

ACE IN THE HOLE

Pilot

by

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ACT ONE

INT. STUDENT DRIVER CAR - DAY

ADAM "ACE" MORELLA, 42, SITS IN THE INSTRUCTOR'S SEAT, GIVING A DRIVING LESSON TO A HEAVY-SET BLACK WOMAN. ACE NOTES EMPHATICALLY SOMETHING JUST AHEAD OF THEM.

ACE

Does the Asian mom in the Lexus
really need the 'My Child Is An
Honor Student' bumper sticker?
Doesn't it go without saying? It's
kind of understood, right? I mean,
if your kid were an honor student,
then...

SHE SHOOTS HIM AN 'OH, NO, HE DIDN'T.'

ACE (cont'd)

(BAILING WATER) I mean, if our
kids... you and me ... us... we...
yes we can!

ACE CLASPS HIS HANDS IN A SIGN OF SOLIDARITY, PUMPS HIS FIST.
SHE'S NOT FEELING IT.

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT DOOR/LIVING ROOM - DAY

THE FRONT DOOR OF THE MODEST NORTH HOLLYWOOD HOME OPENS.

9-YEAR-OLD NATE MORELLA TRUDGES IN DEJECTEDLY IN HIS LITTLE LEAGUE UNIFORM AHEAD OF HIS PARENTS, ACE AND SUSANNA MORELLA, 40. NATE MAKES A BEELINE FOR HIS ROOM. SUSANNA BEGINS TO FOLLOW HIM, BUT ACE PUTS HIS HAND ON HER SHOULDER.

ACE

I think you've done enough.

SUSANNA

I was attending to him as a nurse,
not his mother.

ACE

I'm sure his teammates will note
the distinction when they're
taunting him for the rest of his
life.

SUSANNA

What was I supposed to do, just sit
there?

ACE

Yes. You know, when I was teaching
Nate to be tough and not to rub
where he got hit by the ball, I
didn't think I needed to give a
separate seminar to his mom.

ACE (cont'd)

I figured you knew not to run out onto the field, scoop him up in your arms and carry him to the car.

SUSANNA

He was crying.

ACE

No, you were crying. He didn't start crying until the full impact of the humiliation kicked in. That was a nice touch pulling his pants down.

SUSANNA

I had to make sure nothing was broken.

ACE

Nothing but his will to live.

HOOP-EARRING-WEARING, GOATEE-SPORTING TODD, 19, SUSANNA'S SLACKER SON FROM HER FIRST MARRIAGE, INTERJECTS FROM THE COUCH WITHOUT LOOKING UP FROM HIS LATEST ISSUE OF BLENDER.

TODD

It couldn't have been more embarrassing than getting into his dad's red and yellow student driver car.

ACE GIVES A LONG, DISAPPROVING LOOK AT HIS STEPSON.

ACE

This from a guy who goes through life as Captain Jack Sparrow. That gig is temporary while I wait to hear back from the patent office. By the way, when the Therma-Couch rolls off the assembly line we're moving to a nicer neighborhood and you're not invited.

TODD

Is it gonna be as successful as your sports drink for dogs?

ACE

(INDIGNANT) I'm not going to apologize for Unleashed. At least I'm trying. When you making your big move into the work force?

TODD RETURNS TO HIS MAGAZINE SULLENLY.

SUSANNA

I hope Nate's not too mad at me.

ACE

Nah, he's still in the first stage of grief. Anger comes later.

TODD

Ya ever think maybe Nate's not cut out for team sports.

ACE

Watch it, Todd.

TODD

Maybe he's more evolved than that.

ACE

When you say 'evolved,' you mean in touch with his feminine side?

TODD

Yeah.

ACE

Able to express his emotions?

TODD

Exactly.

ACE

Will call Triple-A when he gets a flat tire?

TODD

I did that one time!

ACE

Yeah, well my son - my real son - won't be afraid to jack up a car and change a tire. And he won't be afraid of the ball. And he'll keep his emotions shoved deep down in his soul where they belong.

SUSANNA

Only to spew out when the guy in
front of him won't go right on red?

ACE

Yeah. When it's important.

SUSANNA HEADS INTO THE KITCHEN WITH ACE IN TOW.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

ACE SITS AT THE TABLE AS SUSANNA MAKES SANDWICHES.

ACE

What's the most terrifying thing that can happen to an American family? That's right, the home invasion robbery. And isn't that essentially what we have here? Only Todd never leaves. He never makes a run for it. We might as well be duct-taped to our chairs, watching him walk back and forth between the couch and the fridge.

SUSANNA

And your plan is to save us with your super-human complaining?

ACE

I'm just saying, I've seen the damage your coddling can do. And I don't want us - and by us I mean you - to make the same mistake with Nate.

SHE HANDS HIM A PLATE WITH A SANDWICH.

ACE (cont'd)

Can you slice that?

SUSANNA

I think we both know who the most
spoiled person in this house is.

SHE BRINGS THE KNIFE TO THE SANDWICH.

ACE

(OBLIVIOUS; NEEDY) Diagonally.

SHE SPITEFULLY SLICES A SMALL CORNER. HE HOLDS UP THE TINY
TRIANGLE, INSPECTS IT, DISAPPOINTED.

SUSANNA

Remind me why it isn't coddling
when I do your laundry or fix you
dinner.

ACE THINKS, CHEWS HIS SANDWICH IN CONTEMPLATION, HAS NOTHING.

SUSANNA (cont'd)

From here on out, I think you're
gonna be coddling yourself.

ACE

So be it. I was the self-coddling
champ of North Hollywood High.
But this isn't about me. It's
about saving Nate before it's too
late. Don't you see, I'm in a
battle with Todd for Nate's soul
here?

SUSANNA

Who should I be rooting for?

ACE

Not the 19-year-old barnacle on the couch that I couldn't scrape off with a masonry chisel.

SUSANNA

At least he's going to college.

ACE

Junior college. That isn't college, that's high school with ashtrays. Face it, he's in 13th grade.

SUSANNA

You went to junior college.

ACE

How do you think I became such an authority on the subject?

TODD ENTERS. ACE FEIGNS BEING ROBBED.

ACE (cont'd)

Please, mister, just take what you want and leave us be.

TODD, WEARING A CHE GUEVARA T-SHIRT, GRABS THE OJ OUT OF THE FRIDGE AND JOINS THEM AT THE TABLE.

ACE (cont'd)

(PAINED) Fresh squeezed?

SUSANNA

It was on sale.

TODD POURS THE JUG INTO A LARGE TUMBLER AS ACE WINCES, CALCULATING THE VALUE.

ACE

Right there. That's more than my
folks spent on me my entire
childhood.

TODD CHUGS THE GLASS, SETS IT DOWN.

TODD

I've got an investment opportunity
and I want you guys to get in on
the ground floor.

ACE

Any chance it will get you off our
ground floor?

SUSANNA

Ignore him, he's having a bad
sandwich day. What is it, Sweetie?

TODD

You know how documentaries are huge
now?

ACE SHAKES HIS HEAD "NO" AS SUSANNA NODS DELIGHTEDLY "YES."

TODD (cont'd)

Well, I'm going to shoot my doc
about the Burning Man Festival and
I want you guys to have full profit
participation.

ACE ROLLS HIS EYES.

ACE

(RUBBING HANDS TOGETHER) Full
profit participation?

SUSANNA

What's the Burning Man Festival?

ACE

It's that hippie concert in the
desert.

TODD

It's not a concert, it's a state of
mind. It's people escaping from the
bonds of societal conformity.

ACE

... and co-eds escaping from the
bonds of their blouses. And
unemployable drifters escaping from
the bonds of not being high.

TODD

It's an experiment in community,
radical self-expression and radical
self-reliance.

ACE

How much you gonna need to borrow
to express your radical self-
reliance?

(MORE)

ACE (cont'd)

Cuz I don't know if your mother and
I can afford it if your self-
reliance gets any more radical.

TODD

It's not a loan. You'd be co-
owners of the project.

ACE

Thirty seconds ago I was co-owner
of that orange juice. And we all
know where that's ending up.

SUSANNA

(HEAR HIM OUT; STERN) Adam.

TODD

I just need a couple hundred
dollars.

THIS CRACKS ACE UP.

SUSANNA

I'm sure we can work this out.

ACE

Here's how we "work this out." (TO
TODD) You go out and work.

SUSANNA GIVES ACE A HARD STARE.

ACE (cont'd)

Tell you what, we'll loan you the
money if you paint the trim on the
front of the house.

TODD

I didn't come in here looking for chores. I'm not a kid asking for an allowance.

ACE

No, you're an adult asking for welfare. You should be thanking me for this opportunity. I wish I could head over to the bank, mow their lawn and get out of this month's mortgage. (MOWING) Just wave up to the window, 'Hey guys, we're all square! And if you knock off a car payment, I'll hose down the driveway!'

TODD

Fine. I'll do it.

TODD SLOWLY REFILLS HIS TUMBLER DEFIANTLY, STARING ACE DOWN OLD-WEST STYLE.

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - DAY

ACE TINKERS WITH THE THERMA-COUCH AS BLACK NEIGHBOR DON
BRAXTON, 42, LOOKS ON.

DON

Susanna carried him off the field?

ACE

She's stronger than she looks.

DON

You have to move. Relocate.

Witness protection. That kid can't
grow up in this neighborhood after
that.

ACE

Remember when Peter Shirley's mom
did that.

DON

He was "Pantywaist Petey" from then
on. Even though it turned out his
arm was actually broken.

ACE

She's doomed him.

THEY SHAKE THEIR HEADS GRAVELY.

DON

Guess what I saw this morning?

ACE

The framing square you borrowed
nine months ago?

DON

(WHISPERING, CONSPIRATORIALLY) An
African-American family looking at
that house across the street.

ACE

Do you know 'em?

DON

Yeah, that's how it works. We all
know each other.

ACE

Well, it's about time someone moved
in there. That front yard is an
overgrown mess.

DON

Are you kidding? A black family's
gonna kill our property values. Do
you know what happened to my
property value after I moved in?

ACE

I don't care if an all-gay Al-Qaeda
cell moves in as long as they have
a Weed Whacker.

ACE GESTURES TO HIS WEED WHACKER FOR EMPHASIS, BUT SEES AN
EMPTY SLOT ON HIS WALL, WHERE HIS WEED WHACKER SHOULD BE.

DON

Yeah, I'll get that back to you.

NATE ENTERS.

NATE

Hey, Mr. Braxton.

DON SHAKES HIS HEAD SYMPATHETICALLY, GIVES NATE A FIST BUMP.

DON

Be strong, little buddy.

DON GRABS A POWER DRILL WITH AN "I'M BORROWING THIS" WAVE AND EXITS.

ACE

Hey, Champ, toss me the three-eighths drive ratchet.

NATE EXPERTLY FINDS THE TOOL, FLIPS IT TO ACE.

NATE

Todd says baseball is dying.

ACE

Talking to Todd about sports is like talking to a Dalmatian about firefighting. (EXTENDING HIS HAND)
Five-sixteenths.

NATE HANDS HIM ANOTHER TOOL.

NATE

Matthew Sherman is afraid of the ball.

ACE

That's why he plays three innings
in right field, chasing
butterflies.

NATE

How do you get to be not afraid of
the ball?

ACE

You just have to understand,
getting hit by the ball doesn't
hurt, it stings. (EXCHANGING TOOLS)
Flathead.

NATE

(CONSIDERING) Doesn't hurt, it
stings?

ACE

Look, everyone is a little afraid
of the ball. Baseballs are hard.
But you have to be more afraid of
your friends knowing you're afraid
of the ball than you are of the
ball itself.

NATE

(CONFUSED) So it is okay to be
afraid of the ball?

ACE

As long as you're more afraid of
being ridiculed by your buddies.
Once you're not afraid of being
ridiculed by your peers, you're
Todd.

ACE POINTS TO NATE TO HAVE A SEAT.

ACE (cont'd)

Okay, how's your section feel?

NATE

Nothing.

ACE

Good. And this section should be
medium.

ACE SITS ON THE 'MEDIUM' END, BOUNCING UP IMMEDIATELY IN
SEARING PAIN.

ACE (cont'd)

Haaa--

ACE JUMPS UP AND DOWN, EXHALING RAPIDLY.

NATE

Did that hurt or sting?

FADE OUT:

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. STUDENT DRIVER CAR - DAY

CLOSE ON - ACE IN MID-RANT IN THE INSTRUCTOR'S SEAT

ACE

The genders are just merging into one. Dudes wear clogs and watch cooking shows. Chicks ride hogs and smoke cigars. I see couples that look more like identical twins than man and wife. Another generation and you won't be able to tell the difference between men and women. Know what I mean, Terry?

PULL BACK TO REVEAL

AN AMORPHOUS, SEXUALLY AMBIGUOUS STUDENT IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT. ACE REALIZES NOT THE BEST AUDIENCE FOR THIS JAG.

ACE (cont'd)

Okay, let's try a K-turn.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

THE FAMILY SITS AROUND THE TABLE. SUSANNA SETS A TRAY OF LASAGNA ON A TRIVET.

SUSANNA

Hot pan, hot pan!

ACE

Oh, yes, lasagna night, the unholy
alliance of meat and cheese.

SUSANNA SERVES A WEDGE TO ACE.

SUSANNA

It's spinach.

ACE LOOKS LIKE A BOY WHO HAS JUST LEARNED HIS DOG DIED.

ACE

(HOPEFUL) Spinach, meat and cheese?

SUSANNA

No, it's vegetarian.

ACE

What the--

SUSANNA DEFTLY SCOOPS THE WEDGE OFF ACE'S PLATE AND SLIDES IT ONTO TODD'S.

NATE

Yeah, Dad, Todd's a vegetarian.

ACE

Since when?

TODD

Since I realized meat is murder.

ACE

Do you have any deeply held beliefs
that don't appear on t-shirts?

SUSANNA

(SERVING NATE) What do you care if
Todd's a vegetarian?

ACE

Well, on the one hand, my deeply
held beliefs are offended by the
sacrilege of spinach lasagna. But
on the other I'm contemplating the
possibility of driving Count Vegula
out of the house by sprinkling Bac-
O-Bits around the couch.

EVERYONE IS EATING BUT ACE.

TODD

This is delicious, Mom.

ACE

(TO TODD) So you're telling me, if
we were stranded on an island and
there's nothing but meat lasagna,
you'd starve?

TODD

That depends, is there any other
pasta on "Lasagna Island?"

ACE

(SARCASTIC) Yeah, there's
tortellini on Lasagna Island! Use
your head.

NATE

I like corkscrew pasta.

ACE

(EXASPERATED) People, we're on
Lasagna Island! The plane went down
on Lasagna Island!

TODD

If I was stranded with you on
Lasagna Island I'd kill myself.

NATE

This is great, Mom.

SUSANNA

Thanks, Sweetie.

ACE

Nate, c'mon, be honest. You would
never choose spinach lasagna over
meat lasagna.

NATE'S ON THE SPOT.

NATE

It's really good. I could be a
vegetarian.

ACE, HANDS TO THE HEAVENS, IS WOUNDED. HE'S LOSING HIM.

ACE

What is going on? (WAVING TO
SUSANNA) Do you see what's
happening here? Hello?

ACE, PANICKY, POINTS BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN NATE AND TODD.
SUSANNA SAVORS A BITE.

SUSANNA

Mmmm, that is good.

ACE

Alright, alright, let's get this
over with.

BUT AS ACE REACHES FOR THE PAN, SUSANNA PULLS IT TOWARD HER.

SUSANNA

Why don't you just enjoy some
Brussel sprouts?

ACE

Why do we need a vegetable? Didn't
you take care of that when you
ruined the lasagna?

SUSANNA RAISES AN EYEBROW, "WATCH IT." ACE MOROSELY NIBBLES
ON A BRUSSEL SPROUT.

ACE (cont'd)

I'll bet Nate doesn't even finish
his.

NATE

I have to leave room for dessert.

ACE

This is America, Nate.

SUSANNA

Here we go.

ACE

We don't leave room for dessert.
We force it down on top of our
meal. We treat the stomach like
Cinderella's evil stepsister trying
to wedge her foot into that
slipper.

NATE

I don't like to overeat.

ANOTHER DEVASTATING BLOW FOR ACE.

ACE

Son, those guys did not lay it on
the line at Gettysburg and Iwo Jima
so you could exercise portion
control. Don't dishonor their
sacrifice. Americans don't leave
room for dessert. We make room for
dessert. That's why we're No. 1.

CUT TO:

INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM - DAY

ACE ENTERS AS SUSANNA MATTER-OF-FACTLY SEPARATES THE DIRTY LAUNDRY, PUTTING HER CLOTHES INTO THE BASKET AND TOSSING HIS CLOTHES ON THE FLOOR BY HIS SIDE OF THE BED.

ACE

What's this?

SUSANNA

I'm being extra careful not to pamper you. I wouldn't want to make you a hypocrite.

ACE

I get it. Tough love. Two can play that game.

SUSANNA

Really? You gonna stop serving me Eggos in bed every third Valentine's Day?

ACE

Exactly. So you might want to think this through.

ACE WALKS TO THE WINDOW, PEERS DOWN.

ACE (cont'd)

Can you please keep me in the loop on Todd's brainwashing sessions with Nate so I know how much de-programming I need to do?

SUSANNA

I think Nate needs male influences
besides you.

ACE

What's that got to do with Todd?

SHE JOINS HIM AT THE WINDOW.

SUSANNA

C'mon, he's making an effort.

ACE

Oh, I know, Cliche Guevara even put
a different-colored rubberband in
his beardy thing today.

SUSANNA

He wants to do a good job. (PEERING
DOWN) I hope he's careful. I don't
know if Todd's ever been up on a
ladder before.

THE TOP OF THE LADDER CRASHES THROUGH THE WINDOW NEXT TO THE
ONE THEY'RE PEERING OUT.

ACE

I'm guessing no.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

ACE STANDS AT THE BASE OF THE LADDER, LOOKING UP. WE SEE TODD'S SOCKS, SNEAKERS AND BARE CALVES.

ACE

You can't just throw on the primer,
you gotta do a little surface prep.
Start off with 60 grit, go to 120
and finish with 180-- Are you
wearing a skirt?

TODD (O.S.)

It's a kilt!

ACE AVERTS HIS EYES.

ACE

I can see your bagpipes and I think
I'm gonna throw up.

TODD (O.S.)

It's 100 degrees out. Keeps me
cool.

ACE CONTINUES INSTRUCTING WITH HIS HAND SHIELDING HIS FACE
AND HIS EYES FIXED ON THE GROUND.

ACE

Okay, get my random orbital sander
and use it in a circular motion.
Once the surface is sanded...

NATE ARRIVES, CARRYING A PITCHER OF LEMONADE AND A GLASS.

NATE

Mom thought Todd could use-- (RE:
ACE STARING AT THE GROUND) What are
you looking for?

ACE

A blindfold or some underpants for
Braveheart up there.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

SUSANNA IS SITTING ON THE COUCH WHEN ACE AND NATE ENTER.

ACE

Good thing you sent that lemonade out. He'd been working for almost three minutes straight.

SUSANNA

Just thought it would cool him off.

ACE

Oh, he's got his own special system for that. (TO NATE) Let's go, I gotta get you to practice.

NATE

I'm not going. They'll call me names.

SUSANNA

If they do, I'll come down there and whip their little butts.

NATE AND ACE LOOK AT SUSANNA INCREDULOUSLY.

ACE

Can you at least let the first trauma dry before you roll on another coat?

ACE PUTS HIS HANDS ON NATE'S SHOULDERS.

ACE (cont'd)

Buddy, I'm afraid you're going to have to stick out your chin and take your beating. It'll be like getting hit by a ground ball. It won't hurt, but it will sting a little. Actually it's probably gonna feel like getting hit by 15 ground balls at once so it might hurt quite a bit.

TODD ENTERS, CATCHES THE DRIFT.

TODD

Nate's quitting baseball. He's joining my hacky sack circle.

TODD FLIPS NATE THE SACK AND THEY EXIT.

ACE

(CALLING AFTER THEM) The Morellas are not quitters! I mean, historically we are, but that ends with Nate!

SUSANNA

Was that my plaid skirt?

FADE OUT:

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT./EXT. STUDENT DRIVER CAR - DAY

WE CATCH ACE MID-RANT AS A FOCUSED, BESPECTACLED TEENAGE PAKISTANI SUFFERS IN SILENCE.

ACE

(LOOKING OUT WINDOW)... oh, great, it's old dude jogging without his shirt day. How come this guy with his B-cups in a nest of gray hair can jiggle down the sidewalk with impunity, but if that were a chick she'd be committing a misdemeanor? Am I the only one who thinks we have this backwards? When did it become okay for dudes to just pop their shirts off everywhere? Jogging, biking, ballgames. Guys are turning this planet into the world's worst topless bar. (TO STUDENT) Goose it, let's make this light.

CUT TO:

EXT. BACK YARD - DAY

TODD AND NATE ARE KICKING THE HACKY SACK WHEN ACE ENTERS WITH A BAT, BALL AND NATE'S GLOVE.

ACE

Alright, fellas, hate to break up absolutely nothing but Todd's gotta get back to work.

TODD

I'm on break.

ACE

A break is ten minutes. Unemployed is a few months. You, you're retired. Now scram.

ACE HANDS NATE HIS GLOVE AS TODD DEPARTS.

ACE (cont'd)

Remember, getting hit by the ball doesn't...

NATE

Dad, it hurts.

ACE

You know, my old man took it easy on me when it came to hitting ground balls. He just never showed up. So you should be happy to take one off the trachea every once in a while.

ACE RAPS A GROUND BALL. NATE FIELDS IT CLEANLY.

NATE

I looked up "hurt" and "sting"
online and I couldn't figure out
the difference.

ACE

Yeah, yeah, what's your average up
to?

NATE

Mr. Thompson said we're not allowed
to keep averages.

ACE

What the hell is the world coming
to when even coaches are worried
about people's feelings? Does he
think this is gonna shield the kids
who strike out every time from
knowing they suck?

IN HIS FRUSTRATION AT THE PANSIFICATION OF YOUTH ATHLETICS,
ACE WHACKS AN EXTRA-HARD GROUND BALL.

CLOSE ON ACE WINCING

ACE (cont'd)

Don't rub it! Atta boy! Shake it
off!

CUT TO:

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

NATE HOLDS A CLOTH ON HIS CHIN AS HE WATCHES ACE WORK ON THE HEATED SOFA.

ACE

When you're young, sometimes you gotta do stuff that isn't fun to get to the fun stuff that comes later.

NATE

What about when I grow up?

ACE

Then you get to do a lot of stuff that isn't fun even though you know there's no fun stuff coming later.

THEY TAKE UP THEIR POSITIONS ON EITHER END OF THE SOFA. ACE WORKS THE DIAL.

ACE (cont'd)

How's your section?

NATE

Good. Warm. Medium.

ACE

Nice. Mine too. (ADJUSTING DIAL)

Now for the center section.

AS HE TURNS THE DIAL, SMALL FLAMES ERUPT IN THE CENTER CUSHION.

NATE'S FIRST TO THE FIRE EXTINGUISHER AND HEROICALLY PUTS OUT THE SMALL FIRE.

ACE (cont'd)

Look at you, fearlessly battling
the backdraft. Is a tough guy like
you really afraid of what some nine-
year-olds on the ball field might
say?

NATE

(PROUDLY) Nope.

THEY FIST BUMP.

NATE (cont'd)

Bummer about the couch, Dad.

ACE

Yeah. But I may have found a way
to solve the Todd problem.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

SUSANNA IS PUTTING BILLS IN PILES ON THE TABLE WHEN ACE ENTERS WITH HIS ARM AROUND NATE.

ACE

Guess who's ready to get back out
on the diamond?

SUSANNA

That's great! (LOOKING CLOSER) Is
his chin bleeding?

ACE BLOTS NATE'S CHIN WITH HIS SLEEVE.

ACE

Thought we got that stopped.

NATE

We play the Tigers tomorrow. They
mercy-ruled us last time.

ACE

What kind of mercy is it to just
wave kids off the field? In our
effort to put a bike helmet over
every kid's psyche we've created a
whole new level of shame. Sorry,
kids, you're desecrating the
National Pastime. Get off the
field!

SUSANNA MAKES A YAKKETY-YAK HAND PUPPET GESTURE.

SUSANNA

We need a mercy rule in this house.

ACE

Maybe if I were drinking a beer, I
wouldn't be so chatty.

SUSANNA

(HOLDING UP A BILL) Maybe if I had
a beer, I wouldn't be so
potentially furious about these pay-
per-view charges.

ACE SNAPS HIS FINGERS AND SIGNALS TO NATE TO GET TWO BEERS.

ACE

(SITTING) What's with the piles?

SUSANNA

These are no late fees, these have
late fees and on these we've been
pretending we're dead.

NATE RETURNS WITH THE BEERS. THE PARENTS CLINK BOTTLES. ACE
SOLICITOUSLY HOLDS HIS BOTTLE AGAINST NATE'S CHIN.

ACE

Getting a little swelling there,
buddy.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

ACE ENTERS TO SEE SUSANNA STANDING WITH HER ARMS FOLDED, LOOKING AT HIS PILE OF DIRTY CLOTHES, RIGHT WHERE SHE LEFT THEM.

SUSANNA

This is your move? Nothing?

ACE

What was I supposed to do, put dirty laundry in the dresser?

SUSANNA

You think I'll crack and come morning this will be magically taken care of, like it always is.

ACE

(BOYISH, SWEETLY) Yeah, cuz you have magic powers.

SUSANNA

Sorry, magician's strike.

ACE

(FEARFUL) You guys unionized?

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

SUSANNA SERVES NATE BREAKFAST AS ACE, WEARING A DIRTY T-SHIRT, WRESTLES WITH THE NEWSPAPER.

ACE

Where's the sports section?

SUSANNA

It's at the end of the driveway.

ACE GIVES HIS FOE A RESPECTFUL LOOK. SHE'S EVEN MORE DIABOLICAL THAN HE COULD HAVE IMAGINED.

ACE

Hold on. You went down to the end of the driveway, picked up the paper, thumbed through it, removed the sports section, dropped that on the ground and then brought the rest of the paper into the house?

SUSANNA

Yeah. (RE: PAPER) You should try reading some of that other stuff.

ACE

(IN AWE) Wow. Well played.

CUT TO:

EXT. FRONT OF HOUSE - DAY

ACE FLIPS THROUGH HIS SPORTS SECTION AS TODD WAITS FOR AN APPRAISAL OF HIS WORK.

TODD

What do you think?

ACE

Hold on, I'm checking my hacky sack scores.

ACE LOOKS UP AT THE HOUSE, CHAGRINED.

ACE (cont'd)

Don't quit your day j-- ... oh, that's right, never mind. This looks awful. You got to get that sander out and start over.

TODD

This is classic oppression of the worker.

ACE

Yeah, we've been pretty hard on you, like that time we ran out of Lucky Charms. Brutal.

ACE LEANS IN, TRYING TO REASON WITH HIM.

ACE (cont'd)

Listen, do you have to go to the Nevada desert to shoot your Girls Gone Wild video?

(MORE)

ACE (cont'd)

Can't you just skip ahead to whatever you're gonna be interested in the following week? Ramming a Japanese whaling ship or starting another t-shirt company?

TODD POINTS TO HIS CHEST, HIS LATEST T-SHIRT DESIGN.

TODD

Check it out.

THE T-SHIRT READS 'SCARS HEAL, THE PLANET DOESN'T.'

ACE

You know scars don't heal, right? Wounds heal, they leave scars. Good thing you showed me the prototype before you ordered a thousand of those.

TODD'S LOOK SAYS IT'S TOO LATE AS ACE PATS HIM ON THE BACK.

TODD

Sorry that my aspirations are a little more lofty than driving instructor. You know you're basically training soldiers in a war against our eco-system. Me, my goal is to have a zero carbon footprint.

ACE

Really? How you getting to Burning Man? Pegasus?

(MORE)

ACE (cont'd)

Floating on good vibes? Or you gonna leech off someone else's footprint?

TODD

Hey, Burning Man is one hundred percent eco-friendly.

ACE

Except for the part where you light a 40-foot wooden statue on fire for no reason, right? You know what else is gonna be bad for the environment? Running my electric orbital sander twice because you did such a crappy job the first time.

AS TODD DEPARTS FOR THE SANDER, DON WALKS UP.

DON

How's Nate doing?

ACE

Gonna face his ridicule like the man his mom is desperately trying to prevent him from becoming.

DON

Good for him. I stepped up too. I got that family to rescind their offer on the house.

ACE

(HANDS TO THE HEAVENS) What?

DON

Told 'em there were a lot of bigots
in the neighborhood.

ACE

First of all, we prefer 'culture
warriors.' Second of all, nothing
hurts property value more than a
house sitting empty across the
street. And next summer when you
hear the rancho music wafting
over your fence, you'll be begging
for the Huxtables.

DON

(RE: THE TRIM) Speaking of property
values, this looks horrible.

ACE NODS "IT SURE DOES" AND BLOWS OUT A LONG SIGH.

CUT TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

NATE AND ACE RETURN TRIUMPHANTLY. SUSANNA LEAPS UP TO GREET THEM.

NATE

Guess who got the game-winning hit?

ACE

Turns out it's more fun to be carried off on your teammates' shoulders than by a registered nurse.

AS SUSANNA HUGS NATE, SHE NOTICES ANOTHER BRUISE ON HIS CHEEK.

SUSANNA

What's this?

ACE

He did get another bad hop in the chops. They really gotta rake that infield.

SUSANNA

Did it hurt?

NATE LOOKS UP AT HIS DAD, SHRUGS IT OFF AND SAYS,

NATE

Nah, it just stung a little.

SHE PULLS HIM TO HER, GETS A LITTLE MISTY, MY BRAVE, BRAVE LITTLE BOY.

ACE

Alright, alright. He didn't just
get back from Guadalcanal.

TODD ENTERS.

ACE (cont'd)

(SUSPICIOUS) Paint job looks pretty
darn good.

TODD

Hey, I learned from the best. So,
you'll stake me?

SUSANNA

Of course, Honey.

ACE

Not so fast. I'm pissed.

SUSANNA

Why?

ACE

Cuz this means he could have been
doing stuff around here all along.
I had him pegged as an imbecile. I
figured he was just useless. (TO
TODD) I gotta say, you had me
convinced. But now the jig's up. I
don't know if we can approve this
loan application. Burning Man might
have to wait til next year.

TODD SINKS.

NATE

I read online that sometimes people
go to Burning Man and just decide
to stay out there, living in
nature.

ACE

(CLAPPING) We gotta get you packed,
Todd-O. Make sure that vid-cam's
charged. Chop-chop.

ACE BOLTS OFF. SUSANNA MUSSES HER BOYS' HAIR, EXITS TO THE
KITCHEN.

TODD

(HANDING NATE \$20) Nice work on the
paint job, buddy.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

ACE AND SUSANNA SIT ON THE EDGE OF THEIR BED, WAITING IMPATIENTLY FOR TODD TO "FIX" THE WINDOW.

TODD

There. That should keep the draft
out.

AS HE STEPS AWAY WE SEE THAT HE HAS TACKED ONE OF HIS 'SCARS HEAL, THE PLANET DOESN'T' T-SHIRTS IN THE WINDOW.

SUSANNA

Thanks so much, Sweetie.

TODD SMILES, SAYS "GOODNIGHT" AND EXITS.

ACE

I don't think you have to thank him
for not really fixing the window he
broke in the first place.

SUSANNA

C'mon, Todd kind of stepped up
today.

ACE

He really did. I didn't think he
had that kind of work in him.

SUSANNA

He's full of surprises. And ol'
Nate really came through too.

ACE

(PROUD) Yeah, little slugger.

SUSANNA

Admit it, sometimes a little
coddling can be a good thing.

SHE RECLINES COQUETTISHLY.

ACE

Like now?

HE LEANS IN.

SUSANNA

Maybe now. Would you like it now?
Or perhaps you'd prefer it in the
form of Lasagna Bolognese.

HE CONTEMPLATES, "OOOOH," A TOUGH CHOICE. IT SHOULDN'T HAVE
BEEN. HE WHO HESITATES IS LOST.

SUSANNA (cont'd)

(ROLLING OVER) You blew it, pal.

SHE REACHES FOR THE LIGHT. CLICK. DARKNESS.

BEAT

BEAT

ACE

(V.O.) But I still get the meat
lasagna, right?

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW