenda? Well I'm takin' the high road. I'm not gonna be bothered by lame insults from someone who can't even hang on to his wife!

LARRY: Don't you dare bring that up!

EARL: *(Singing "Plastic Jesus". Google "Tia Blake Plastic Jesus" for a good tempo)* I don't care if it rains or freezes, long as I got my plastic Jesus sitting on the dashboard of my car....

LARRY: How low can one man sink?

EARL: Snapped off like a dry twig, how convenient!

LARRY: Okay, that's it! You're nuts Earl! You're insane! You are a turnip brain! A turnip brain who doesn't have the sense to know when somebody is trying to help him out!

EARL: Did you hear that Brenda! He admitted it!

BRENDA: Admitted what?

EARL: That I'm a turnip brain!

BRENDA: Bingo!

EARL: *(to Larry)* Scabby Applethief.

LARRY: Turnip brain.

BRENDA: Earl, grow up! And Larry, you should know better!

LARRY: I should know better? I'm not the one dumb enough to believe some internet scam artist is going to give me fifteen million dollars!

EARL: What?!

BRENDA: Larry!

LARRY: Sorry!

EARL: You told him??

BRENDA: It just kinda slipped out! He said he had a job for you then I said we didn't need the money and then he said you were gonna be a naked guy who doesn't eat and then...

EARL: So that's what this is all about, you're nosing around to get a piece of the action!

LARRY: There isn't going to be any action Earl, you're being scammed!

EARL: Says the man not smart enough to uncover these opportunities for himself and just wants to ride on my coat-tails.

LARRY: By the time this is finished, the only thing you'll have left is a turnip... one that is roughly the size of your hat!!

EARL: All right, that's it!! It's go time!

LARRY: Bring it on Turnip head!

Earl and Larry starting dancing around each other like a couple of bad boxers, while Brenda tries to intervene. After 5 or 10 seconds a very loud knock is heard on the door. Everybody freezes. Knock happens again.

LARRY: Aren't you going to answer it?

EARL: Not necessarily

Knocking is louder and more insistent

LARRY: Are we just gonna stand here like this??

EARL & BRENDA: Shhhhh!

Knocking is even louder

VOICE FROM OUTSIDE: *(very loud and threatening)* You have exactly ten seconds to open this door!

EARL: *(loudly, to the man at the door)* I don't have a watch.

VOICE: Five seconds.

EARL: I can't, I'm naked!

VOICE: *(louder and more threatening)* Two seconds!

EARL: Brenda, open the door!

BRENDA: Me?! Why me?

EARL: Because he thinks I'm naked!

The door bangs open revealing a large intimidating man wearing a black leather jacket and carrying a briefcase

BRENDA: *(Angrily)* How many times did I tell you to fix that lock!

EARL: I was gettin' around to it!

BRENDA: Well that does us a hell of a lotta good now doesn't it!

EARL: Why didn't you fix it?

BRENDA: Me??!! Why should I have to....

GUSTAF: *(bellows very loudly)* Shut up!!!

Everyone falls silent as the intruder takes a few steps into the room

EARL: Who are you?

GUSTAF: Who do you think I am?

EARL: The cable guy?

GUSTAF: Have you been waiting all day for me?

EARL: No

GUSTAF: Then I'm not the cable guy am I?

EARL: Then who are you?

GUSTAF: Just call me... Crown Prince Gustaf.

Lights Down. End of Act 1

Act2

Scene opens seconds after Act 1

LARRY: Crown Prince who?

GUSTAF: Gustaf

LARRY: *(to Brenda)* Is this the guy who.... *(Brenda nods)*. Oh boy.

EARL: What are you doing here?

GUSTAF: I think that will become evident in the fullness of time. Who here signs his emails "Early Bird"?

EARL: Early-Bird? What's an Early-Bird?

GUSTAF: Don't get cute, I'm on a tight schedule.

EARL: I think you have the wrong place. There's no one here called Earl, I mean Early ...or birds..

BRENDA: We don't get any birds here now that we attract all the neighborhood cats on account of the driveway smelling like lobster.

GUSTAF: I was going to ask about that.

BRENDA: Earls gonna use a power washer on it as soon as the neighbors buy one, aren't you Earl?

GUSTAF: So you would be Earl.

EARL: *(glaring at Brenda)* Maybe.

GUSTAF: Now that we've dispensed with the pleasantries, to business.

EARL: You don't look like a Crown Prince.

GUSTAF: And you don't look like you've got ten thousand dollars.

LARRY: Oh boy...

GUSTAF: *(to Larry)* Who are you?

LARRY: Earl's brother-in-law.

GUSTAF: What's all over your shirt?

LARRY: Apple

GUSTAF: You oughta be more careful when you eat. A man doesn't present well with fruit smeared all over his shirt. Sit down!

(Larry quickly sits in the closest chair)

EARL: *(nervously)* So, what can we do for you, your... your Highness?

BRENDA: I don't think he's a real Prince.

GUSTAF: Did I say you could speak?

BRENDA: Sorry

EARL: Just a minute, what gives you the right to come crashing into my house like this?

GUSTAF: Good point. So... why don't you toss me out?

Gustaf cracks his knuckles

EARL: *(pause)* Welcome to our humble abode.

GUSTAF: Your hospitality is accepted with appreciation. Now, to the purpose of my visit. The ten thousand dollars you owe me.

LARRY: Ten thousand dollars!!!

GUSTAF: Actually, I don't recall giving you permission to speak either.

LARRY: Sorry.

GUSTAF: Now Earl, as I mentioned earlier I'm on a bit of a tight schedule today, so I'm hoping to resolve this matter as quickly as possible.

BRENDA: I knew this would happen! Ooops, sorry... May I speak?

GUSTAF: Yes, but make it brief.

BRENDA: *(to Earl)* You idiot!!

GUSTAF: Succinct, to the point... very good! A wonderfully efficient use of time. Now, allow me to do the same. I'm keenly interested in discussing this personal check you sent me, which I have just discovered, was written on a non-existent back account.

EARL: Is that all? Now Gustaf, I can call you Gustaf can't I? I have this all worked out. Just send the check to the Visigoths and by the time they realize the check isn't good, it'll be too late and they'll release the funds.

GUSTAF: You are a funny man.

EARL: I am?

GUSTAF: Yes you are. A very funny man! Say that again, the part about "releasing the funds".

EARL: ...they'll release the funds...

GUSTAF: (*laughing*) That's it! That's good! "Release the funds"!

LARRY: I tried to tell you Earl, there are no funds.

GUSTAF: Aha! The gentleman here with the fruity shirt, no insult intended, understands completely!

EARL: But *I* don't understand!

GUSTAF: Were you dropped on your head when you were a baby? (*To Larry*) You seem to have a grasp on the situation, could you possibly enlighten your brother in law?

LARRY: (*to Gustaf*) He sent you a check?

GUSTAF: Yes

LARRY: (*to Earl*) You sent him a check?

EARL: Maybe.

LARRY: You sent him a *bad* check?

EARL: Kinda.

GUSTAF: (*consulting the check*) This is Twenty two Cherry St, Green Gables Trailer Park, isn't it?

LARRY: You sent him a *bad* check with your *address* on it!?

EARL: He said he needed to get money out of the country and... and and... he needed my help and...*and* he said he lived in Europe!

LARRY: But where did you send the check?

EARL: *(pause)* ...Oh.

LARRY: What's wrong with you!! I told Brenda those internet deals were scams.

GUSTAF: "Scam"... that's such an unpleasant word.

LARRY: ...didn't I tell you Brenda?

BRENDA: You told me.

LARRY: I told her!

BRENDA: You told me and I told Earl.

EARL: *(to Larry)* You told *her*? Why did you tell her?? You know I never listen to her! This is all your fault!

LARRY: My fault! Don't you try to drag me into this!

GUSTAF: Okay that's enough! That's enough!! Why does everything have to be so contentious? Now, we seem to have a situation here. *(pause)* *(to Larry)* You wanna go change your shirt?

LARRY: No I'm good.

GUSTAF: Then soak that shirt the first chance you get. That stain's going to set.

LARRY: Really?

GUSTAF: I can't overstate the importance of pre-treating stains. Here look at this. *(indicates the front of his shirt)*. Do you see a stain?

LARRY: No.

GUSTAF: That's because I pre-treated the first chance I got. The whole front of this shirt was a huge blood stain, but now you'd never know it...have another look.

LARRY: That's good. What happened? Must have been a helluva a shaving cut.

GUSTAF: Did I say it was my blood?

They all stare at Gustaf

GUSTAF: Now back to business. Earl....

EARL: *(weakly)* Yes?

GUSTAF: The most expeditious way out of this situation would be for you to give me my ten thousand dollars.

EARL: I don't exactly have it right now.

GUSTAF: I didn't think so but I had to explore that option.

EARL: So you're saying you don't have millions you need to get out of the country?

GUSTAF: The penny finally drops!

EARL: I'm not getting any money?

GUSTAF: Can't fool you....

EARL: *(to Larry)* Can I have that twenty back?

LARRY: Nope.

BRENDA: Look, Mr. Gustaf, Earl didn't mean anything by sending you that check, he was just tryin' to make a little money that's all. Nobody got hurt, so why don't we just let it go. This hasn't cost you anything, has it?

GUSTAF: But I've incurred expenses, not to mention the monetary ramifications of what this could do to my reputation if I were to "let it go" as you put it. Besides, I had to drive clear across town!

EARL: What? You just live across town!

GUSTAF: I have to live somewhere, don't I? Now, let's get back to business.

EARL: Wait a minute, you told me you lived in Europe and owned a castle and a whole herd of those Lapdancer Stallions!

BRENDA: Lapdancer Stallions?

GUSTAF: I think he's referring to the Lipizzaner Stallions, the famous Austrian dressage horses.

EARL: So they weren't Lapdancing Stallions. You lied about everything!

LARRY: Earl, why would anybody want a lapdancing horse!

EARL: I dunno!

GUSTAF: Let's get back to the issue at hand. Earl, it seems to me that you owe me a sum of money and you seem unwilling, or more to the point, unable to pay.

EARL: You lied to me so I don't owe you anything. I'm not paying you a cent!

GUSTAF: Really? That's amusing position to take.

EARL: You can take me to court all day long, I've dodged the best of them.

GUSTAF: You're getting more amusing by the second.

LARRY: I don't think he's worried about court, Earl.

GUSTAF: I'll put it simply. Do you intend, in any way, to attempt to honor this ten thousand dollar check?

EARL: Pfffftttt!! *(Earl replies with a "raspberry")*

GUSTAF: I'll take that as a "no". Alright, seeing as you are exhibiting a reluctance to cooperate, maybe you should have a look at my portfolio, it'll give you a better appreciation of your, shall we say... predicament. *(opens his briefcase and pulls out a manila envelope)* I brought this with me in anticipation of just such a situation. In my line of work I often encounter a certain measure of recalcitrance. *(Gustaf removes some 8x10s and spreads them on the coffee table)* You'll have to excuse some of these shots. You see, in my work areas, the quality of light is often very poor but I think they get the point across. Here... this one should be of particular interest to you. This gentleman reneged on a \$9,000 obligation.

EARL *(pause) (pointing to the picture)* Is that his arm?

GUSTAF: No, that's his leg.

EARL: What's it doing behind his head?

GUSTAF: And this, (*hands Earl a photo*) this is some of my best work.

EARL: Ouch.

GUSTAF: You have it upside down.

EARL: (*turns the photo around*) I don't feel good.

GUSTAF: Would you like a moment to compose yourself?

EARL: Yes, please.

GUSTAF: I'm sorry, I didn't really mean that. I find this is most effective if it builds uninterrupted to a crescendo. Now this (*hands Earl another photo*) this one looks best if you hold it at arms length. (*Earl does so*) It's from what I like to call my "Angry Period".

LARRY: (*taking the photo from Earl*) Let me see that... Very impressive. The liberal use of red conveys the mood quite effectively. Earl... pay the man.

EARL: With what!? I don't have anything worth ten thousand dollars! We'll just have to think of something else.

GUSTAF: I'm open to suggestions. Do you have any?

EARL: I dunno... maybe you could write it off as a bad debt.

GUSTAF: So that would be, what...line one eighteen on my tax return? "Uncollected Extortion Payments"? Or... here's an intriguing idea, I could write you off.

LARRY: That doesn't sound good.

GUSTAF: But of course, that's a last resort, nobody wins if I have to write you off. I don't get my money and you....well what happens to you is a whole other theological discussion.

EARL: But I keep telling you, I don't have any money!

GUSTAF: You may *think* you don't have any money but my experience is that people always have a little something squirreled away for a rainy day. A few coffee tins full of change, a small vacation fund. You'd be surprised how it all adds up! In your case, maybe not to ten grand, but it's a start. In fact, I think you should all chip in! (*to Larry*) Let's start with you.

LARRY: All I have is this twenty. (*hands it to Gustaf*)

EARL: Actually, that's mine, so that's from me.

GUSTAF: Only nine thousand nine hundred and eighty dollars to go! Earl?

EARL: You're not getting my sock money!

BRENDA: Sock money?

EARL: Crap.

GUSTAF: And that money would be... in your sock?

EARL: None of your business.

GUSTAF: Would you like to see more photographs?

EARL: Fine, fine!

(He reluctantly removes a roll of bills from his sock)

BRENDA: You hide money in your sock!

EARL: I'm saving it for a rainy day.

GUSTAF: Give it here... *(Earl hands him the money)*

BRENDA: You've been holding out on me!

GUSTAF: Thirty-five dollars.

EARL: Yeah, well what about you?

BRENDA: Me?

EARL: You really think I haven't noticed one is always bigger than the other?

BRENDA: *(pause)* Fine!

(takes money out of her bra and hands it to Gustaf)

GUSTAF: It's a start... baby steps. Let's see *(counts the bra money)* You're now only nine thousand eight hundred and ninety dollars short. *(to Larry)* Any more from you? Nothing in your socks? Underwear? *(Larry shakes his head)* Well we have a grand total of one hundred and ten dollars.

EARL: Well that's all you're gonna get 'cause that's all we have.

GUSTAF: I really like the quality of the light in here....

BRENDA: Please, Mr.Gustaf, he's not lying to you, we really don't have any money. But it doesn't have to be cash does it? I'm sure you must see *something* here you want....

GUSTAF: (*looking around*) Maybe I'm being a little hasty in my judgment and making certain socio-economic assumptions, but I'm thinking.... no.

BRENDA: Surely there must be something that could... satisfy you?

GUSTAF: What are you proposing?

BRENDA: You're a man aren't you, and men tend to like certain things?

GUSTAF: Well... yes...

BRENDA: Maybe I can find something that you would "tend to like"?

EARL: Brenda, you're not thinking of...

GUSTAF: Let her speak, I'm willing to entertain any reasonable proposal.

BRENDA: I'll just go into the bedroom and...

EARL: Good God Brenda, no!!!

BRENDA: Earl, what the hell is wrong with you?

EARL: I can't believe you'd do that!

BRENDA: Somebody has to give him something!

EARL: Not that!

BRENDA: Why not? You don't even look at it anymore.

EARL: How do you know what I do when you're asleep?

BRENDA: (*starting towards the bedroom*) Come on Prince, have a look and see what you think.

EARL: (*blocking the bedroom door*) No, I won't let you!

BRENDA: Earl, get out of the way.

EARL: Brenda, give him anything but that!

BRENDA: It's the only way.

EARL: No... not my framed, personally autographed Jeff Foxworthy poster!!!

BRENDA: Why not??!! I'm tired of having Jeff Foxworthy watch me get undressed every night. (*stops*) I can't believe I said that.

EARL: That's the centerpiece of my art collection! Why don't you just go to bed with him?

LARRY, BRENDA & GUSTAF: What!!!???

GUSTAF: You are a very sick man! Do you think I have come here to take advantage of a lady? I'm a businessman who is seeking compensation and to offer your wife as payment is reprehensible! Shame on you. And you can keep your Jeff Foxworthy poster... I don't understand his jokes.

LARRY: I like the one about..

BRENDA: (*she's been seething and finally explodes*) What do you mean, "go to bed with him"!!

EARL: We've moved past that.

BRENDA: Oh no we haven't!!

EARL: I was being sarcastic, I know you'd never do that!

GUSTAF: Are you implying she finds me repulsive?

EARL: No!

GUSTAF: (*to Brenda*) Do you?

BRENDA: Yes, I mean No!...I mean...(*to Earl*) This is all your fault!

EARL: I'm just trying to find a way out of this! Come on, work with me! Besides, you never know, maybe he finds *you* repulsive.

BRENDA: (*To Gustaf*) Do you?

GUSTAF: Not at all, in fact I find you exude a certain understated sexiness.

EARL: So you're exuding for him!

BRENDA: I'm not exuding for anybody!

EARL: Well somebody's obviously exuding and it's not me! Who else do you exude for? Maybe I wasn't too far wrong about the whole going to bed thing!!

BRENDA: (*Charging at Earl*) You sniveling little weasel!!

She starts flailing away at Earl while he covers his head and tries to get away. Larry and Gustaf watch with amusement.

GUSTAF: (*to Larry*) She's good!

(watches the mayhem for a few more seconds then intervenes)

GUSTAF: Alright you two stop it, that's enough! (*separates them*) If anybody is going to mete out justice around here it's going to be me! Alright, as I mentioned before I find we have a "situation" here. I am owed a sum of money and it's obvious you have nothing of any real value here so...

EARL: I could throw in a Dale Earnhardt bobble-head doll, still in the box.

GUSTAF: (*ignores him*) So, I find myself in the unenviable position of having to...

EARL: Okay, okay, my final offer. You can have my car.

GUSTAF: Interesting. Where is it?

EARL: In the back yard.

GUSTAF: On blocks?

EARL: You can have those too.

GUSTAF: (*sighs*) So, I find myself in the unenviable position of having to resort to alternate means to find satisfaction.

EARL: What do you mean "alternate means"?

LARRY: He means violence, you twit.

GUSTAF: Unfortunately your brother-in-law is correct. I really hate it when it comes to this. (*takes a pair of latex gloves from his briefcase and puts them on*) I'll admit, I'm a little on the lazy side and the physical exertion can be somewhat taxing so, hoping to avoid this very situation, I once took a course in alternative dispute resolution. However, I was rather disappointed

when the concept of "violence" never came up, it simply wasn't one of the alternatives! Despite my aversion to it, it can be a very effective tool and personally I think that not including that option seriously weakens the effectiveness of the mediation process but... who am I to judge? However, I did learn something and now I tend to blend alternative dispute resolution with, shall we say, "old school" techniques. The prospect of grievous bodily harm does wonders in achieving consensus!

(during the preceding speech, Gustaf takes a pair of needle nose pliers, a hammer, a screwdriver, a crescent wrench, a power drill and a large salami from the briefcase and arranges them neatly on the coffee table)

EARL: What's with the salami?

GUSTAF: I have to keep my strength up.

BRENDA: *(she is starting to get upset)* No, please no...

LARRY: Look, Mr.Gustaf. We've given you all the money we have so what's the point in hurting someone, especially if you don't enjoy it.

GUSTAF: I'm sorry, I really am. But every man determines his own destiny, and when he chose to defraud me, he set in motion a chain of events which I have very little, if any control over. *(to Earl)* I'd say "this will hurt me more than it will you", but really it won't. *(picks up the power drill)* You wouldn't have an extension cord I could borrow, would you?

BRENDA: Please don't!! Please don't hurt him! He was only trying to get enough money to buy a pool that turns red when you pee in it. *(starts to loudly and messily cry, sniffing etc)*

GUSTAF: Can you please try and control yourself?

(Brenda starts to cry even louder, loudly sniffing and snorting. She wipes her nose on the length of her sleeve)

GUSTAF: *(clearly disgusted)* Oh come on, must you?

BRENDA: I'm sorry, I can't help it, when I cry my nose runs and....

GUSTAF: Don't you have a tissue?

BRENDA: In the bathroom.

GUSTAF: Oh. I see. Well go in there, use whatever you have to and don't come back until you've pulled yourself together. I hate it when women cry, makes me feels as if I've done something wrong.

(Brenda starts to leave for the bathroom)

EARL: Pssst, Brenda *(Brenda stops)* imb-clay out the athroom-bay indow-way.

Everyone stares at Earl

EARL: What?..What?

GUSTAF: Are you serious? Pig Latin?

EARL: Who knew you spoke it? I rolled the dice.

GUSTAF: *(to Brenda)* You wouldn't be that "oolish-fay" would you? Especially when I'm still here with your husband... and this crescent wrench. *(He holds up the wrench and Brenda starts loudly crying again)* No! No crying!! Get to the bathroom... go... go!

Brenda exits to bathroom

GUSTAF: Why does that make me feel so guilty? I have to learn to let that go. Now, where were we?

LARRY: Wait, we don't have to do this. I may have a solution.

GUSTAF: But I've already put the gloves on.

LARRY: Just hear me out.

GUSTAF: *(sighs)* Alright, but this is ruining the rhythm of the whole thing.

LARRY: I can get you apples.

EARL: That's right, he's an apple cop!

GUSTAF: He's a cop!!!

LARRY: No, I'm a Night Security Supervisor at an apple warehouse and...

GUSTAF: You guard apples?

EARL: *(sarcastically)* Tell me about it.

LARRY: Look, I can get you all the apples you want if you'll just leave us alone.

GUSTAF: Ten thousand dollars worth of apples?

LARRY: Sure... in installments

GUSTAF: Why would I want that many apples?

EARL: You can get that many apples? You only got me a lousy bushel!!

LARRY: Well you coulda had all the apples you wanted too if you hadn't gone off on that stupid fishing trip last year and missed your interview!

EARL: You mean for the job you stole from me!!

LARRY: I didn't steal it, they figured you didn't want it, so they offered it to me.

GUSTAF: Ahhhh, excuse me...

EARL: Offered? You stole my job, admit it!

GUSTAF: If we could just....

LARRY: Will you listen to me?

EARL: Why should I listen to a Scabby Applethief?

GUSTAF: A what?

LARRY: Because I've been trying to tell you the Senior Supervisors job is open and it's yours if you want it!

GUSTAF: This is all very interesting but....

EARL: Senior Supervisor?! If I were the Senior Supervisor the first thing I'd do is fire your sorry butt.

LARRY: *(to Gustaf)* See what I have to put up with from this pinhead? No gratitude, no gratitude whatsoever.

GUSTAF: If I could just interject here....

EARL: You think I just rolled off the turnip truck? Give me one good reason why you'd let me have that job.

LARRY: Because if you'd had the Night Supervisors job, the Senior job would naturally have been yours, so I thought I'd step aside.

EARL: You'd step aside for me? *(pause)* I don't believe it, you've got something up your sleeve you conniving little rat! *(to GUSTAF)* Gimme that drill! *(GUSTAF almost gives it to him)*

LARRY: Earl, listen to me....

EARL: Scabby Jobthief!

Earl gets Larry in a headlock and they struggle

GUSTAF: *(loudly)* Wait, stop right there. *(they freeze as Gustaf checks out the headlock)* Very good, you have nice technique... you're a natural.

EARL: Thanks.

GUSTAF: You may want to release him now. Allowing the victim to pass out is the mark of an inexperienced amateur.

(Earl releases Larry)

LARRY: Listen to me!! I don't even want the job, it's yours for the asking.

EARL: You expect me to believe that!

LARRY: I guess not, why would I expect anything to sink into that thick head of yours, you ingrate!

EARL: Ingrate! What about the time you....

GUSTAF: *(interrupting loudly)* That's enough!! May I offer some input here? Name calling, recriminations and bringing up past hurts are counterproductive to the process. Now let's resolve this dispute like mature adults.

EARL: Well if that idiot thinks I'm going to...

GUSTAF: Shut up!! I know what I'm doing! Now Earl, I think if you listen to Larry attentively and respectfully, without judging, and value what he is bringing to the discussion you may find a mutually satisfying outcome is possible. Larry, what would you like to say to Earl.

EARL: Nothing I want to hear!

GUSTAF: *(picking up the hammer threateningly)* Remember...listen attentively and respectfully.

Brenda enters, sees Gustaf threatening them with the hammer and bursts loudly into tears again

BRENDA: No, please, please don't do it!!

GUSTAF: Stop it, stop it! No crying!

BRENDA: *(blubbering)* I can't help it!

GUSTAF: Get back to the bathroom, pull yourself together!
(Brenda exits to bathroom) (to himself) I'm not responsible for how she feels, I'm not responsible for how she feels... Okay, where did we leave off?

LARRY: You were telling knucklehead here to listen attentively and respectfully.

GUSTAF: That's right, thank you. Go on Larry.

LARRY: Earl, I know the Night Supervisor position should have been yours, so I've stepped aside and recommended you for the Senior Supervisors job.

GUSTAF: Good! Now Earl, as we progress, I want you to dialogue with Larry, validate his feelings and listen actively to what he is saying. Begin by prefacing your first comment with "What I'm hearing you say is..."

EARL: Validate his feelings?

GUSTAF: Yes

EARL: Is that anything like validating parking?

GUSTAF: No

EARL: Do I have to touch him?

GUSTAF: No. Just start with "What I'm hearing you say is...."

EARL: Okay fine. What I'm hearing you say is ...

GUSTAF: Go on...

EARL: What I'm hearing you say is a big boatload of crapola!

Gustaf slaps Earl on the back of the head

EARL: Owww!

GUSTAF: You see, that's the element I think is missing in the currently accepted dispute resolution model.

LARRY: You're good.

GUSTAF: Thank you. Now Earl, let's try that again and try to find a way to phrase your response in a manner that will help you avoid the pain. Mirror his statement using non accusatory language and phrasing.

EARL: I have no idea what you just said.

GUSTAF: Tell Larry what you heard without calling him names.

EARL: Do I have to?

GUSTAF: I don't think you realize how conciliatory I'm being here. At this point I'm usually taking portfolio shots of my handiwork.

EARL: Okay, okay. Larry, what I'm hearing you say is... you... you... aww this isn't gonna work!

LARRY: You're wasting your time on him, he's hopeless!

GUSTAF: For this process to work, the two of you have to come together voluntarily. Do it now or I'll knock your heads together.

EARL: I'm not gonna validate anything with that pinhead! *(Gustaf slaps Earl on the back of the head again)* Owww! okay, okay. I'll do it! Larry....

LARRY: *(grinning)* Yes Earl?

EARL: Larry, what I'm hearing you say is you put a good word in for me at the apple warehouse.

GUSTAF: Excellent! And how does that make you feel?

EARL: Hungry.

GUSTAF: Hungry?

EARL: All those apples.

GUSTAF: I mean does it make you feel valued? Appreciated? Hopeful?

EARL: I guess.

GUSTAF: See! Now we're getting somewhere!

LARRY: I'm not jerkin' you around Earl, the job is yours, all you have to do is apply.

EARL: And you've told them you don't want the job?

LARRY: That's right.

EARL: You've really done that for me?

LARRY: Yes, that's what I was trying to tell you!

EARL: The Senior Supervisors job.

LARRY: That's right.

EARL: I'd get the office with the swivel chair...

LARRY: You betcha.

EARL: The one next to the vending machines?

LARRY: Yes.

EARL: *(pause)* Ah jeez Larry ...I don't know what to say. I'm sorry Larry, I really am...

LARRY: It's okay bud, we're family. *(they hug)*

GUSTAF: Damn I'm good! Alright, alright *(separating them)* you can have your Oprah moment later but now, do you mind if we get back to the matter at hand? The matter of my money?

LARRY: We can still work this out, like I said I... we can get you all the apples you want.

GUSTAF: Last week I bought a six quart basket of apples. I still have three left. What am I supposed to do with *ten thousand dollars* worth of apples?

EARL: You could hire Boy Scouts to sell them for you. And pay them with apples.

Brenda has returned from the bathroom and has quietly opened the hall closet door and removed Earls' bowling ball from its' bag and is sneaking up behind Gustaf. Larry sees this and is trying to stretch his explanation out to give her time.

LARRY: Or, there are all sorts of other things you can do... apples are one of the most versatile fruits! You can't go wrong with apples! There's apple pie, apple crumble, apple crisp, apple tarts, apple dumplings, apple muffins ...

During Larry's speech, Brenda has moved behind Gustaf and raised the bowling ball over her head to hit him with it, but the weight of the ball pulls her backwards and it drops to the floor

GUSTAF: What the.....! *(he retrieves the ball)* Alright, everybody sit down!! *(they sit)* I'm hurt. I'm working with you to find equitable solutions here, giving you the benefit of my expertise and what do you do? You try to crack my skull with a bowling ball! Is this the thanks I get? I'm a reasonable man, but this is unforgivable and ill-advised. Not to mention crude and clumsy. This was a very very bad idea and I don't have to tell you what this means to...*(he examines the ball)* Oh.. nice...very nice. I haven't seen one of these in years... it's a classic. Wow. This is a Lane Master Black Diamond Limited Edition ball! The "Cadillac of Balls"! Hmmm good weight, good feel... probably computer balanced. Who's the big time bowler? *(reads the name engraved on the ball)* "Curly Early"! *(to Earl)* What are you doing with this ball? You buy it at a garage sale?

EARL: No!

GUSTAF: Don't lie to me, this is the Holy Grail of bowling balls... this is Curly Early's ball! Did you steal it?

EARL: No!

GUSTAF: Then whose ball is this?

EARL: Mine.

GUSTAF: Yours?!

EARL: Ya, so what?

GUSTAF: What? No!! That would mean that you're....

EARL: Curly Early

GUSTAF: Are you serious!!??

EARL: What of it?

GUSTAF: *The Curly Early!!*

EARL: Ya

GUSTAF: That's impossible!

EARL: Not really.

GUSTAF: Okay then, prove it! Here, hold the ball.

Earl puts his fingers in the ball holes and holds it out for Gustaf to see

GUSTAF: It is you!! *(to Larry)* Look at the position of the little finger, nobody else did that, it was revolutionary! Curly Early! Wow!! I don't believe it... you're legendary!!

LARRY: I wouldn't go *that* far.

GUSTAF: Are you kidding me? You never saw this man bowl? Nobody could curve a ball like Curly Early! He could make the ball dance a figure eight down the lane and take out a seven ten split!! He had magic... pure magic!

EARL: Aww that's ancient history.

GUSTAF: My Dad used to tell me about you! He said you could have gone Pro and ruled the Tour but some chick pulled in the reins and made you settle down!

BRENDA: That would be me.

GUSTAF: No offence!

BRENDA: None taken.

LARRY: How do you know about Earl?

GUSTAF: When I was a kid my Dad owned Fred's Bowl-a-Rama. That's where Earl played! Dad worshipped him!

EARL: You're Fred's kid!?

GUSTAF: Ya!

EARL: That tubby little kid we used to send out for smokes?

GUSTAF: Ya!! That was me!!

EARL: You've changed.

GUSTAF: I hope so, I was only six back then. And you... you used to have hair down to the middle of your back. I didn't recognize you.

LARRY: (*incredulous*) I don't believe this.

GUSTAF: Oh man, this is incredible!! Curly Early! Can I shake your hand? (*shakes Earls hand and while still holding it...*) Wow!! The hand that bowled back to back perfect games on June eighth, nineteen ninety five! (*or appropriate date 22 years before current year*)

EARL: What happened to you? You stopped hanging around.

GUSTAF: My folks split up when I was seven and I had to move away and live with Mom.

EARL: Oh yeah, 'cause your Dad was fooling around with that blond cashier who could never keep her blouse buttoned up!

GUSTAF: What? I didn't know that!

BRENDA: Good one Earl.

EARL: How could you not know?

GUSTAF: I was only six!

EARL: Don't you remember your Dad used to let you sit on the counter while they went in the back and said you could ring the counter bell if you saw anybody coming?

GUSTAF: You mean I was a lookout?

EARL: I gotta admit I wasn't too crazy about it.

GUSTAF: Every time I rang it, Daddy would appear.

EARL: That was the idea.

GUSTAF: I was a six year old enabler!

BRENDA: (*to Earl*) Why didn't you do something about it?

EARL: I sorta did....

BRENDA: You "sorta did"? Oh... you took the counter bell.
(sarcastically) That must have taught them a lesson.

EARL: Never mind, it doesn't matter now. *(to Gustaf)* Hey, sorry to spring it on you like that.

GUSTAF: That's okay, I can deal with this. It's a revelation I can't say I was expecting, but I think I have the tools to handle this. Excuse me.

He calmly takes an apple from the basket, looks at it, then frantically smashes it to a pulp with his fist

LARRY: *(moves to Gustaf)* Be my guest.

GUSTAF: *(wipes his hands on Larrys shirt)* Thank you. Remember...

LARRY: I know... pre-treat.

BRENDA: Earl, are you going to apologize or do I have to do it for you?

EARL: Do you mind?

BRENDA: Gustaf, my husband can be a bit of an idiot sometimes and it would really help him feel better if you smacked him a good one.

EARL: That's not exactly what I had in mind.

GUSTAF: No. I appreciate the offer, but I employ violence only in a professional capacity. I can handle this, I know my father was a man of appetites and this will not appreciably alter my memory of him.

EARL: Whatever.

BRENDA: So where's your Dad now?

GUSTAF: *(pause)* He's gone home

EARL: Milwaukee? I'm pretty sure he said he was from Milwaukee.

GUSTAF: No... home.

EARL: The apartment over the lanes?

GUSTAF: No

LARRY: He died you idiot.

EARL: Oh... sorry.

GUSTAF: He's been gone for seven years now.

BRENDA: I'm so sorry.

EARL: Ya, me too.

GUSTAF: At least he died doing something he loved.

EARL: That cashier was built and if his heart was bad I'm not surprised if...

BRENDA: Shut up Earl!!

EARL: Sorry.

GUSTAF: It was an accident at the lanes.

EARL: I didn't know. I never went back after little Earl was born and we moved away. What happened?

GUSTAF: (*getting emotional*) It was a Saturday afternoon. Dad had just done the Ladies Afternoon Church League fifty-fifty draw and then went to do some maintenance work behind the pinsetter on lane eight. I was bowling a few frames on lane nine. I don't know what happened... they say he must have been leaning in to clear a pin jam and slipped on a spot of oil or something but he...he....he fell into the pin-setting machine.

BRENDA: Oh no!

GUSTAF: Nobody even knew he was back there! They kept calling out "Pin jam on lane eight, pin jam on lane eight! Hey kid, ring the bell, get your Dad out here!" Oh God now I know what they meant!

BRENDA: What happened then?

GUSTAF: They just kept pressing that reset button again and again and again!!

BRENDA: That poor man.

GUSTAF: It was horrible!

BRENDA: I'm so sorry!

GUSTAF: And that god awful sound!! Chunka chunka chunka!!

BRENDA; Oh my goodness....

GUSTAF: Nobody even realized what had happened until he came sliding down the ball return.

BRENDA: Oh no....

GUSTAF: They say on a quiet Saturday afternoon you can still hear the screams from the Ladies Afternoon Church league.

EARL: Who won the fifty-fifty?

BRENDA: Earl!!

GUSTAF: *(crying)* Daddy!

EARL: Ah jeez...

GUSTAF: *(sobbing)* Oh god...Daddy I'm so sorry!

LARRY: This is embarrassing...

GUSTAF: *(crying)* Why, Daddy why??

EARL: ...and weird.

BRENDA: Can we do anything for you?

GUSTAF: *(wailing)* Bring back Daddy!!

EARL: *(to Brenda)* What are you worried about him for?

BRENDA: Because he's hurting, that's why.

EARL: Better him than me!

BRENDA: Shut up and sit down *(to Gustaf)* It's OK, let it out.

GUSTAF: I thought she was "Aunty Pam"!

LARRY: Aunty Pam?

EARL: The blond cashier

LARRY: Oh

GUSTAF: *(sobbing)* Daddy...

BRENDA: Can I get you a tissue?

GUSTAF: Please.

Brenda exits to bathroom. There's an embarrassed silence for a few seconds while Gustaf sobs

EARL: So... ummm... did the pin-setter ever work right after that?

GUSTAF: Don't look at me... turn around!

Larry and Earl turn around

EARL: Ummm, I guess I'm really sorry about your Dad, he was a fine man. He always treated me good. I don't think I ever paid for extra frames.

GUSTAF: *(beginning to compose himself)* You're right, he was a good man, a very good man.

EARL: The best... a prince! I mean a real one, not like you.

GUSTAF: And he would be happy to know that I've met Curly Early again.

EARL: You gonna be okay?

GUSTAF: I'm fine, I'm fine. It's just that I needed that release. He was a fine man and bowling was his life. People still talk about his funeral, we had a special coffin made in the shape of a bowling ball and we rolled him to the cemetery.

EARL: That's beautiful.

GUSTAF: We lost control of him a couple of times but he always hit something and stopped. The last time he knocked over ten headstones which I thought was very appropriate.

Brenda returns from bathroom

BRENDA: *(hands Gustaf a roll of toilet paper)* Here, I brought you the whole roll.

GUSTAF: I'll be okay. I'm sorry... this was all very embarrassing although cathartic. I feel better now. Please forgive me. You can turn around now.

Larry and Earl do so.

BRENDA: If you want we can talk about something else.

GUSTAF: No, I think I need to get this out. You see, I'd left to take philosophy at university and I was home on summer holidays when it happened. I never went back, because after Daddy died I had to run the lanes. Thing is, everybody said it was haunted by Dad's ghost. When Melba from the Church League saw Dad's face on the head pin, that was it... nobody would go near the place.

BRENDA: Imagination can play strange tricks on people.

GUSTAF: No, his face actually was on the head pin. I thought it would be a nice tribute. Boy was I wrong. I tried to keep it afloat but I eventually had to sell, leaving me with no choice but to find other ways to earn a living.

EARL: So you thought you'd become Crown Prince Gustaf and scam innocent people.

GUSTAF: There's that word again! I prefer to say I'm using the new economy to create alternative revenue streams.

LARRY: So, what now?

GUSTAF: Well number one., I think we can all agree to forget about my little moment of weakness. Agreed?

BRENDA, LARRY, EARL: Yes, agreed...of course... yes....

GUSTAF: I must admit though that the revelation that I am dealing with the legendary Curl Early has certainly put a different spin on this whole situation.

LARRY: But we still have a "situation".

GUSTAF: Of course we do!

LARRY: You're still gonna go through with this?! Come on man, this is Curly Early!!! Curly Freakin' Early!!

GUSTAF: I know, and believe me it breaks my heart, but I must keep in mind that a man can't live on his reputation and expect past accomplishments to give him carte blanche for future indiscretions.

EARL: Huh?

LARRY: I think he means you're up the creek standing on a banana peel while watching your paddle slowly float away.

BRENDA: But he's not gonna live on past accomplishments, he's going to go back on tour!

EARL: That's right. I'm hittin' the pro circuit again! I'm still the greatest to ever walk into Fred's Bowl-a-Rama. And, I'll take the Senior Supervisors job while I'm in training, so I can start making payments every week, then when I'm on tour I can pay you out of my winnings.

GUSTAF: How much?

EARL: On a Senior Supervisors salary I could probably swing fifty dollars a week.

GUSTAF: Fifty dollars a week? That would take you ...let's see *(he whips out a calculator)* roughly three and a half years to pay off the debt.

EARL: That's not bad.

GUSTAF: Factoring in interest *(calculates)* eight hundred and twenty five years.

EARL: That's not good.

GUSTAF: Wait a minute... you're turning pro?

EARL: You heard me, Curly Early is comin' back!

BRENDA: The return of Curly Early!

GUSTAF: Good! I'll take fifty per cent of your winnings.

LARRY: Who are you, Colonel Tom Parker?

GUSTAF: Sixty per cent

EARL: What?

GUSTAF: Shall we go for seventy?

LARRY: Are you crazy?

EARL: Ya, crazy like a loon!

BRENDA: Fox.

EARL: Fox!

GUSTAF: Done! Seventy per cent!

EARL: Wait a minute, let's talk about this.

GUSTAF: As your manager I'm always willing to sit down and talk.

EARL: Manager?

GUSTAF: And agent. Which, by the way, will require me to take an additional ten per cent.

EARL: So if you take seventy per cent, then another ten per cent that means that out of every dollar I make you get...

LARRY: Seventy three cents.

GUSTAF: Actually eighty cents, I'll be taking the agents' ten per cent off the gross.

EARL: Ah jeez.

GUSTAF: I'm liking how this is working out. This is so much better than violence! I'm thinking we'll have a long and profitable relationship.

LARRY: *(to Earl)* Well at least all he'll get is ten thousand dollars.

GUSTAF: Oh no, that figure is moot now, Earl has signed a contract with me in perpetuity.

EARL: I haven't signed anything!

GUSTAF: You will.

BRENDA: I *knew* the wheels would fall off, they always do!

GUSTAF: Have faith! If Earl is as good as he says he is there should be plenty for me and a little left over for you. Now Earl, let's map out a training strategy, we have to get you back into prime shape. We need a target... when you were at the top of your game, what was your average?

EARL: Two fifteen

GUSTAF: What?

EARL: Two fifteen, nobody else was even close.

GUSTAF: I think I just heard a wheel fall off.

EARL: What do you mean?

GUSTAF: Two fifteen. I should've known. That may have been a good average twenty years ago but today, the players are younger, stronger. You know what a pro bowler averages today?

EARL: No.

GUSTAF: Two thirty five

EARL: Two thirty five!!

GUSTAF: Two thirty five! If you go on the tour rolling two fifteen I wouldn't make enough off you to buy a decent steak dinner.

EARL: You're not serious.

GUSTAF: I'm a businessman Earl and I only back winners.

EARL: *(dejected)* Two thirty five....

GUSTAF: You could be a pro bowler, but you'd be a starving pro bowler.

EARL: Are you sure?

GUSTAF: I still have contacts in the biz.

BRENDA: Oh baby, I'm sorry.

EARL: No big surprise, one more thing that hasn't worked out. I've let you down again baby. I'm just a no good loser. It's just one more screw up.

LARRY: At least this one doesn't smell bad or make our feet stick to the floor.

EARL: Yep, it's just one more crash and burn from the King of the Losers, Screw McScrew-up.

BRENDA: *(starts to get emotional)* No you're not and you're still my Curly Early, I still love you.

GUSTAF: No crying!

BRENDA: Sorry.

EARL: (*getting emotional too*) She deserves so much better.

GUSTAF: Especially you!

EARL: Sorry

GUSTAF: So, it looks as if we're back at square one. Damn. You're sure you were two fifteen?

EARL: Yes (*pause*) Okay! Fine!! Let's just get it over with! I don't have ten thousand or anything close to that. So go ahead, break my damn arm, I don't care. Do what you like, in fact take anything you want here...take the damn ball, I don't care, I'm obviously not gonna need it anymore. All I ask is that you leave Larry and Brenda alone, they had nothing to do with this.

LARRY: Thanks bud!

GUSTAF: What did you say?

EARL: Leave Larry and Brenda alone.

GUSTAF: No, before that.

EARL: Take the damn ball?

GUSTAF: Ya, that's it! Are you serious? Take the ball? You want me to take the ball? Your ball? Curly Early's ball! That's just crazy...

EARL: Why, it's just a stupid bowling ball.

GUSTAF: Whoa, did you hear what you just said! That is not just a stupid bowling ball! When Hank Aaron broke the Babe's home run record... was that "just a stupid baseball"? This is the ball that belongs to the bowler my Daddy idolized! No...no I can't take it.. or maybe I *can* take it. Should I? I don't know!

EARL: Okay fine, take it, don't take it, see if I care.

LARRY: So... you think that ball's pretty valuable huh?

GUSTAF: Curly Early's ball? You bet!

LARRY: Ten thousand dollars worth of valuable?

GUSTAF: (*realization dawning*) Yeah...

EARL: You're gonna give me ten thousand dollars for the ball?

LARRY: No, stupid!

BRENDA: He's gonna take the ball, go away and leave us alone, right Gustaf?

GUSTAF: That could be part of an effective solution.

LARRY: So... you'll take the ball and call it even?

Larry takes the ball and hands it to Gustaf

GUSTAF: Oh man... Curly Early's ball! *(caresses the ball and goes to put his fingers in the holes but stops)* ... May I?

EARL: Be my guest.

GUSTAF: *(reverently puts his fingers in the ball)* It fits!!!

LARRY: Feels good, doesn't it?

GUSTAF: It feels amazing! *(He strikes a bowling pose)* In my briefcase there's a camera. Can someone take a picture?

BRENDA: Sure

GUSTAF: Earl, help me out. I want the real Curly Early stance.

(Earl helps him pose, Brenda retrieves the camera and takes the picture and hands the camera to Gustaf)

GUSTAF: Thank you!

LARRY: So we have a deal?

GUSTAF: Deal! *(extends his hand to shake then sees he's still wearing the latex glove)* Ooops, sorry! *(removes it and shakes hands)* *(to Earl)* Deal?

EARL: Deal!

GUSTAF: This is working out even better than I... wait, there's one more thing.

LARRY: Which is?

GUSTAF: I can't leave it like this. I'm afraid the ball isn't enough.

EARL: I knew it...

LARRY: Maybe he'll just sprain your ankle.

GUSTAF: Can you autograph it?

EARL: What? ...sure!

Earl gets a marker from a sideboard and prepares to sign the ball

EARL: To... Gustaf

GUSTAF: No, use my real name.

EARL: I don't know your real name, we just called you "Hey kid".

GUSTAF: *(he looks a little embarrassed)* It's Felix

EARL: *(writing)* "To Felix...stay out of the gutter, Curly Early"

GUSTAF: Oh wow...oh wow...This is great!! "Stay out of the gutter", I like that.

EARL: You see, it has a double meaning...

BRENDA *(interrupting)* He gets it, Earl!

EARL: Okay ...so we're even?

GUSTAF: You bet!

BRENDA: You know where the door is.

GUSTAF: Right, Right. Wait!! What am I doing... what's wrong with me? I always do this, I get all carried away in the moment and never get around to fully completing a task.

(Everybody freezes)

GUSTAF: Did you really think I would forget about it?

EARL: I guess not.

GUSTAF: I can't carry the ball around like this! The bag! I'm not leaving without the bag!

LARRY, EARL and BRENDA *(together)* Oh yeah, right, sure, sure....

Earl grabs the bowling ball bag from the closet and gives it to Gustaf. He takes the bell out before giving it to him, Gustaf doesn't notice.

GUSTAF: *(puts the ball in the bag)* I don't believe it... Curly Early's ball I've got Curly Early's ball!

EARL: Well you take good care of it.

GUSTAF: You better believe I will. Daddy would be so proud!

BRENDA: Proud of Gustaf or proud of Felix?

GUSTAF: Felix. He wouldn't like Gustaf. I don't like Gustaf.

BRENDA: He'd love Felix. He'd be very proud of Felix.

GUSTAF: You think so?

BRENDA: I know so *(pause)* You say you don't like Gustaf?

GUSTAF: I'm sorry, Gustaf was a stupid mistake. This was my first and last time. Are you surprised?

BRENDA: No, I had my suspicions.

GUSTAF: Really?

BRENDA: Yeah... who tortures someone with a crescent wrench.

EARL: Wait a minute, you mean...

BRENDA: Shut up Earl.

GUSTAF: Maybe I can talk someone into selling a certain bowling alley back to me.

BRENDA: You think you can make a go of it?

GUSTAF: It's been seven years, I don't think anybody will see Daddy's face on a head pin again.

EARL: So obviously, no broken arms or portfolio shots.

GUSTAF: No broken anything. Sorry to worry you. And those portfolio shots? They're all off the internet. In fact, maybe...

EARL: What?

GUSTAF: *(holds out the bowling bag)* Maybe I should give you this back, I really don't deserve it.

EARL: Well thank you, I think that's only...

BRENDA: *(forcefully overrules Earl)* No! You keep it, we insist.

GUSTAF: Oh thank God!! I really didn't want to give it back! This is for you Daddy! It's Curly Earlys ball! *(he breaks down crying again)* Oh Daddy!!!

Gustaf stands there loudly sobbing and holding the bag tight to his chest

BRENDA: *(handing him the roll of toilet paper)* Here, take this too.

GUSTAF: Thank you.

Larry opens the door

LARRY: Felix...

GUSTAF: *(barely in control)* Okay, yes... thank you. Thank you everyone!

LARRY: *(guiding him to the door)* This way Felix...

GUSTAF: *(holding the ball up in the air)* This is for you Daddy!

(starts to leave)

EARL: Wait a minute. *(Felix stops and turns)* Here kid.

He tosses the ball and Felix catches it

If you ever want to get his attention.

GUSTAF: *(pause)* Thank you! Thank you! *(as he exits we hear him sobbing and crying)* Thank you!! Thank you!!

Larry closes the door. Larry, Earl and Brenda look at each other

EARL: *(pause)* Anybody hungry?

LARRY: I could eat.

BRENDA: I'm ok.

EARL: He left his briefcase here.

LARRY: I don't think he needs it any more.

EARL: *(opens the briefcase)* Cool, free tools. And a salami!

LARRY: Great, bring it over to my place and we'll watch a movie, I got cable today.

EARL: Really?

(A loud knock is heard at the door, everybody freezes)

EARL: *(to Larry)* Are we expecting anybody?

LARRY: How should I know?

BRENDA: Maybe Felix wants his briefcase.

(Knock is heard again)

EARL: We have a deal Felix, you're not getting anything else!

LARRY: I don't think it's Felix.

(Knock is heard again, loud and insistent)

LARRY: Oh for cryin' out loud, *(calling to visitor)* Who is it?

OFF STAGE VOICE: It's the Cable Company!

(pause)

BRENDA: Bathroom window!

(Everyone runs off stage to escape through the bathroom window)

LIGHTS DOWN

END

Performance rights must be secured before production. For contact information, please see [the 7-10 Split information page](#).