ACE IN THE HOLE

Pilot

by

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2/17/09
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 CLAPS 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)

(PAINE) 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 INCREDUOUSLY.

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
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)
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 ranchero 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