The Wedding Jackpot: A Creative and Critical Investigation of the Farce Genre in the Context of Screenwriting and Feature Film

A project submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the project is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Sung-Ju Suya Lee

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¹ Correct spelling, with all lower case for first and last name.
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Abstract

Despite the genre of farce being old fashioned, it can still pull an audience and make money. This can be shown in the recent box office blockbusters, *Bridesmaids* (2011) and *The Hangover* (2009–2013) franchise. Yet, there is a gap in the literature on farce screenwriting, both academically and within industry/professional discourse. For example, despite there being numerous books and texts on comedy theory and comedy writing, there are only a few dozens of available books on theatrical farce. This gap in literature is highlighted in order to help inform comedy and/or genre researchers, and also farce practitioners, which in this case alludes to the screenwriter.

This research-led practice PhD in screenwriting consists of two parts: a feature film screenplay, *The Wedding Jackpot*, and an accompanying critical dissertation that explores, analyses and reflects on the creative process. The screenplay is written in the genre of farce comedy, and explores the efforts of a young woman to find a fake fiancé. The dissertation provides a framework in understanding, guiding and applying farce techniques to the practice of screenwriting.

Since there is limited analysis and research from screenwriting and comedy theorists, research led me to the key theatrical genre theorists: Eric Bentley, Albert Bermel and Jessica Milner Davis. Audiences, critics and academics do not generally acknowledge what they are watching as a farce, most preferring to simply categorise it as comedy. Current other types of comedy, including slapstick, satire and parody, feature components of farce. Indeed, some theorists consider these to originate from farce.

In this PhD then, Bentley’s ten farce elements have been analysed, compiled and narrowed down to six principles, designed to inform the screenwriter: violence; mocking; humour; plot; characters; and, pacing. I then apply these principles to the analysis of a contemporary produced screenplay case study, *Bridesmaids*, in order to further understand and examine the mechanisms of farce screenwriting.

Finally, I apply the theories and techniques under examination to a discussion of the screenwriting process that I use in my own screenplay. In the Conclusion, I highlight two new story devices that I have created: The Farce Scatter Graph Line Chart and
The Ping Pong Method. Through this process, my findings seek to address the current gap in the field of farce screenwriting studies, which I hope can be of use to other screenwriters, novelists and authors across different literary and screen forms.
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Abbreviations

AAWP—Australasian Association of Writing Programs
AFI—The American Film Institute
AHSN—Australasian Humour Studies Network
BBC—British Broadcasting Corporation
CBS—Columbia Broadcasting System
IMDb—The Internet Movie Database
ITV—Independent Television
MGM—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, Inc. (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures)
MTV—Music Television
NBC—National Broadcasting Company
OECD—The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PGA—Producers Guild of America
RMIT—Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University
R/T—running time (for films or TV shows)
UMS—Universal Media Studios
UTS—University of Technology, Sydney

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2 Note: correct abbreviation; small ‘b’.
Introduction

If you know a thing theoretically but don’t know it practically, then you don’t really know its whole theory; and if you know it practically, but don’t know it theoretically, then you don’t really know its whole practice.

C.E. Montague: A Writer’s Notes on His Trade (cited in Bentley 1953, vi)

When embarking on this PhD, I was very excited, and simultaneously confused, directionless and unanchored. I was not only displaced, but also felt chaotic in my creative, professional and personal life. I did not know in which country I wanted to do my PhD, nor what subject—film, television, media or screenwriting, as per my professional background. I had switched universities, from Monash to RMIT, going from a theoretical to a creative practice PhD. I did not know why I chose farce comedy, but now, having researched this subject, I know why I was—and still am—drawn to this genre. In essence, farce comedy captures my life, and most likely it will continue on this trajectory. Like Eric Bentley remarked, farce is “mischief as fate” for its characters (1964, 244), I continue on without having any choice in this matter. My life can be summed up in this PhD journey of writing a screenplay, The Wedding Jackpot, and the lives of the characters in it.

Description of Screenplay Project (Creative Artefact)

When I first considered what would best suit this creative practice PhD, I encountered numerous methodologies, methods and approaches, but in regard to methodological frameworks, I also acknowledge and accept that there is no one interpretive model to

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3 This PhD adheres to Australian spelling. However, numerous quotations contain American spelling. Also, if a word or a phrase is quoted within a quote, the internal quotation marks have been revised as single quotation marks. The quotations reflect their spelling, i.e., the first word within a quotation may or may not be capitalized as per original text.
4 If the quote does not cite a reference, then it was obtained from one of the numerous quotation websites. Often, the same quote was viewed on different quotation websites, such as goodreads.com, topfamousquotes.com and azquotes.com.
5 I touched on my creative practice in ‘Rewriting, remaking and rediscovering screenwriting practice: when the screenwriter becomes practitioner-researcher’, a joint conference paper with several other screenwriting PhD Candidates. The conference was the AAWP 2015.
6 In Michael M. Meany’s ‘The Semblance of Truth: The Development of Dialogue in Computer-Based Characters’ (2006, 2), he examines this issue further with insight.
suit or fit every writer (Fliotsos 2011, xiii). As part of this ‘creative thesis’ model (Fletcher and Mann 2004, 1), the creative component of my PhD, *The Wedding Jackpot*, is an original farce comedy feature length screenplay.\(^7\) It is a chaotic, violent, fast-paced, humorous story about mistaken identities, deceptive charades, improbable circumstances and missed timing. At the same time, it questions the state of the institution of marriage, the social context of weddings and knowing your authentic self. In order to understand this PhD research, I request that the screenplay be read after the dissertation. Since this is a ‘formal analysis’, which is the “study of a [text] in relation to the form or literary genre to which it belongs” (Thomas 2014, xviii), this PhD study of the farce genre, which incorporates the analyses of Eric Bentley’s, Albert Bermel’s and Jessica Milner Davis’ theories of farce,\(^8\) provides a basis by which to guide and improve my writing. In this genre research, I investigate farce elements for screenwriting as opposed to novels, plays, musicals, dance and so forth. The outcome reveals the results of the tropes of farce specific to screenwriting in the actual writing of *The Wedding Jackpot*, drawing on theories and ideas of farce, as well as a deep analysis of the screenplay, *Bridesmaids* (Mumolo and Wiig 2011).

**Brief Summary of The Wedding Jackpot**\(^9\)

When a young, penniless, unattached woman accidentally enters a design-your-wedding contest for future brides only, with a $1 million prize, she must find a fake fiancé to marry on Valentine’s Day. She needs the money since she never seems to get the recognition she desires working as a visual display artist at a big, downtown department store, and cannot afford the latest sky-high rent increase, which she must pay or live on the street. She has never had a boyfriend, only has casual sex and doesn’t believe in true love or marriage. She is a fish-out-of-water in the world of weddings and marriages. Since she has no scruples, she recruits a benefits co-worker to be the fake groom in order to win the prize, but she eventually falls in love with the assigned wedding contest reporter who tries to live authentically and believes in true love. Unbeknown to all, the contest organiser and one of the other

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\(^7\) Farce is noted to be farce comedy as well as farce tragedy. See genre section.

\(^8\) I have ordered the key farce theorists alphabetically. It should be noted that I have referenced Jessica Milner Davis’ revised book published in 2003, although her original book was first published before Albert Bermel’s book.

\(^9\) See Appendix A: *The Wedding Jackpot*—Synopsis.
bride finalists already have the contest fixed. Nevertheless, being in true love for the first time, she ultimately forfeits it all to be with the reporter.

**Description of Research that Supports the Screenplay Project**

My creative practice research investigates the farce genre (i.e., specifically the generic tropes of farce) in screenwriting, after which these principles are examined and applied to a produced screenplay, *Bridesmaids*. This results in the writing of my own original screenplay, *The Wedding Jackpot*, within the confines of the farce research. This dissertation examines the farce theories of those identified as the main theorists, Eric Bentley (1964), Albert Bermel (1990) and Jessica Milner Davis (2003); and, tests these theories of farce to discover if they can assist in screenwriting practice. Reflection on this process is then undertaken in order to contribute possible applications, recommendations, significance and knowledge.

In researching the study of genre, the landscape of literature is vast and complex. The discussion was narrowed to focus on the critical reflection of writing the screenplay, for which I look to Craig Batty and Lisa Dethridge. According to Dethridge in ‘Ways of Acting and Reflecting: Researching and Writing the Screenplay’ in *Creative Arts Research*—specifically related to researching and writing a screenplay—creative researchers may identify different ‘ways’ of “knowledge generation in the academy.” She elaborates further in regard to “what it means for a researcher to reflect on screenwriting projects” by which she advocates a “methodology to combine rational analysis and imaginative reflection” (2009, 97).

In addition, Batty in ‘Unpacking Critical Theories to Enhance Creative Practice: A PhD in Screenwriting Case Study’ concurs that principles are ‘adaptable’ from one creative writing PhD to another (2013, 24); and advocates Graeme Harper’s theories of ‘capability’ and ‘knowledgeability’ [sic] (2007, 20) in creative writing research. Batty expands on Harper’s theory of its purpose in initiating action:

> this is the idea that research into a subject enables a better practice of that subject (capability), at the same time developing a greater awareness of what we know about the subject (knowledgeability) [sic]. This produces a ‘responsive critical understanding’ (Harper, 2007, p.21): a process of moving beyond mere reflection and instead towards application. Or, rather than reflecting on the practice of the
subject, understanding it and then just leaving it there, knowledge gleaned is then applied back in practice. This, one would hope, results in a better, more enhanced ability of practice. Understanding thus becomes responsive of how it is used, not just acknowledged (Batty 2013, 24).

In regard to screenwriting, Dethridge agrees and clarifies that when creative researchers “produce a project (screenplay) and an accompanying research paper (exegesis) situating their project within a larger context, in the process they relate the creative work to scholarly, theoretical, technical and industry questions of screenwriting” (2009, 97). Batty stresses the need to “signpost the PhD’s intention to work as a ‘package’ ” with practice-related PhDs (2013, 19). Dethridge highlights this ‘dual research process’ further with:

In the context of the academy we observe how researchers in screenwriting organize their work into two components: firstly, there is the project document (a screenplay for feature film) representing an act of creative imagination; secondly, there is the support of an exegesis investigating a specific conceptual framework and the methodology through which the creative work is undertaken (2009, 97).

Considering my PhD and this dissertation, in line with Batty (2013) and Dethridge (2009), my research question is:

**How can extant theories of farce be applied to the practice of screenwriting, providing tools for both the analysis and writing of a screenplay?**

The literature search suggests there is a general lack of research relating to this specific genre within the field of screenwriting. The majority of the studies of farce relate to the literature and theatre plays before the 20th century (Bentley 1964; Bermel 1990; Davis 2003; Enders 2011; Hughes 1956). Very few (comedy) screenwriting books touch on farce for the screenwriter. Ironically, in Greg DePaul’s *Bring the

\[10\] It should be noted that RMIT University has replaced the wording of ‘exegesis’ with word ‘dissertation’ for creative practice PhD degrees in 2015.
Funny: The Essential Companion for the Comedy Screenwriter, he argues, “most comedy, and most film comedy, is farce. Just like Shakespeare, just like Molière. And, by the way, just like pretty much all TV comedy” (2017, 103–104). However, his section on farce for screenwriters is limited, and the advice for farceurs is the same dramatic narrative methods found in most screenwriting and creative writing books and articles. It is my intention as a screenwriter, therefore, to understand, investigate and utilise the theories of farce in a systematic way, which might further contribute to the canon of farce literature, and advise future farce writers and the motion picture industry about writing farce comedy screenplays.

**Overall Structure of the Dissertation**

In the remainder of this Introduction, I provide the rationale for the study, explaining the lack of literature for undertaking a project-based PhD in farce comedy screenwriting. Included, I state my research question with reference to the chapters and the methodology for undertaking this research.

Chapter One is divided into two sections. First, the literature review highlights the key farce theorists, Eric Bentley (1964), Albert Bermel (1990) and Jessica Milner Davis (2003), which also draws on topics outside of farce comedy. Secondly, I cover the study of farce with explanations, analyses and historical aspects under genre, comedy and farce. This section is a prelude to the six farce principles found in Chapter Two.

In Chapter Two, I compile and analyse Bentley’s ten farce principles from The Life of The Drama (1964) into six smaller farce principles with the context of screenwriting. The other theorists and philosophers are considered within these six farce principles. Briefly, the six farce principles are violence, mocking, humour, plot, characters and finally, pacing.

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11 In a final look on Amazon.com and books.google.com in late 2016, there were some new books on comedy writing and screenwriting. Hence, this book has a copyright of 2017.
12 DePaul’s farce section is about three pages.
13 DePaul’s ‘formula for farce’ is “Character with Goals + Obstacles + Actions Taken to Overcome Obstacles = FUNNY” (2017, 104, emphasis in original).
In Chapter Three, I analyse the farce comedy screenplay, *Bridesmaids* (2011), using the six farce principles examined in the previous chapter. This is not to debate if the theorists were correct and/or accurate with their theories, but to utilise their theories in a case study of a produced screenplay to expand my creative practice knowledge. The case study analysis is thus part of the screenwriting process.

In Chapter Four, I apply the six farce principles and the learning from the case study to the writing process. From the research preparation of the farce analyses and the case study, this method highlights any impact the farce theories had in the writing of the screenplay. I argue that creative practice is equal to the research, in which the writing of the screenplay is a contribution with insights into the creative practice approach (Batty 2013; Dethridge 2009; Lee 2015, 6, cited in Batty et al. 2015). For each of the six principles, I explain the challenges and difficulties I encountered in the writing process through the numerous revisions and drafts of *The Wedding Jackpot*. The farce principles and the reflection encapsulate the objective of gaining a deeper understanding as a screenwriter, which then results in inventing two new methods for creative practitioners and the industry.

In the Conclusion, I present a brief overview of the dissertation findings in relation to the research question along with the limitations to this approach. Although not re-inventing farce comedy in this exploration of the study of genre, I conclude with the premise that farce is more than ‘writing by numbers’ as the interrogation into writing a farce comedy screenplay has provided new insight and classifications into genre expansion within cinema industry contexts. The conclusion highlights a distinctive contribution in which I have discovered two new methods for myself in the process of writing a farce comedy screenplay, which I have named, The Farce Scatter Graph Chart and The Ping Pong Method.¹⁴

¹⁴ Alternate names: pingpong and ping-pong.
Rationale: Significance, Context and Aims

There are many different theories on how comedy should be written and structured. I highlight a very small percentage in this dissertation while acknowledging several commonalities and contrasts. This applies to farce theories. The rationale to undertake another study is that there is little research on farce comedy screenwriting. Albeit with a historical literary criticism background, other scholars, academics and critics, such as Samuel Johnson and L.C. Knights, have expressed their objections to analysing the theories of drama, with the concerns of the “hazards of defining or prescriptive criticism” and that it would “hinder the criticism of individual plays” respectively (cited in Baker 1981, 1 and 133, note 2). Stuart E. Baker reports that there are no general agreements, standards, purpose, etc., to evaluate farce (at that time of printing) compared to comedy, but attempts a general analysis (1981, 1). In support for research alongside professional culture and industry in regard to screenwriting practice, Elizabeth Grierson and Laura Brearley advocate Dethridge’s claims of relevance of the ‘dual focus’ of screenwriting structure and technique, and how it “relates to the demands of production and consumption” (2009, 12).

The vast literature of comedy is noted in James E. Evans’ *Comedy: an annotated bibliography of theory and criticism* (1987), which lists 3,106 items from Classical through to 1984 (1987, v). He claims, “Since 1900 interest in comedy has proliferated in literary studies and numerous fields” especially since Sigmund Freud and Henri Bergson published their respective influential essays (ibid). However, in 1991, Andrew Horton noted that there was limited research on the “subject of film comedy” as a broad study, at the time of printing, with the exception of Gerald Mast’s *The Comic Mind* (1979). Horton nevertheless reports Mast’s comedy theories as

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15 As a discussion of terms and theories, additionally: Although there are numerous theories on humour, it should be noted that there are fewer theories on comedy. This leads to even fewer theories related directly to comedy writing. The focus is on creative practice, and hence, there are distinctions between the ‘purpose of theory’ and the ‘description of practice.’

16 Evans notes he had to be selective since comedy bibliography is very extensive. There are 48 items listed under the farce genre subject, with 56 other listings with farce as a sub-section or a segment on farce. According to Evans, a previous comedy bibliography, *Comedy and Tragedy: A Bibliography of Critical Studies* (1972) by E. H. Mikhail, was limited, with only approximately 400 items.

17 The other fields being: philosophy, anthropology, psychology, sociology, religious studies, communication studies and medicine (Evans 1987, v).
“incomplete and restrictive” (1991, 1). But, Horton highlights that Mast’s research “wisely recognized the danger” (Horton 1991, 1), and warns of the “swamp of abstract debate on the nature of comedy and the comic” (Mast 1979, 3). There is no single adequate definition or theory of comedy, although problematically there have been attempts for a grand-scale account (Mast 1979, 3; King 2002, 5), for which Horton claims, “No totalizing theory of comedy has proved successful” (1991, 2). Geoff King adds, “Various different theoretical approaches are available and of differing degrees of use, depending on the precise nature of the comedy involved in any individual case and the different to questions we might seek to answer” (ibid). Murray S. Davis concurs and expands:

It is fruitful to apply Hobbes’ superiority theory to aggressive jokes, Bergson’s mechanization theory to farce, Freud’s sexual theory to dirty jokes, and Northrop Frye’s anthropological theory to Aristophanic [sic] Old Comedy… But humor is too complicated to be comprehended by such-single factor theories, no matter how well they explain one of its aspect (Davis 1993, 7, cited in King 2002, 5).

As an example of the limits of theory, this tripartite classification visually suggests these groups are somehow mutually exclusive. This grouping of theories is, however, more accurately analysed as offering different perspectives on the phenomena of humour. Raskin argues, “incongruity-based theories make a statement about the stimulus; the superiority theories characterize the relations or attitudes between the speaker and the hearer; and the release/relief theories comment on the feelings and psychology of the hearer only” (Raskin 1985, 40, emphasis in original).

Similar to comedy, discussions of farce are both multifaceted and inaccurate. According to The Reader's Encyclopedia of World Drama, the “General critical literature about farce is scarce, although allusions to farcical effects, not always to farce by name, will be found in most of the standard books and essays on comedy and humour and in criticism of specific plays and playwrights” (Gassner and Quinn 2002, 265). Yet historically, farce has been present in dramatic theatre, literature, dance, song and art since the age of the pre-classical Greeks (Bermel 1990; Davis 2003; Melchinger 1966; Nicoll 1965; Rozik 2011), hence farce theory’s ‘fundamental’ roots are ancient. In contrast, Davis states, “popular comedy is now a great deal better
appreciated than in the 1970s” (2003, vii). Furthermore, she acknowledges that the influx of considerable other works on farce research has only recently surfaced in the few years prior to her revised edition of Farce (2003, vii-viii). In Comedy: Meaning and Form, Robert W. Corrigan reports that in editing the second edition, he “realized that it was no longer as necessary to fight the battle for the legitimacy of farce as dramatic form” (1981, ix). He states, “people have come to see that farce is the basic ore [sic] from which much of theatre derives” (1981, iix). Davis agrees that with ‘critical studies’ since 1978, ‘farce’ as a term has been acknowledged and praised.

However, my research reveals a lack of critical farce theory literature applied in the cinematic context that also applies to farce genre screenplays and screenwriting. There is an exception with Bermel’s book, Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen (1990). Furthermore, there is a lack of critical screenplay analysis for screenplays that have already been produced. There are no current books solely on how-to-write-a-farce-screenplay compared to other genre screenplay books such as Billy Mernit’s Writing the Romantic Comedy: from “cute meet” to “joyous defeat”! How to write screenplays that will sell (2000), and Arthur Asa Berger’s The Art of Comedy Writing (2010). It is noted some publications have a farce section or a farce chapter, such as in comedy books, journal articles and blogs, but the descriptions lack in-depth detail, nor are elaborate enough to guide the farce screenwriter.

Ironically, there are over 5,000 theses and dissertations on the topic of farce, most of which are mostly related to the field of theatre. The earliest general PhD farce genre theory thesis was A Study of the Techniques of Modern American Farce (1962) by James Roy Tinsley, University of Pennsylvania. This thesis is unavailable for viewing. The earliest general PhD farce genre theory thesis accessible was Jessica R.

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19 Here I differentiate comedy and farce. There are numerous books on comedy theory, writing, screenwriting, plays, films, stand-up, etc.
20 Submission dates from the late 19th century to the present. I searched for farce genre theory under postgraduate theses and dissertations, both creative practice and theoretical, on RMIT University library, Libraries Australia, Google Scholar, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (international), Canada Theses and Index to Theses (Great Britain and Ireland).

Although screenwriting manuals are considered a newer field compared to literature or playwriting manuals, they do date back to the last century. According to William C. Martell in *How To Write Photo Plays* (cited in Emerson and Loos 2015), the earliest screenwriting book was published in 1910. In Terry Bailey’s ‘Normatizing [sic] the silent drama: Photoplay [sic] manuals of the 1910s and early 1920s’ (2014), early screenwriting manuals and their contribution for today’s screenwriters are analysed. In Edwin James Muddle’s *Picture Plays and How to Write Them* (1911), there is a section on comedy writing (Muddle 1911, 64–68, cited in Bailey 2015, 211). Some silent film manuals reference Aristotle (Slevin 1912, 57, cited in Bailey 2015, 213), and the structure can be traced back to the Victorian stage, mainly though vaudeville and melodrama (Vardac 1949, 22–44, in Bailey 2015, 213). Bailey argues that the silent film drama owes its debt to two playwrights and their drama structure theories: “Gustav Freytag’s five-act ‘pyramid’ structure (Freytag 1894:115) and Eugene Scribe’s ‘Well-Made Play’ (Cardwell 1983:876–884)” (cited in Baily 2015, 213). This is important to note as Bermel (1990) cites the well-made play structure as heavily used for farces, and Freytag’s five-act structure is similar to screenplay template structures.

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21 Davis’ PhD Thesis was partially accessible on Google Scholar, and accessed individually by chapters.
22 These were theoretical theses, not practice-based theses, which lacked analysis of any playwriting or screenwriting tools for writing farce.
23 After reading Bailey’s article, I accessed the vintage references on the vintage book websites.
24 Eustace Hale Ball explains the 5-act structure in *The Art of the Photoplay* [sic], “more or less directly as it appears in *Technique of the Drama* (see Freytag 1894:114–140), albeit without crediting Freytag” (Ball 1913, 49–50, cited in Bailey 2015, 213). Ball discusses the “‘rising action’, the ‘climax’, ‘falling action’ and the ‘denouement’ ” (Ball 1913, 49–50, cited in Bailey 2015, 213).
In some of these early silent film screenwriting manuals, if they discuss comedy, they
distinguish comedy from genres such as farce and slapstick (Bailey 2015, 218).
William Lord Wright focuses his only comedy chapter on what he calls ‘farce
comedy’ (Wright 1922, 125, cited in Bailey 2015, 218), but “then advises readers to
avoid attempting to write in this genre altogether, as the studio staff can do it better
themselves” (Wright 1922, 127, cited in Bailey 2015, 218). The search revealed only
one writing manual book for the farce genre; Walter W. Ellis’ How to Write a Farce
was written in 1948. This slim book demonstrates farce elements, theories and
techniques with plays before 1948, but the storytelling tools are specifically geared
towards plays, which have a different structure and format than screenplays. Bentley
has theorised that farce can generally be adapted to the ‘silver screen’ quite easily and
successfully due to the physical nature of that genre, especially the black and white
slapstick comedies such as the Charlie Chaplin movies. However, Bentley mostly
notes the train and car chases (of the silent era) as the main examples in his book, The
Life of the Drama (1964). Most of his examples are notably from plays.

The motion picture industry search revealed that the current crop of comedy movies
such as Bridesmaids (2011), and The Hangover (2009, 2011 and 2013) franchise,
have become popular—as based on the box office gross figures (Box Office Mojo
2013)—and it is suggested these comedies have the added elements of farce that
audiences have paid money to see. Although not critically recognised during awards
season, the latest resurgence of farce genre movies (i.e., The Other Woman 2014; Bad
Neighbors 2014) has proven that they can be successful as a money maker for the
motion picture industry in Hollywood and worldwide. This suggests that there is an
incentive for adding farce elements to filmmaking. It also indicates the need for
researchers to investigate and study the possible underlying causes and/or factors for
this under-analysed phenomenon. The aim of my research will thus venture into new
territory, making it new knowledge, and therefore contributing to the overall research
field in the motion picture industry and in particular for the practice of screenwriting.
The final outcome hopes to fill the gap in the review of literature in the farce genre for
screenwriters, directors, producers, film theorists and movie viewers.
Methodology

Introduction

In starting this discussion of methodology, I reflect that it was often confusing and imprecise, especially with the many approaches, methods and methodologies in the creative practice field (Lee et al. 2016, 90). In regard to the planning and undertaking of a ‘systematic’ investigation, I look to theorists in the general field of ‘research’. According to Jonathan Grix in *The Foundations of Research*, the terms ‘methods’ and ‘methodology’ are “often confused, used interchangeable, and generally misunderstood” (2010, 30). In *Designing Social Research*, Norman Blaikie explains that ‘research methods’ are the “techniques or procedures used to collate and analyse data” (Blaikie 2000, 8; cited in Grix 2010, 30). Grix elaborates that the “method(s) chosen for a research project are inextricably linked to the research questions posed and to the sources of data collected” (2010, 30, emphasis in original). For ‘methodology’, Grix states that it is “concerned with the logic of scientific enquiry; in particular with investigating the potentialities and limitations of particular techniques and procedures. The term pertains to the science and study of methods and the assumptions about the ways in which knowledge is produced” (2010, 32). The terms ‘methods’ and ‘methodology’ pertaining to a creative practitioner is unpacked further in this section, as I keep in mind Peter Dallow’s remarks in his article, ‘Representing creativeness: practice-based approaches to research in creative arts’, in particular as he states, “To investigate and report upon creativeness in the creative arts requires us to think about artistic originality with some theoretical originality” (2003, 49).

As a screenwriter, who has written screenplays as well as other stories in various formats, perhaps it is suggested that I may have an ‘insider’ perspective. Although I understand the workings of a screenplay and how to write one, the methods of incorporating the farce principles were new and I needed guidance from creative practice research theorists. The standard research-led practice methodology was an approach that was helpful as a framework. The screenplay and the dissertation research were enacted simultaneously, which caused confusion, wasted time and

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headaches for myself. I look to Grierson and Brearley when discussing the start of my methodology. In *Creative Arts Research*, Grierson and Brearley argue the “importance of opening the field of qualitative methodologies to wider narratives of enquiries” (2009, 9), in which “practitioner-researchers find ways to articulate and critically reflect upon embedded practice as a mode of research and to establish a methodology appropriate for their project… [and] establish methodologies that can sustain research questions and themes” (ibid, 4). They highlight that research projects may work with “combinations of methodologies for creative arts research” in order to establish the appropriate paradigms to grapple with research questions and information (ibid, 5).

With influence of the abundant farce plays and their analyses by the theorists such as Bentley (1964), Bermel (1990) and Davis (2003), along with the screenplay case study, *Bridesmaids*, as a creative practitioner, I observe Richard Dyer’s theory of creating art. In *Pastiche*, Dyer claims that nothing is new and that it is a matter of ‘degree’, arguing that:

> All art involves learning from others, taking, adapting, borrowing, imitating, and since this is standard practice, there is not necessarily any felt need constantly to acknowledge it. The issue often is what and how much the artist has done with their borrowing, whether they have so transformed the element(s) appropriated as to produce a new work (2007, 26).

As noted previously, I will use Dethridge’s “dual research process” (2009, 97). My PhD’s contextual framework falls under the project-based research category, and includes two parts—a creative project (also known as a creative artefact—a screenplay) and a dissertation. My research investigates the nature of practice in the creative field as its primary focus. Hence, this study of genre employs a mixed methodology/methods approach that is headed by a research-led practice approach, one that is relevant to the object of the study and “framed by a particular purpose and set of questions” (Schwandt 2007, 196). These methods address “the purpose of the study” and answer the questions on a ‘paradigmatic’ and/or ‘philosophical’ level, rather than a ‘technical’ level (ibid). Centrally, it consists of a practice-related research methodology (i.e., research-led practice and practice-led research; see Smith
and Dean, 2009), and secondarily, a qualitative content analysis research methodology. The research plan is broken down into the two major areas: A) the literature review analysis and the case study analysis (Bridesmaids), and B) the screenplay-writing project and a reflective analysis. According to John L. Styan, researchers “always wish to know where the conventions of the script, the acting and the audience came from, and often where they went to, and why… [a play] alters in however slight a degree, the matrix of conventions, and thus the form of the genre and its impact” (1975, 14). My aim is to investigate and utilise the generic elements and technical device conventions and structures of farce comedy in order to understand and write a farcical comedy screenplay, and thus contribute in creating a framework for farce screenwriters.

In Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean’s Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts, they discuss research-led practice in creative writing:

Research-led practice takes different forms in different fields and is more prominent in some areas than others... In creative writing, for example, research-led practice is mainly conceptual and tends to be driven by critical and cultural theory: see Krauth and Brady (2006) and Dawson (2005). The impact of theory on practice can be found not only in novels and poems but also in hybrid genres such as fictocriticism [sic] which bring creative and critical writing together (2009, 8).

Smith and Dean state that at the foundation between creative practice and research are the definitions and questions of research and knowledge in which they refer to The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) definition:

Creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications (2009, 2–3).

Practice-related research methodologies26 have been debated, albeit controversially, amongst practitioners, scholars and academics, especially associated in the arts,

26 For example: practice-led, practice-based, research-led practice, performative, action, reflective and experience.
design and media field, as well as implemented differently by various universities.\(^{27}\)

My main methodology is research-led practice, but it does touch onto other methodologies. According to Linda Candy’s *Practice Based Research: A Guide* (2006), practice-related research is divided into two modes: practice-based and practice-led (2006). For the latter research mode, she explains, “If the research *leads* primarily to new understandings about practice, it is practice-**led**” (ibid, emphasis in original). For the former research mode, Candy states, “If a creative artefact is the *basis* of the contribution to knowledge, the research is practice-**based**” (ibid, emphasis in original).

Smith and Dean argue a “bi-directional” and reciprocal relationship between creative practice/work and research in which practice-led research and research-led practice are an interaction and an “interwoven in an iterative cyclic web” (2009, 1–2). In Michal M. Meany and Tom Clark’s ‘Design Dramaturgy: A Case Study in New Media, Humor and Artificial Intelligence’ (2012), they examine this further with Schön’s (1983, 55) concept of ‘reflection in action’ with ‘dramaturgy’, which “offers a technique… to acquire new perspective on the process and practice of making.” Further to Candy’s discussion of practice-led research overlapping with action research theory, in Bob Dick’s *You want to do an action research thesis?*, he claims that action research “is a methodology which has dual aims of action and research” (1993). *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* notes that action research theories and methodologies may be also termed as action inquiry, action science, participatory inquiry, pragmatic action research, participatory action research, and collaborative inquiry (Schwandt 2007, 3).

For action research, Dick divides the definition further into two components as, 1) “action to bring about change in some community or organisation or program”, and/or 2) “research to increase understanding on the part of the researcher or the client, or both (and often some wider community)” (1993). Additionally, Dick examines the action theory definition as: “In both approaches it is possible for action

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\(^{27}\) A complete or in-depth analysis is beyond the scope of this exegesis. Please see Berkeley 2014; Candy 2006; Dick 1993; Haseman 2006; Kolb 1984; Rust, Mottram and Till 2007; Schön 1983 1987; Srivener 2002; Velikovsky 2014.
to inform understanding, and understanding to assist action. For thesis purposes it is as well to choose a form where the research is at least a substantial part of the study. The approach described… tries to assure both action and research outcomes as far as possible. You can modify it in whatever direction best suits your own circumstances” (ibid). Dick states that researchers regard a major characteristic of action research as “cyclic (or a spiral), either explicitly or implicitly. At the very least, intention or planning precedes action, and critique or review follows” (ibid).

Dick stresses that an important feature and a considerable advantage of the spiral technique in action research theory is that it “provides a mix of responsiveness and rigour, thus meeting both the action and research requirements. For some writers, action research is primarily qualitative. Qualitative research can be more responsive to the situation. To my mind a need for responsiveness is one of the most compelling reasons for choosing action research” (ibid). He argues that ‘qualitative measures’ can allow the researcher to address more of what they want to examine.28

In investigating content analysis methodology for the case study and my screenplay analyses, the differences between quantitative research and qualitative research methodologies are already established and legitimate (albeit within its subject field) according to the theorists. In *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry* (Schwandt 2007, 121), a framework(s) for qualitative inquiry “is a configuration of an interrelated set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that comprise of way of viewing reality.” Since this PhD applies “classic context analysis” (Schwandt 2007, 41), I refer to Qualitative Content Analysis, in which Mayring states that “qualitative content analysis consists of maintaining the systematic nature of content analysis for the various stages of qualitative analysis” (cited in Flick et al. 2004, 266) and normally consists of a “system of categories at the centre of the analysis… but this is revised in the course of the analysis by means of feedback loops and is adapted

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28 Dick explains: “When practitioners use action research it has the potential to increase the amount they learn consciously from their experience. The action research cycle can also be regarded as a learning cycle (Kolb, 1984). The educator, Schön (1983, 1987), argues strongly that systematic reflection is an effective way for practitioners to learn. Many practitioners have said to me, after hearing about action research, ‘I already do that’ ” (Dick 1993).
flexibly to the material” (ibid, 269). These further definitions and theories are useful for my understanding of the needs of a creative practitioner, and the acceptable ideas of methods and methodologies.

This PhD incorporates both research-related and practice-related outcomes. Both Candy and Dick state that historically many examiners are likely to suspect action research of being far less rigorous than more conventional research. Hence, Dick suggests to “focus on rigour: on the quality of your data and your interpretations” (1993). Dick highlights that there are several approaches to action research, and that the options of other paradigms and/or methodologies (also within action research) may add value to the qualitative content and analysis (ibid). The spiral technique in action research is important to my method of revising the screenplay, with its cycle of researching, planning, reflecting, etc. before the action of actually revising, and lastly of the critique and review. I have used these theories, which overlap and interconnect—all of which have informed my PhD dissertation and screenplay project.

**Methods for Each Chapter**

**Chapter One and Chapter Two**

Since this dissertation firstly implements the research-led practice methodology, this research investigates the generic elements and conventions of farce in the study of genre, particularly for cinema. I examine the work of theatre theorist, Eric Bentley, in *The Life of the Drama* (1964) and *The Psychology of Farce* (1958), which are regarded as seminal works on farce theory. My aim is to explore, describe and examine the definitions of each of his ten elements and theories about farce. Next, I identify and group the ten elements into smaller, combined structures and conventions of farce theory. This compilation of the search of the literature review informs my dissertation and my screenplay project. Further in-depth analysis on these farce theories is investigated.

To achieve a deeper understanding, I also analyse and compare other farce theorists, Albert Bermel’s *Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen* (1990), Jessica Milner Davis’ *Farce* (2003), and the only farce writing manual, Walter W. Ellis’ *How to Write a Farce* (1943), which was written before Bentley’s farce theories, are used.
to investigate Bentley’s theories against actual theory practice. It is important to note
that Ellis’ book is theatrical based, not cinematically based.

Chapter Three
Along with the research-led practice methodology, this chapter utilises other methods
for the script analysis skill of Bridesmaids, such as ‘The Formalist Approach’ for its
qualitative textual content analysis. In the scholarship of analyzing case studies, I start
with Toward a Dramaturgical Sensibility: Landscape and Journey, in which Geoffrey
S. Proehl argues that writers need both knowledge and an understanding of the script.
He clarifies that “Understanding allows for way of knowing that is deeper, slower,
more holistic. It indicates an approach to analysis that uses as much of the self as
possible, not only the left side of the brain” (2008, 89). I highlight Interpreting the
Play script: Contemplation and Analysis, in which Anne Fliotsos argues that one type
of analysis cannot fit every dramatic work (2011, xiii). Since “there is no single,
foolproof way to approach a text”, she suggests that when responding to a script in
“finding a path to understanding”, one needs to “choose the right tool for the job”
(2011, 101). James Thomas concurs in his Script Analysis For Actors, Directors, and
Designers, as he asserts that “No single method can ever be completely true” as there
are numerous ways to understand a text (2014, xiv).

When one interprets a script, Eugenio Barba cautions, “No true ABC exists. Everyone
has his or hers own and has to invent his or her own first steps. In art, whenever we
find a rule, a principle or an axiom, we are also aware that - in the measure in which it
is true – its opposite is also true” (quoted in Zarrilli xiii; cited in Fliotsos 2011, 101).
However, in Modern Fiction: A Formalist Approach, Harry T. Moore suggests that
the formalist approach is ‘highly valuable’ for script analysts (cited in Hardy 1971,
xii), as well as in The Drama, Theatre and Performance Companion, Michael
Mangan supports that formal analysis can be a ‘powerful tool’ for the literary scholar
as well as the creative artist (2013, 87). And, the formalist analysis has “traditionally
been the Western approach to scripts – compliments of Aristotle, Stanislavski,” et al.
(Fliotsos 2011, 1).

29 Hardy notes: The Formalist Approach was also termed as The New Criticism (1971, 1).
When I researched about analysing case studies for this dissertation, I looked to Thomas as he argues that the formalist analysis can be used as a ‘means of entry’ into a text (2014, xiii). He explains formalist text analysis by starting with the etymology of the word: “Formal is based on the idea of form or shape. The Latin word forma means something that shapes or has been shaped, but especially the shape given to an artistic object. The English word formula is related to it as are conformity, inform, reform, transform, and uniform” (2014, xviii, italics in original). He reports the present definition of formalist analysis: “the search for playable dramatic values that reveal a central unifying pattern which in turn forms or shapes a play from the inside and coordinates all its parts” (ibid). According to Hardy, The Formalist Approach involves two characteristics of the criticism of the written work, which are the “close reading of the text” and a “special set of critical terms - which, [are] more than their underlying theories”, and this leads to “emphasize a more significant characteristic: not “form” merely but meaning through form” (1971, 1, italics in original).

Mangan refers to Thomas (1992) when describing this approach in which the text is broken down into its component part such as given circumstances, plot, character, dialogue, rhythm, etc. - and “each of these is explored in detail through a series of questions” (Mangan 2013, 87). Although Ransom suggests that in a “close reading” of fiction, one does not require a “large acquisition of critical concepts” to be “applied categorically” (cited in Hardy 1971 2; see Ransom’s The New Criticism), these standard system of classification requires an analytic reading of the text, in which Thomas terms as “intellectual attitude” (Thomas 2014, xiii), which he argues that “analytical reading is hard work” and “A professional’s analysis of a play is a long and painstaking process” (2014, xxxi).

Since this is a screenplay case study, I referred to several script analyses books, which were fundamental to my understanding of analysing screenplays. These include Four Screenplays: Studies in the American Screenplay (Syd Field 1994), Screenplay Story

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30 Thomas notes: “the underlying assumption of formalist analysis is that the plays themselves ought to be studied instead of the abstract theories or external circumstances under which they were written” (2014, xviii).

31 Thomas adds that “In fact, a major characteristic of professionals is their recognition of the value of slow, methodical brain work” (2014, xxxi).
Analysis: The Art and Business (Asher Garfinkel 2007), And The Best Screenplay goes to... Learning from the Winners: Sideways, Shakespeare in Love and Crash (Linda Seger 2008), Analysing the Screenplay (Jill Nelmes 2011), and Reading Screenplays: how to analyse and evaluate film scripts (Lucy Sher 2011).

The search for the case study was done on the Internet. I searched under comedy movies, farce movies, IMDb.com, Box Office, etc. The farce comedy screenplay, Bridesmaids (2011), was chosen after I read Bentley’s theories on farce, specifically for farce comedy. I decided on the case study in regard to its farcical elements and similar storyline to my screenplay project, The Wedding Jackpot. Since this PhD project is also to inform the motion picture industry, I have also considered the critical box office component into the final decision for the case study.

The farce theories are tested and applied in order to understand the elements, techniques and mechanics of farce comedy to the case study, Bridesmaids. Questions to test were, ‘How did they do it (write the farce elements)?’, ‘Why did they do it?’, ‘What are the farce element repetitions?’, ‘Any new farce points to be aware of?’ and ‘Are there element groupings in farce?’. The answers will hopefully lead to the ultimate question: how-to-write-a-farce screenplay. According to numerous movie reviews, Bridesmaids has been categorized as a romance, a comedy, a romantic comedy, an anti-romantic comedy, chick flick, raunch(y) comedy, farce, R-rated comedy, and gross-out comedy as well as having slapstick, black comedy, dark comedy, satire, screwball and parody (imdb.com 2013). The application and analysis of each farce element applied to this screenplay will determine which of the farce genre conventions were useful for screenwriting. The conclusion to these questions is to guide in the writing of my own screenplay.

Chapter Four
In the writing process of my screenplay, The Wedding Jackpot, I alternated between analysing theory, analysing Bridesmaids, making/revising story mind maps, a wedding concept visual bulletin board, keeping a dating story file folder, and revising my screenplay as I am reminded of Dallow’s remark that “Art, as Shklovsky observed of the chess knight, does not progress in a straight line (cited in Bordwell, 1991, 274)” (cited in Dallow 2003, 49-50). Reflective research and learning is debated, albeit controversially, such as Schön (1983 and 1987), in which he argues that practitioners
learn best through experience and reflection, and by passing on the information through educating other professionals. Another learning theorist, David A. Kolb (1984), asserts that experiential research and learning promotes practical understanding through a continuous learning cycle. For my own reflective practice, I also adhere to Schön’s concept of reflective practice, it “provides a link between action research and practice-based research. [He] is concerned with an individual’s reflection on his or her own professional practice as distinct from the early forms of action research which were concerned with situations more broadly. The combination of action research and reflective practice is an approach widely adopted in educational research by teacher-researchers who might equally call this form of research ‘practice-led’ ” (cited in Candy 2006).

For this chapter, I implement Dick’s action research theory and methodology, most specifically the spiral technique method. He suggests to “First, use a cyclic (or "spiral") procedure. In the later cycles you can then challenge the information and interpretation from earlier cycles. Both the data you collect, and the literature you read, are part of this. In effect, your study becomes a process of iteration. Within this process you gradually refine your understanding of the situation you are studying” (1993). These approaches all guide in the reflective methodology in the understanding of the study of the farce genre for creative-practice.

After each draft, I would highlight what worked or not, at that given time of my PhD candidature. I found that I kept improving as I delved deeper into the ‘zone’ of creativity. Then, I would review the farce principles again to see what else I could apply to that particular draft. It seemed I had many ‘light bulb’ moments as the drafts increased. I would look at wedding magazines to cut out pictures to add to my wedding concept visual display bulletin board. Sometimes a certain picture would reveal another insight into adding a farce moment, i.e., in one picture, the bridesmaids helped the bride eat cake, and smear it on the groom. I used that inspiration for the wedding preparation dinner scene at the hotel, in which it evolves into a food fight.
Chapter 1 –
Literature Review: The Theorists and Understanding Farce

Introduction
In this research of the study of genre, especially in relation to screenwriting, the literature review highlights a selected body of scholarship relevant to farce comedy for creative practitioners. The chapter is divided into two main sections: the theorists and understanding farce. The first section examines the primary theorists in the field. The key theorists are farce theory experts Eric Bentley, Albert Bermel and Jessica Milner Davis. In the second part, understanding farce is divided into three sections: genre, comedy and farce, in which the farce section has an in-depth literature review from the definition to the dialectic of farce. In the farce literature review, I methodically investigate the generic conventions of farce in order to discover and understand the techniques and mechanics in creating a feature length film screenplay for the current audience as well as a framework for farce screenwriters.32

Part One—The Primary Theorists
Central theorists Eric Bentley (1958, 1964), Albert Bermel (1990) and Jessica Milner Davis (2003) inform my investigation of farce. When Jeffrey D. Mason reviewed Bermel’s farce book, he remarked that “it may not be possible to write such a book at all” (1983, 566), in that a farce book could not be written for the “general reader”.33 In light of Mason’s criticism, farce as a genre for the general public is still accessed in other platforms, such as the silver screen. The principles of farce explored in this research were drawn from Eric Bentley’s ten farce theories as outlined in his book, The Life of the Drama (1964),34 and his critical article, ‘The Psychology of Farce’

32 As stated, this dissertation is limited to farce comedy screenwriting. I have not included a section for the history of farce, as it would be a chapter or a book in itself. There are several books that contain historical farce plays, and their analyses. Please see Bermel’s book (1990) and Davis’ book (2003). I have not included farce in other arts, entertainment and cultural platforms. Please see Bermel's chapter, ‘The Constellation of Farce’ (1990, 418–438).
33 It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to look at every farce book, comedy book, drama book, etc., to verify Mason’s hypothesis.
34 It should be noted that there are other books on farce discussion dated before Bentley’s book (amazon.com; books.google.com). Also, the newer books, such as Jody Enders (2011)
(1958). These principles were used in order to create a framework for the practice of farce screenwriting.35

To highlight why I have chosen these three farce theorists, I look to other commentators that have recognised these theorists’ farce work. Bermel declares that Bentley’s book, *The Life of the Drama*, is the “seminal statement on farce” (1990, 16). He affirms that it influenced his own work, and suggests that it has caused other theorists such as Jessica Milner Davis to take this genre seriously. He praises the book’s ‘Farce’ chapter by claiming that “every page… resonates with wisdom and provocation” (ibid). In John J. McLaughlin’s article, ‘The Future of Farce’ (1970, 734), he declares Bentley’s book as “The best thing that has been written about the psychology of farce.” Jonathan Kalb (2006), professor and theatre critic, considers Bentley’s *The Life of the Drama* to be an “ambitious and penetrating” book as well his most “enduring theoretical” book.

Joan F. Dean advocates Bentley as an especially important critic of farce as a dramatic genre and endorses his article, the “famous defense [sic] of farce, *The Psychology of Farce*” (1982, 482, article title in italics in original). She analyses and highlights Bentley’s argument about the genre’s psychology of the “darker side of human nature” and its “primitive vitality” (1982, 482–83). John Dennis Hurrell claims Bentley’s article, ‘The Psychology of Farce’, as “an admirable essay” (1959, 427). He agrees with Bentley that there are legitimate reasons for the audience’s laughter as a release in farce. Hurrell acknowledges Bentley’s theories about farce’s relevance, and its comments about relationships, human conditions, moral codes and life. In addition, Corrigan writes that Hurrell’s essay is a “valuable response to Eric Bentley’s groundbreaking work on farce” (1981, ix). Joseph Farrell analyses the changing status, merits and definitions of farce, which historically was considered a vulgar and inferior genre (1995, 307). He acknowledges that Bentley is one of the few left who have:

and Roger Foss (2012), are similar to the majority of the other farce genre books; they mostly concentrate on the theatrical of farce (at the time of the PhD dissertation literature search).

35 Please see Appendix B: Matrix—Bentley’s Farce Theories.
devoted serious study to traditional farce to point out that the genre does have its own conventions and mask assumptions. It differs from satire, but in highlighting inappropriate behaviour in public figures or types, it invariably presupposes the existence of a social-moral code of taboos and commandments that could be the target of the satirist (ibid).

Bentley attempts to address questions about the study of drama in this theoretical book on theatre, *The Life of the Drama* (1964). This critical and accomplished literary work delves into theories, mechanics and conventions of the theatre to answer the ultimate question of what makes drama compelling (according to Bentley). His theoretical discussions continuously refer to the actual craft of the theatre along with theories of psychology such as Freud’s theory of laughter (Freud 1960 and 1989).

In Bentley’s book, he categorises and scrutinises the numerous components and conventions of farce’s generic narrative and structure. His evaluation explores the key factors of farce as well as his own insights from being a theatre critic and scholar. His investigation contains examples that are varied and numerous, ranging from the Greeks (i.e., Aristotle, Aristophanes and Plato) to the mid–20th century (i.e., W.C. Fields, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams). The farce chapter is very in-depth and gives value to the so-called ‘low comedy’ (Bentley 1964; Styan 1960). Bentley disputes this labelling of farce, as very often it can be more insightful than high comedy in terms of commentary on human nature, society, culture and civilization (1964, 64).

Bentley’s essay, ‘The Psychology of Farce’, was written in response to the only English theatre encyclopaedia available at that time (*The Oxford Companion to the Theatre*) which defined farce unfavourably and inaccurately, according to Bentley (1958). In his essay, he dissects the definition sentence by sentence. Although he does not dismiss the encyclopaedia’s definition, he challenges and disputes the definition throughout the essay. There are numerous examples for each of the essay’s arguments, which give weight to his rationale and endorsement of the farce genre. He substantiates his logic by citing the literary, cinematic and academic giants such as

36 It should be noted that the current editions of *The Oxford Companion to the Theatre* have substantially revised their entry for ‘farce’, which may have been influenced by Bentley et al.
The Greeks, Bergson, Chaplin, Feydeau, Freud, Labiche, Molière, Shakespeare and Wilde. Some of the arguments in the essay are expanded in his book, *The Life of the Drama*, along with other examples and theorists. As Bentley argues in support of farce throughout the essay, he often cites Freud in regard to psychological theories especially about humour. The essay starts off with negating the encyclopaedia’s definition and ends with an analysis into human nature. It follows logically and builds upon the argument for farce convincingly. Bentley’s relevance is manifold for this creative practice PhD. His theories lay the foundation for my six principles for farce screenwriting, in which his initial investigation into genres unpack deeper scholastic insight into human nature. His theories also guide storytellers, especially with structure, which is pertinent in screenwriting.

The 2003 (revised) version of Jessica Milner Davis’ *Farce* builds on the 1978 original, especially in terms of the discussion of plot. It is noteworthy that this is the first book solely dedicated to the study of farce after Bentley’s book, *The Life of the Drama* (1964). Rishel claims *Farce* to be an “exceptional book” (2005, 419). Rishel commends Davis for being objective and scientific:

> Her analysis is keenly perceptive, complex and valid. The book does not avoid complication and, in farce directly points out potential inconsistencies when it describes farcical structures which become the voice for drama other than farce (2005, 421).

Jody Enders suggests that Davis’ farce theories and analyses would be greatly beneficial for directors and actors seeking farce historical plays compared to other works on the same topic, such as Allardyce Nicoll in *World Drama* (1949) (Enders 2011, 7–8). This book is an in-depth academic analytical criticism in favour of the literary genre of farce. Davis argues that not only is farce a worthy and essential companion to tragedy and comedy, but it contains components that are common to other genres as well as other sub-genres of comedy. However, she also stresses that farce is important and distinct enough to stand on its own, separate from the other genres.

When defining farce, Davis scrutinises the factors and rules of farce, both historically and currently, for different countries. According to Davis, this ‘elusive’ genre is
difficult to define and encapsulate due to farce blending and merging with and into other genre territories. Leslie Smith argues that Davis has “rebutted some of the sillier generalizations” in her study of farce (1989, ix). This examination of farce is heavily plot-focused in her book. Further to this discussion, melodrama and farce are ‘plot driven’, while tragedy and comedy are ‘character driven’, as Jerome Stolnitz states, “In comedy and tragedy, by contrast to melodrama and farce, character is integral to action. Indeed the action is mainly constituted by the unfolding of character as the protagonist attempts to meet the exigencies of circumstance” (Stolnitz 1955, 58).

Davis defines, classifies and categorises the traditional plots of farce (i.e., rebellion, revenge and coincidence). The newer edition evaluates those plots with more insight and theoretical methodology citing the elements and conventions of farce (i.e., timing, counterplot, circular). She analyses farce’s components of characterisation, characters and masks throughout its history in alignment with the investigation of the plots and plot devices. She questions the ‘improbable situational plots’ (fantasy) in farce as the all-encompassing element (i.e., farce as plot driven), saying that the actors still have to be as realistic/naturalistic/humanistic in their acting skills, to make the play believable and make the audience still feel safe in what they are feeling and/or reacting. The book contains numerous examples from The Greeks to the late 20th century farces such as Mr. Bean and Fawlty Towers to support her observations and theories.

Davis’ main purpose is to “illuminate the essential differences between basic farce (what many critics and popular usage might call ‘low comedy’) and other forms, or moods, to styles of comedy, such as satire and romantic comedy, absurdism [sic] (sometimes called ‘metaphysical’ farce, or ‘intellectual’ farce) and ‘black’ or gallows humor” (2003, ix). Davis’ theories are relevant since they directly speak of structure, which is the foundation of screenwriting. Her numerous play analyses provide deeper insight into how the past farceurs designed their stories. I took this knowledge gained from Davis’ authorial and reliable interrogation of farce, and the application of her findings further validated the farce workings of the creative practice.

Albert Bermel dedicates his book, Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen (1990), to both Eric Bentley and Stanley Kauffman, the latter a respected
American theatre critic. The original title, *Farce: the Complete and Definitive Account of One of the World’s Funniest Art Forms*, was first published in 1982. According to Davis (2003, 163), “After Eric Bentley, it is Albert Bermel who has contributed most in our time to the rehabilitation of farce.” Bermel’s book is a chronological historical study of farce, dating back to the classical Greeks and to the late 20th century. He incorporates a catalogue of work (i.e., plays, films, music, etc.) with an in-depth insightful and applied analysis, often including examples of tangential farce modes such as cartoons. His expansive definitions and terminologies of farce also consider how the genre merges with others.

The latter half of the book concentrates on the film industry (concurrently with plays), which is relevant to this research. Davis asserts, “One of the major contributions of Albert Bermel’s book on *Farce* (1990) is to extend his insights to the genre as it takes shape in film” (2003, 180). Stephen A. Fulchino remarks that the book has “value”, and that “Research collections in film and theater will want this book” (1982, 550–51). Bermel’s investigation into farce in the motion picture industry is well handled and the analyses address the farce progression in a rational manner. His analyses are drawn out in a continuous, layered account that is easy to follow. Mason acknowledges that Bermel’s book “brings a tremendous amount of material into view,” and “it certainly establishes the territory for anyone proposing to study the subject” (1983, 566). He endorses Bermels’ enquiry into the four kinds of farce (i.e., fantasy, realism, theatricalism [sic] and the well-made play) and argues the “idea is provocative” (ibid). Bermel’s examination of farce in moving pictures is a core in this PhD dissertation. The numerous film examples unpack the farce principles, which also highlight farce’s influence in the storytelling. His relevance is noteworthy in that his investigation adds to the understanding of designing farce stories, and what farce elements screenwriters can use.
Part Two—Understanding Farce

Genres

Don't classify me, read me. I'm a writer, not a genre.
Carlos Fuentes

A text cannot belong to no genre, it cannot be without a genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genre-less text.
Jacques Derrida

In the etymological lexicon of media scholarship, this research investigates genre analysis in cinematic terms as well as in literature and theatre. In this section, the definitions and details of genre, comedy and farce will be given briefly. I take note here of Ken Dancyger’s theory that “Genre is perhaps the most misunderstood of narrative tools” (cited in Nelmes 2011, 106). Genre literally means ‘kind’, ‘sort’ or ‘type’ in French (Graves and Engle 2006, xii; Mangan 2013, 174; Sanders 2009, 7; Scher 2011, 13), while John Truby reports that genre may be a particular kind of story form (2008, 319), and Lucy Scher remarks that genre also categorises the style of story (2011, 13). Dyer explains that genres are “groupings of works recognised as being alike,” but also includes other terms for groupings such as ‘cycles’ or ‘formulas’ (2007, 35).

Next, Steve Neale reports that the study of cinematic genres began in the 1960s (2000, 1), but John Sanders (2009, 7) notes that genre study has a long history in literature and may be dated back as far as Aristotle’s Poetics. To confuse matters, Styan states that this practice of genre analysis may have begun during Shakespeare’s time when “Measure for Measure was pigeon-holed a comedy, Troilus and Cressida a tragedy and Henry IV a history” (1960, 254–55). Discussions of genre classification have also opened up the debate about creativity and expansion. According to Sanders, the study of genre has revealed it is a “flexible and ever-growing field that is forever open to interpretation” (2009, 7). Further as a creative practitioner, I look to...

37 ‘Cinema’ is used as an umbrella term here, and will also apply to the films, movies, small screen (i.e., TV) and motion picture industry. The word ‘film’ is interchangeable with the word ‘movie’, for the purposes of this dissertation.
Dancyger’s idea of “how flexible and useful genre can be in the writing of a screenplay” (cited in Nelmes 2011, 106).

In the discussion of the number of genres, it underscores the idea of genre’s flexibility for the screenwriter to consider. The precise number of genres is debated, though theorists suggest there are between two to five primary genres. The different genres being: tragedy, comedy, melodrama, farce and tragicomedy. Corrigan argues that the ‘forms’ are markedly different, and thus “we have no trouble distinguishing among them” (1981, 222). However, Dancyger argues, “Genres are not fixed forms” (in Nelmes 2011, 122). To qualify this rigidity and the resultant debate, Anne Fliotsos offers that while “most modern writers do not concern themselves with purity of genre, historical playwrights often did” (2011, 43). Perhaps as a caution to the modern screenwriter, though, Bermel suggests that no film or play belongs to one genre exclusively (1990, 52), and that “No [single] genre sustains itself consistently through a work” (ibid, 64).

Perhaps most importantly for this research, Bermel offers that farce either “infringes” on other genres (ibid, 15) or is “invaded by other genres” (ibid, 61). Due to farce’s being “less consistent” and having a “better absorption” interaction nature, he adds that farce can “animate other kinds of dramas” and vice versa (ibid, 52). He explains, “when we say that a work is a farce we mean that the farcical effects predominate,” and that there are “shifting connections” between the genres “without fixed definition or domain… combining their individual qualities without surrendering them” (ibid, 52, italics in original). In agreement, Truby claims that most stories in novels, plays and movies are “founded on at least one genre, and are usually a combination of two or three” (2008, 319). Similarly, several online dictionaries have explained and/or

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38 Historically, theatre was commonly categorised as two genres, drama and comedy, or tragedy and comedy from Aristotle’s time. In certain theatre, drama and motion picture industry circles, it still continues, i.e., The Golden Globe Awards, for their TV category, differentiates ‘drama’ from ‘comedy’, and for the motion picture category, ‘drama’ and ‘comedy or musical’ (in lieu of only ‘comedy’).

39 However, Truby also states, “You tell a great story without using any genre at all” (2008, 319). As a caveat, this may be a ‘problematic quote’, and needs to be ‘balanced’ against Hans Robert Jauss’ ‘Horizons of Expectation’ theory, which is a literary theory; ‘If the writer is the first audience of a work, part of the reception of the work will be based on its genre.’ According to The Dictionary of Theories (2002, 258), “It refers to the mental set or
categorised farce as a comedy and/or without specifically noting it as a genre. This reflects current usage and understanding of farce, in which there still remains an ambiguity and uncertainty about how farce should be understood and defined.

Next, the discussion of story structure stresses another uncertainty related to genre, especially since screenplays focus on structure. I start with Eli Rozik, who identifies that the term ‘drama’ has multiple meanings; first, as a theatrical play and/or performance, and second as “serious fictional worlds that cannot be classified in the usual generic terms of ‘comedy’, ‘tragedy’, ‘farce’ and ‘melodrama’ ” in regard to the theory of theatre, which can be viewed as ‘true to life’ (2011, 15). This dissertation uses both definitions and clarifies the term when needed. Despite “film drama” being different from the play and considered by some to be “superior”, Styan declares the “method of film structure” is the same for all ‘drama’ (1960, 287). Similarly, Rozik states that according to Aristotle’s and Georg Wilhem Friedrich Hegel’s discussions of dramatic theory, the “structures of action are shared by all genres” (Rozik 2011, 16 and 75). However, in analysing structures into categories, Northrop Frye argues, “The structure of the play in its turn depends on the category of the play; if it is a comedy, its structure will require a comic resolution and a prevailing comic mood” (1957, 171–72). There may not be a definite structure for farce, but since the PhD creative artefact is a farce comedy screenplay, I adhere to Frye’s argument about the ‘comic mood’ in the writing of The Wedding Jackpot.

predisposition that readers bring to a work of art, formed through their previous experiences of genre and style, and their beliefs and assumptions about meanings likely to be encoded in a particular species of work. The horizon of expectations differs in different periods and cultures.”

40 The Collins Dictionary (2014) states that the second definition of farce is “the genre of comedy represented by works of this kind.” The Oxford English Dictionary (2014) notes it as “That species of the drama which is constituted by such works.” Macquarie Dictionary (2014) reports it as “that branch of drama which is concerned with this form of composition.” The Chambers Dictionary (2014) defines farce as “comedies of this type.”

41 Please see Appendix C: Northrop Frye’s Five Basic Narrative Modes.

42 I did not investigate if there was a structure for farce tragedy. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation. As noted elsewhere in this dissertation, there are several suggestions for farce story structures, such as the well-made play and Freytag’s pyramid structure or alternatively, called his 5-act structure, which could be applied to other genres as well.
Specific film genre analysis is the focus of this research, in which “Genre is a well-established technical term in the film industry” (Scher 2011, 13). Historically, in investigating the structure for plays and films, Daniel López reports that the early filmmakers used stories and subject matter already known—then later improved them, created variations or invented new story angles—in which many of the films were very similar to each other therefore, they started falling into types (1993, xxi). In Frank Beaver’s Dictionary of Film Terms (2006, 113), genre is “A term for any group of motion pictures which express similar stylistic, thematic, and structural interests.” Thus the reverse has now occurred as Sanders observes that genre and its form suggests a template for the filmmaker as a foundation that has already been established (2009, 8), which can also be said for genre screenwriting. Similar to the other theatrical and literary theorists, López declares that each film genre distinctly shares similar elements, components, features, iconography and traits with other films, which are easily recognisable and belongs to one particular group of films or genre (1993, 129). Mark A. Graves and Frederick Bruce Engle argue that the most recognisable features in a genre are the “stock characters, typical plot structures, principal conflicts or issues examined in the genre and/or the predominant mood or attitude expressed in film in that category” (2006, xiv). Furthermore, López argues that convention and formula are the foundation of genre films (1993, 129). Dyer points out that, for example, a Western is like other Westerns, therefore “genre production is a species of evident imitation, of making something and receiving something like something else because it is like something else” (2007, 35). Hence, I refer to Beaver for further consideration in my investigation of farce for screenwriting, as he asserts that:

By isolating the various filmic elements which characterize a particular motion-picture genre, it is possible to employ those elements in evaluating a film that falls significantly within a genre. Through an examination of the manner in which the recognizable generic elements have been copied or varied, genre criticism seeks to determine how the film’s thematic intentions have been achieved (2006, 113).

I approach this research with the idea that “There are, and always will be, many exceptions raised to all the points discussed in relation to film, storytelling and genres” (Scher 2011, 16). Since this study is aimed within the framework for
screenwriting, Sanders (2009, 7-8) reports that genre is used by Hollywood and the motion picture industry to produce, market and sell to the mass market. In regard to genre classification and audience expectation, Hollywood movies have been criticised for being formulaic in telling stories which fall into broad categories, which audiences know, expect and identify film template genres when they go to the cinema (Dancyger, cited in Nelmes 2011, 122; Graves and Engle 2006, xi; Mangan 2013, 174; Sanders 2009, 8). Styan remarks that dramatists work in a play’s “convention” which the audience takes for granted (1960, 188). However, the use of genre is “not a method that should result in making films formulaic. Genre is about understanding that films are integral to our storytelling tradition and we all need stories to help us make sense of our lives” (Scher 2011, 28). This study depicts and shows genre as a useful tool for screenwriting, albeit, still mindful of the ‘formulaic’ conventions that could be interrogated if used as a guide for the screenwriter.

Although, film genre research theories have been debated amongst critics, academia and amateur movie buffs, often with contrasting views such as defining a genre and the limitations of genres (Beaver 2006, 113; Graves and Engle 2006, xii–xiv; López 1993, 129; Sanders 2009, 7-10), I look to address genre specifically for screenwriting. In the scholarship of genre screenwriting, the “purpose of any discussion” of genre is not necessarily “to find unity and precise definitions” (Scher 2011, 16), but for genre to provide “a means of categorizing a script based on its tone, concept, and content” (Garfinkel 2007, 57). Genre as a discourse provides a ‘framework’ for screenwriters to establish and structure their stories, with an a [sic] deeper understanding to “what the story should mean, why it should mean that, and how that meaning is established through the choice of character/s and events” (Scher 2011, 15–16, italics in original).

**Comedy**

You can tell how smart people are by what they laugh at.  
Tina Fey

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43 See also Hans Robert Jauss' 'Horizons of Expectation’ literary theory; his discussion of genre.
In order to discuss farce, comedy must be addressed in this dissertation, albeit briefly and centred towards screenwriting. Comedy has been both defined as a genre and as a non-genre—its definition, limitations and categorisation have divided film genre theorists, as well as theorists of theatre, literature and the visual arts. Firstly, in this literature review of comedy, Baker remarks that comedy theories (along with tragedy) have been extensively discussed and analysed although with theoretical disagreements, but the “major premises and arguments are familiar” (1981, 1). To explain further, Bentley states:

Theorists have thought out all manner of quasi-final definitions of comedy. The procedure is either to legislate a priori, ‘The essence of comedy is A, B, and C,’ or to generalize from a particular school of practice - the one the theorist likes best - and to say: ‘The essence of comedy is D, E, and F.’ Both methods give an assured answer, and that is a sufficient reason for adopting neither (1967, 127, italics in original).

However, this dissertation continues with the literature review in regard to what is commonly considered and acknowledged in the comedy genre. This examination clarifies such meanings to contribute to the analysis of the screenplay case study and in the process of writing my own screenplay. In the historical realm, López declares that “There is no formal body of theoretical works or poetics explaining the nature of comedy as there is, for instance, for tragedy” (1993, 55). Additionally, Rozik acknowledges that since Aristotle’s *Poetics*, analysts have attempted to demonstrate that comedy has a “particular and typical fictional structure” especially in comparison to any shared structural traits to tragedy (2011, 62). Furthermore, Bentley affirms that there is little known information about Aristotle’s theory of comedy with “the few remarks on comedy in the *Poetics* scarcely amount to a theory at all” (1953, 158). In *Poetics* (c.335 BC), Aristotle states, “Comedy has had no history, because it was not first treated seriously. It was late before the Archon granted a comic chorus to a poet; the performers were till then voluntary. Comedy had already taken definite shape when comic poets, distinctively so called, are heard of” (*Poetics* V, 2–3, cited in Halliwell 1998, 36). Moreover, in *The Cambridge Introduction to Comedy*, Eric Weitz argues that the understanding, analysis and appreciation of comedy especially from other places and other times “is owed at least in part to the fact that some patterns can still be seen to betray their roots in past practices” (2009, 39).
Historically, comedy has its roots several thousand years ago, and continues to be both debated and enjoyed. With this understanding, it is clear why it remains a popular genre for screenwriters and audiences alike.

In the discussion of the divided theories of the expansion of the comedy genre and its subsequent categorisations, this highlights the confusion and differentiation of farce as a separate genre or a sub-category of comedy. To start, Corrigan considers comedy the most “complex of all dramatic forms” (1981, 5). Additionally, Styan argues, “comedy is the largest and most inclusive of dramatic genres” (1972, 236). Rozik concurs and acknowledges that other (comedy) genres are “usually perceived as different, which, according to the definition, should be seen as subspecies ‘comedy’ ” (2011, 116). He elaborates that comedy spans from “the unbridled nature of farce to the romantic atmosphere of Shakespearean comedy; from humorous narratives to satiric and even grotesque ones; and from literary fiction to cinema, not to mention obvious misapplications of this generic term” (2011, 1). Since the motion picture industry categorises movies by genres, López suggests that comedy, in which the sub-genres are vast, can be thought of as a “mega-genre, it is better to define comedy in terms of comic form including many possible types or variants. This does not prevent the categorization of different types of comedy (slapstick, screwball comedy, comedy of manners, parody) as subgenre of the mega-genre, or genre of their own if there is a large body of films that share similar characteristics” (1993, 55). Having an understanding of the landscape of comedy is relevant for the screenwriter if they straddle between writing comedy versus farce.

For screenwriting theorists who adamantly stress that comedy has sub-genres, Truby argues that the seven sub-genres or seven major comedy stories all fall under the main genre of comedy, such as farce, romantic comedy and black comedy, which have their own distinctive story structure. In line with Truby, Dancyger notes the subgenres of comedy as character comedy, farce, romantic comedy, satire, screwball comedy and situation comedy; in which, the ‘subcategories’ have “different shapes, tones and character arcs,” but he stresses that “The overly general description is not terribly

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44 According to Truby, the other major comedy stories are action comedy, buddy picture, satire and the traveling angel (Truby.com; johntrubysscreenwriting.blogspot.com).
useful to the writer facing the writing challenge” in his screenwriting essay (in Nelmes 2011, 106). This PhD dissertation reflects Dancyger’s statements that the ‘general description’ for farce principles is limited for screenwriters, and it is this observation that as a creative practitioner, a farce study was conducted in order to guide my screenwriting. The initial debate of defining, as per previously categorising comedy, starts with Aristotle’s *Poetics* as he states that comedy:

> is a representation of inferior people, not indeed in the full sense of the word bad, but the laughable is a species of the base or ugly (or the Ludicrous being merely a subdivision of the ugly). It consists in some blunder (or defect) or ugliness that does not cause pain or disaster, an obvious example being the comic mask which is ugly and distorted but not painful (*Poetics* V, 1, cited in Butcher 1951, 21).

It should be noted here, again, that Aristotle’s discussion is linking character to comedy, as similar to his linking of character to tragedy. Of course, farce has characters, but they are driven by ‘plot’ events rather than by ‘character defects’. Additionally, in comparing comedy to farce, many principles overlap, as Styan argues that “The classical intention of comedy is to chasten morals with ridicule and gently chide us for our human mistakes” (1972, 236), thus defining comedy as “drama inducing thoughtful laughter” (ibid, 419). Moreover, in analysing structures and themes, Rozik states that “Comedy often presupposes the rules underlying a convention in order to thwart them. Such a procedure is intended to arouse laughter” (2011, 53).

In a further contrast of comedy and farce, I briefly look at genre hierarchy. I start with the traditional genres of comedy and tragedy, with their respective higher and lower form designations, and theorists’ discussions that have revolved around the aims of comedy and what it means.45 In furthering this argument of the differences of purpose and themes between the two genres, the core of the examination’s foundation lies in relation to the human beings’ psychological journey. Historically, as a fundamental theme, Aristotle argues, “Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy [aims]

45 Dyer states, “Pastiche is to be found throughout the Western cultural tradition, high, middle and low” (2007, 131).
as better than in actual life” (Poetics II, 1 and 4, cited in Butcher 1951, 13). Furthermore, Bentley states that the higher forms, comedy and tragedy, are differentiated from the lower forms, farce and melodrama, due to their “respect for reality” (1964, 257). For this context, Bentley defines ‘higher’ as it “signifies adult, civilized, healthy”, whereas the ‘lower’ “signifies childish, savage, sick” (ibid).

However, in not basing this differentiation on upper or lower status, Bentley also notes, “the lower forms are not excluded by the higher; they are transcended by them” (ibid). Styan’s distinction is more absolute as he defines high comedy as “sophisticated comedy of intellect and high society”, and low comedy as “unsophisticated farcical comedy” (1972, 420). Nevertheless, in contrast to other theorists, in Aesthetics (c.1818), German philosopher, Hegel (1770–1831) argues that comedy takes art to its limit in which its “dissolution of art” suggests this is the highest aesthetic manifestation of freedom in art (not including philosophy and religion) (cf. 1975, 1236). In essence, Bentley notes that “In comedy, we see and criticize man’s life; in tragedy, we sense and appraise his fate” (1967, 33). This principle of criticising ‘man’s life’ is one of my six principles of farce. This is relevant to this research because an understanding of society and psychology is necessary in writing farce. A screenwriter relates the function of ‘critique’ to the function of world of the farce story.

Thus, in combination with the analyses of the above theorists, Rozik suggests that comedy “refers to a fictional world characterized by an archetype structure of action; a lowly mode, regardless of class; a comic mood; and optimal comic laughter” (2011, 116). In this investigation of the comedy genre, and its expansion and impact, Styan suggests that “The twentieth-century theatre… The success of the new comedy would rest upon our exceptional ‘suspension of disbelief’ if the fusion was to occur, just in neo-impressionistic art the pointillist anticipated that small splashed of pure unmixed colour would blend behind the eye to create a consistent effect of extraordinary vividness and luminosity, if the spectator stood far enough away” (1962, 127–8). Additionally, Styan’s evolutionary, philosophical and psychoanalytical analysis of

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46 For further investigation, please see Fry’s essay, Comedy (1951), and Hegel’s Aesthetic (c.1818; cf. 1975, 1236).
genre for the theatre can be applied to the motion picture industry. Although Muddle recommends that, “new writers tackle comedy” (Muddle 1911, cited in Bailey 2015, 218), in contrast, others go by the often quoted phrase, “Dying is easy, comedy is hard.” It is with this thought, if one still ventures into writing in this genre, it is with great admiration that they achieve more than what is ‘hard’ with writing comedy, to go beyond what other writers will not or cannot do to pass over the hurdle of comedy.

Farce

Well, there are times when one would like to hang the whole human race and finish the farce.
Mark Twain

Farce is nearer tragedy in its essence than comedy is.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Table Talk, entry for 25 August.
(Published: in 1835)

This dissertation centres on farce theory for creative practitioners, with the key focus on writing a farce comedy screenplay. Theorists have noted the challenges in defining specific terms in the literature, theatre and cinema fields, with added recognition of analysing the contrasting and contradictory viewpoints. In this discourse of farce theories, according to the two drama theorists, Styan (1960) and Bentley (1964), farce can be found in both comedy and tragedy. Since I will be writing a farce comedy screenplay, I will focus on farce comedy technical and structure theories. I look to McLaughlin’s theory that farce may be the “most maligned of all dramatic genres”, however it is the “most directly cathartic of all literary genres” (1970, 729) and his prediction that in the future, it will be appreciated as much as the other genres. In the investigation, the different theories highlight Michael Mangan’s statement that there is no “Strict generic definition of the form” (2013, 180). Hence, this PhD

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47 This phrase is often attributed to Jack Lemmon due to popular folklore, but there is no concrete evidence of this exact phrase. There are many different versions and many similar versions. (http://quoteinvestigator.com/2010/10/26/comedy-is-hard/).
48 Analysing both farce comedy and farce tragedy theories with both types of farce case studies (i.e., a farce comedy screenplay analysis and a farce tragedy screenplay analysis) is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
49 In this dissertation, I do not analyse his prediction, as of the year 2016.
attempts to shed light with the farce principal analyses and to assist screenwriters who would venture to write farce.\textsuperscript{50}

The discussion of farce, its categorisations, definitions, justifications and impact, is varied and inexact. Andrew Wyllie claims that the “authorities present a bewildering range of often conflicting and frequently unilluminating [sic] definitions of what farce is” (2009, 113). In his book, Georges Feydeau and the Aesthetics of Farce, Baker states that farce had “rarely been subjected to theoretical analysis” compared to the more respected dramatic genres of comedy and tragedy (1981, 1). As a retort to Baker’s comments, Enders dissects numerous definitions and meanings of farce as a genre, giving space to many contrasting views (2013, 21–32). Since Baker’s time, there have been more farce theoretical analyses from academics, scholars, reporters, critics, reviewers, et al.,\textsuperscript{51} but fewer from a moving pictures point of view, especially screenwriting.

Firstly, Wyllie remarks, “The term farce is itself fraught with difficulty” (2009, 113). To highlight Wyllie’s assessment, I start with López as he stresses that farce is “not easy to define”, although notes farce as a “comedy form” (1993, 108–9); similarly, Wyllie categorises the term farce as a play that is comic (2009, 113). We will see why Sören Aabye Kierkegaard’s\textsuperscript{52} statements about the difficulty of explaining or defining farce with “Every attempt at an aesthetic definition founders upon the farce” rings true (Kierkegaard 1942, 51; in Wyllie 2009, 113). Michael Arditti states that, “Of all theatrical terms, farce is the one used most loosely—and cynically” (i.e., to re-assure audiences that a play is funny) (1996, 1). Ray Cooney highlights that farce “covers a wide area” and if at a certain point, “ ‘Comedy’ becomes ‘Farce’ and, having become ‘Farce’, it then flows into several farcical tributaries” (2014a). This may account for

\textsuperscript{50} It should be noted that there are other considerations for screenwriters of farce to keep in mind besides the farce tropes, such as the ‘different relationship’ between the audience and the farcical victims that is created by the ‘intimacy’ of the screen, and that the ‘condensed’ plots are less appropriate to motion pictures (perhaps with the exception of animated shorts).

\textsuperscript{51} L.C. Knights had concluded that the lack of farce theories would be a “boon to farce criticism” (in Baker’s Georges Feydeau and the Aesthetics of Farce, 1981, 1.) With further footnotes: “Notes on Comedy,” in Comedy: Meaning and Form, Robert W. Corrigan (ed.).

\textsuperscript{52} Some notes in regard to Sören Aabye Kierkegaard. The alternate spelling of Kierkegaard’s first name is Søren. For Repetition, Kierkegaard’s pseudonym is Constantin Constantius.
why Bermel refuses to “deliver a formal definition of farce”, in which he states definitions are very restrictive and exclusive, even with qualifying clauses, and farce is “by its very nature inclusive and expansive” (1990, 9). Accordingly, several online dictionaries report that farce has had several definitions (both in usage and obsolete) throughout the centuries. This difficulty of defining farce is highlighted and the lack of precise definitions has been noticed in the various writing and screenwriting books.

Furthermore, to add to the confusion, Styan states that farce is a separate genre from comedy, and then declares that farce “is to be found at the root of all comedy” (1972, 196; my italics). In Nicoll’s *Masks, Mimes and Miracles* (1963), he regards farce an ‘essential component of a good comedy’ (cited in Davis 2003, 73), as he explains that the “rough physical framework provides an excellent skeleton for comedy’s richer qualities,” and without it, there is a danger of becoming “too delicate and too refined for theatre’s daily food” (Nicoll 1962, 88, cited in Davis 2003, 73.) The theatrical theorists differ from the cinematic theorists in which they consider farce as a major genre, while the latter group’s disagreement of farce’s classification suggests that genre clarification is not in accordance in the theory of cinematic genre study, nor to screenwriting.

In creating the framework, the investigation entails the dictionary origin (i.e., Latin) to the fusion of farce meanings. The theorists and dictionaries give different definitions for farce; highlighting López’s statement that farce is difficult to define. In *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth Century Theatre* (2002, 269), Strang states that the term farce, “derived from the Latin word ‘to stuff’ ”, means to stuff or to fill the story. Similarly in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2014), the first definition of farce means to stuff, to fill in, to cram full of, to pack something such as in meat (force-meat) [sic], in cooking or the stomach. While the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2014), goes further in defining the first definition of farce with “improve by stuffing” and/or “savoury stuffing”. This suggests that screenwriters could stuff their stories

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53 There are numerous online and hard copy dictionaries with slightly different definitions of farce. An in-depth analysis is beyond this dissertation.
54 For historical farce definitions and references, see Arditti 1996, 1; Bermel 1990, 61; Davis 2003, 74, 82 and 143; Ellis 1948; Hickling 2003; Mangan 2013, 82 and 170.
in writing farce as per the past farceurs, who had achieved this ‘stuffing’ device in farce (Bermel 1990: Davis 2003).

In Bentley’s essay, ‘The Psychology of Farce’ (1958), it highlights the confusion of defining farce. Bentley attacks the only English encyclopaedia of theatre’s [at the time of printing] article on farce. In the next chapter, I deconstruct some of Bentley’s analysis and relate it to screenwriting. The aforementioned farce encyclopaedia definition is:

*Farce*, an extreme form of comedy in which laughter is raised at the expense of probability, particularly by horseplay and bodily assault. It must, however, retain its hold on humanity, even if only in depicting the grosser faults of mankind; otherwise it degenerates into travesty and burlesque… In modern usage, the word farce is applied to a full-length play dealing with some absurd situation hinging generally on extra-marital relations—hence the term bedroom farce. Farce has small literary merit, but great entertainment value, and owing to its lack of subtlety can be translated from one language to another more easily than comedy (cited in Bentley 1958, vii).

Taking note of Bermel’s belief that “farce is better described than defined” (1990, 9) especially in regard to screenwriting, the other theorists debate this genre’s nature. In regard to the actual workings of farce and its aims, Styan argues that farcical elements are not only “difficult to perform, but it also eludes analysis”, but notes that it does not elude analysis of its “mechanical plot and characterization”, which he considers “generally implausible anyway and arguably the least of importance to its effect” (1975, 77). In contrast to Styan’s argument, the relevance of examining the plot and characterisation is highly relevant to screenwriting, especially considering that plot mechanisms are difficult in farce. And, perhaps, which could be conferred as one of the foundations of farce’s ‘effect’.

As noted by Styan, R.J. Cardulla remarks that farce is a “comedy of situation as opposed to character” (2015, 192), in which Wyllie concurs, “characterization, as oppose to caricaturization [sic], is relatively unimportant” (2009, 113). In a French
handbook on literary practice,\(^5\) it notes “The subject [of farce] must be merry and laughable; there are neither scene divisions nor pauses. It should be noted that there is no less science in knowing how to make a good farce than an eclogue or a morality [play]” (cited in Davis 2003, 78–79). Baker adds that traditional farce can be described as “frivolous devotion to amusement and its apparent irrationality” (1981, 1). These analyses guide the screenwriter to understand and clarify the inner workings of writing a farce story, in which the historical recommendations and standards reveal farce’s inner dynamics.

The understanding of the structure of farce is important for screenwriting practice. Previous farceurs analysed the challenges of story mechanisms for writing a farce story, which can be hidden and difficult to even decipher. Historically, theorists understood the difference of farce written and farce performed, as Francisque Sarcey, the 19th century critic argues that, “All farces congeal when they are transferred from the stage to a cold description of them” (cited in Styan 1977, 77). Similarly, in the introduction to Feydeau’s *Théâtre Complet*, Marcel Achard (1899–1974), the French farceur playwright, advocates the same view as he compares farce to “somewhat like being in the position of the clockmaker who has to dismantle the carillon on the Strasbourg cathedral” (ibid). Cardullo concurs as farce’s “intricately connected plots” are like “well-oiled machines” (2015, 192). Davis stresses farce is not only a demanding and challenging style, but requires the premium mastery of the dramatist’s ‘visual imagination’ such as the ‘precise machinery of a complex display of fireworks’ of the likes of the past farceur Feydeau (2003, 82–83). Similarly, in Daniel Binns’ research of narrative game theory, the complexities of structure are multi-levels, multi-patterns and multi-progressions (2013, 2–4), and can be applied to farce. This complexity of structure is an intricate component of understanding farce when creating the story. The screenwriter designs the story knowing that it takes into account the different layers and levels that are required in farce.

In why farce is difficult to grasp and why it is unacknowledged, Styan investigates that the degree of styling in farce is “inseparable from its working, and it is this key

element which is hardest to recognize in reading and all but impossible to describe. The usual critical tools do not help, and our ignorance of its true mechanism—the way it energizes the audience—may be the reason why we undervalue it” (1975, 78). The text in farce can be debated in regard to its impact on the message, the acting and the impact on the audience. If a text has subtle or nuance description as opposed to pushing enhanced performances, can it still be played at an extreme farce level?

When it comes to analysing farce between the performance versus the text, Wyllie reports that “There is a longstanding and widely held view that performance and immediate visual impact operate in farce at the expense of its content”, and questions “whether the textual content of a farce is capable of surviving its performance” (2009, 114). Cooney stresses, “Farces have to be performed not read. The audience is always the missing ingredient. This is who they are written for” (2014a). In light of this, I endeavour to continue my investigation for the purposes of writing my farce screenplay, and with the aim of informing farce writers with the findings into the actual process of the writing itself. Although, albeit the concerns of the text, whether it can be effectively impacted, the screenwriter’s goal is to bring to light their farce story in a way that speaks to the reader to go beyond the page.

The screenwriter also takes into account the actual story, and how far to push the content. According to Tyrone Guthrie, he declared that theatre was most interesting “not the nearer it approaches ‘reality’, but the farther it retreated into its own sort of artifice” (1959, 180), which in accordance with farce, characterises the extreme nature of this genre. In analysing farce as the extreme opposite of tragedy, Bentley states that farce is “the antithesis of serious, which is not easily put to serious uses” (1967, 140). In acknowledging the humour element, Styan defines farce as the “drama of laughably improbable situations” (1972, 419) as he asserts further that farce “properly ridicules life itself by using absurd characters in absurd situations. It is quite without dignity and quite amoral; it unashamedly sets out only to win our laughter” (ibid, 196). Furthermore, noting farce’s element of its mocking intentions, López notes, “farce seeks to disconcert and produce laughter by auditory, visual, and physical means. It thrives on insults and humiliations, engages in outrageous behaviour, and its characters frequently find themselves in ludicrous situations. It is often illogical, and does not respect social conventions” (1993, 108–9). Depending on the screenwriters’
intentions, the story can centre on affecting the audience’s reactions by going to the extreme in farce.

In current film genre theory books and encyclopaedias, the definition of farce is diverse. Graves and Engle describe farce as both physical comedy and slapstick in which it is “fast-paced… and sight gags predominate” (2006, 30). Susan Hayward mentions farce along with sight gags, screwball and romantic comedy (2006, 90–92). López states that, “slapstick, sex comedy, anarchic comedy and parody fall under the banner of farce” (1993, 109). In noting specific farce plot and character techniques, Graves and Engle notes that in farce, “humor often results from the mistaken identity, disguise, and other improbable situations. Cross-dressing is a popular theme, as in *Some Like It Hot* (1959)… or *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993)… Often dignified individuals are made to appear absurd, such as the society matrons… [in] Marx Brother[s]’ *Horse Feathers* (1932) and *Duck Soup* (1933)… Serious subjects, such as the Third Reich in *The Producers* (1968), are often recast in wacky or absurd ways” (2006, 30). Davis remarks that farce’s mimicry dealt with its “traditional characters and subjects of the folk-drama deals with stealing, deception, trickery, magical transformations and practical jokes of all kinds” (i.e., Punch-and-Judy shows), which further saw the development of buffoons (2003, 71). In regard to a “good example of cinematic farce”, Rozik suggests *Norbit* (2007), starring Eddie Murphy (2011, 120), which highlights these discussed farce techniques. These are important to consider as a toolkit as the screenwriter implements and ‘stuffs’ their farce story, which the necessary ‘tools’ need unpacking for writing clarification.

There is a discrepancy in farce analyses timeline, as Siegfried Melchinger suggests that the form of modern farce is the “Break-through of reality into a grotesquely fantastic world, usually from a starting point in ordinary middle-class surroundings… The radical form of unreality, always proceeding, however, from logical necessity out of an ordinary situation” (1966, 218–19, my italics); research states that similar themes and elements have endured historically to current times. Similarly, López

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56 Ben Hecht “helped invent several genres” such as the “madcap or screwball comedy.” These comedies include Howard Hawks’ *Twentieth Century* (1934) and *His Girl Friday* (1940) (Cardullo 2015, 131).
observes: “Recently, it has even taken new directions to include tragic undertones as in the absurd comedies called tragic farces” (1993, 146–47, my italics); research has indicated that tragic farce is not a current phenomenon. Ironically, theorists remark that farce, more than comedy, is akin to tragedy; while others suggest farce has more in common with tragedy than comedy (Arditti 1996, 2; Cooney 2014a; Rodway 1975, 31). Braham Murray claims that the “essence of great farce is that it is only one step away from tragedy. If it didn’t work itself out at the last moment then the leading characters’ lives would fall apart” (2011, 121). Cooney believes farce “could easily be treated as tragedy in other hands. What Shakespeare does with kings, I do with taxi drivers” (cited in Hickling 2003). Ned Sherrin explains: “It’s the same complications: people put in impossible situations, but with different results” (cited in Arditti 1996, 2). Jurgen Wolff suggests that although Hamlet is a great drama, but it would also make a “great (early) Woody Allen comedy” (2010).

However, Rozik later states that the “boundaries between farce and comedy… are not clear-cut. Nonetheless, it is clear that both these genres operate the lighthearted mood, leading to the theses that their difference are only a matter of degree” (2011, 117). This suggestion for screenwriters to consider tragedy in the writing of their farce comedy draws attention to the basic storytelling device of in-depth psychological revelations of both the characters and the story theme itself. In spite of the viewpoints into the scrutiny and breakdown of the farce genre analysis, I venture to have a deeper appreciation and understanding as well as of the farce genre so as to successfully complete my farce screenplay, and to pass on my acquired knowledge to other screenwriters. The literature review thus far lays the crucial fundamental groundwork of understanding within the idea of writing a screenplay in the genre of farce.

**The Complexity, Purpose and Significance of Farce**

For me, insanity is super sanity. The normal is psychotic. Normal means lack of imagination, lack of creativity.
Jean Dubuffet

There is a thin line that separates laughter and pain, comedy and tragedy, humor and hurt.
Emma Bombeck
The diverse spectrum of farce has scholars noting different hypotheses, from social to practical. This leads into the investigation of the purpose and significance of farce, in which numerous theorists examine the content, context and theme of farce. To understand why farce exists and why it has endured as a genre, I start with an analysis from a farce dramatist, Ellis declares that “One idea must be fixed firmly in the author’s head—entertainment. First of all, your farce must have entertainment value, or it is absolutely valueless in the eyes of the speculative manager [in regard to box office]” (1948, 5), which is equally apt to screenwriting as playwriting. In agreement, Davis reports that farce is “intended solely to entertain” (2003, 69). Moreover, Cooney adds, “Someone once said the sole purpose of farce is to get laughs” (cited in Arditti 1996, 1). Historically, Davis notes that in the 17th century the name farce “became synonymous with pure hilarity” (2003, 83). In Bishop Richard Hurd’s ‘On the Provinces of Dramatic Poetry’, he remarks that farce’s “sole aim and tendency… is to excite laughter” when differentiating itself from other mixed forms of comedy in the 18th century (Hurd 1811, 30, cited in Davis 2003, 84). This is not a new concept as farce’s principle of laughter has a long tradition. As is the case for farce playwrights, then farce screenwriters need to apply this same ideology when first designing their story, to keep the concept of entertainment at the forefront.

Although some theorists suggest that farce’s role is entertainment and to get laughter, the discussion of the subject matter and/or theme of farce must also be explored in order to fully understand this genre. As a prelude to the debate of farce’s dialectic nature as a multi-facility, uncensored and extensive genre, Cooney asserts that one should “never underestimate the intelligence of your audience” (2014a) as Bentley declares that “To the simple all things are simple” (1964, 241). I start with Bentley’s analysis of farce and its dialectic tension:

Dramatic art in general is an art of extremes, and farce is… an extreme case of the extreme. Farce characteristically promotes and exploits the widest possible contrast between tone and content, surface and substance, and the minute one of the two elements in the dialectic is not present in its extreme or pure form, there is likely to be a weakening of the drama (1964, 243).
In this investigation of farce’s contrasting and opposite propositional conflicts, Bentley notes that “farce can seem simple, not only to the simple-minded”, but also to those who acknowledge its complexity and depth (1964, 241, italics in original). He analyses farce’s simple ‘way’ into two different analyses. Firstly, Bentley states that “farce is simple due to it goes right ‘at’ things”, in which there is “no beating around the bush” such as knocking down your mother-in-law (1964, 214). He suggests that this is the “absolutely direct, unmediated vision, without the duality of mask and face, symbol and object, which characterized the rest of dramatic literature” (1964, 241). He infers that this ‘way’ is part of farce’s extreme nature and style, and for farceurs to access and incorporate this uncensored creativity into their work. The second is its “acceptance of the everyday appearances of everyday interpretations of those appearances” (Bentley 1964, 241). With creative practice in farce, he suggests that farceurs create from the perspective of the common person and situation in order to stretch and reach the high(est) level of absurdity in the story. Bentley compares farce to melodrama in which farce uses the “ordinary unenlarged [sic] environment and ordinary down-at-heel men of the street” while melodrama uses “empurpled and enlarged images” (ibid). He declares, “the trouble is that farce is simple in both these ways at once, thereby failing to be simple at all. Farce brings together the direct and wild fantasies and the everyday and drab realities, the interplay between the two is the very essence of this art—the farcical dialectic” (1964, 241). This notion of the dialectic nature of farce suggests that screenwriters conceive their ideas with a duality in order to achieve this balance.

In the next part, Bentley examines the dialectic of farce with the opposite behaviours of gaiety and gravity, in which gravity lurks behind farce’s gaiety and equally vice versa (1964, 241–242). He stresses that the visibility of both gravity and gaiety of farce is part of the style, but different from the “contrast between mask and face, symbol and thing symbolized, appearance and reality”, in which the contrast in styles is a contrast of gravity and gaiety on the surface and what lies beneath (1964, 242). Bentley states this is a double dialectic of farce: the contrast of grave and gay on the surface, and the contrast of surface and under the surface, in which the second is a greater and more dynamic contrast (ibid). Davis concurs, and adds: “Two complementary elements are at
work in this process, the impulse to pleasure and self-indulgence and the impulse to aggression and hostility. Perhaps at bottom these two elements are one” (2003, 90). This deeper level reveals an inner complexity that farce stories exist in, and brings a higher narrative device in screenwriting practice, as Bentley notes the dual nature is both visible with “the surface of farce is grave and gay at the same time” (1964, 242).

Adding to the further complexity, in part of this second larger contrast, Bentley states that in farce, “unmasking occurs all along”, compared to comedy in which unmasking characteristically occurs with a “single character in a climatic scene” (ibid). Davis adds that the “Structural stylization and mechanical patterning also help to distinguish the festive license under which these attacks are carried out” (2003, 141). She adds to this duality with, “It follows that the mask of the farceur has two faces: the actor may present the joke of his licensed aggression or the joke of his ultimate submission” (2003, 143). When writing farce characters, the dual device is a guide for revealing and/or hiding characters, which can add narrative layers to the story.

Another part of the second larger contrast is violence, in which Bentley states that violence in “itself is not the essence of farce”, but that violence is set in contrast against gentleness to heighten the impact of the violence (1964, 243). Davis remarks that the “extreme hostility found in farce is balanced by a joyous festivity” (2003, 91), and the “aggression is both sufficiently precise to be psychologically valid and yet sufficiently delimited to qualify as play” (2003, 141). She states, “Essentially, the comic spirit of farce is one which delights in taboo-violation, but which avoids implied moral comment or social criticism, and which tends to debar empathy for its victims” (2003, 141). In creative practice, a screenwriter’s creativity faculty can produce room to play with the dual juxtaposition of violence and gentleness. This enriches storytelling that lends itself in having deeper meaning for its audience.

In the complex analysis of the meaning of farce, I refer to David J. Kangas, who states that farce is closer to the sublime, as he elaborates, “In the judgment of the sublime there is a negative or indirect presentation of the absolute.
Strictly speaking, the sublime refers to no object, for it relates to the formless, the unbounded, what the imagination cannot contain” (2007, 107), and what the German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), terms as “contra-purposive” in regard to the faculty of reflective judgment (cited in Kangas 2007, 107). Furthermore, in regard to content, Ellis argues, “No subject is taboo for a farce” (1948, 12). I refer to Kangas with his chapter on ‘Farce: Thresholds of Representation’:

The critique of farce becomes a critique of the subject thought, as in idealism, in terms of its power to represent reality to itself. It is a critique of the faculty of judgment, which identifies subjectivity with its power to determine the real on the basis of its spontaneity. Those are the metaphysical stakes in the analysis of farce (2007, 106).

Additionally as per Kant’s ‘contra-purposive’, Styan compares genre content significance with “The common factor in the farce and in the tragedy is ugliness, and it suddenly exhibited by uniting at a stroke the two responses” (1960, 201). In Theaterprobleme (1955), Dürrenmatt discusses The Brechtian thesis in which it “postulates that the state of the world is disastrous and tries to show how it came to be that way, can produce superb theatre” (cited in Melchinger 1966, 122). At its core, farce’s fundamental existence was created out of necessity by humans as Bentley suggests that the world may be “unalterable and monstrous” with submitting or surrendering to the “pure chaos”, and which takes “shape in the drama”, not as tragedy (i.e., no heroes, the world makes no sense), not as comedy either (i.e., no civilisation, no social norm), but as farce (1984, 380). Similar to Bentley and Styan, Bermel suggests that the “tragedian performs on the slippery edge of a pit, and its name is farce”, with melodrama even closer to the edge (1990, 59). The theme of farce may also include that the “joke is on us all as members of the human race” as Davis remarks that “Farce does not deny that human aspirations exist: it merely regards them as a joke” (2003, 87). A theme in farce, that critiques

57 “Kant lists four ‘modalities’ of judgments about beauty: they are disinterested, universal, they relate to a purposiveness without a purpose, and they presume a sensus communis. See The Critique of Judgment…” (cited in Kangas 2007, 214, italics in original).
58 Bentley argues that farce is more violent than melodrama. See Farce Principle #1— Violence and Aggression.
society, can add value in storytelling, as well as impart wisdom. Farce screenwriters can be thought of as messengers of insight and knowledge to impart to an audience.

In the analysis of farce and the theory of humour, this touches on sociological and psychology theories of the farce debate. Rozik notes that several theorists, such as Bentley and Styan, have based their approaches to the theory of farce “inspired by psychoanalysis”, especially on their thesis of laughter (2011, 117). Many literary critics such as G.B. Shaw have criticised that farce lacks either meaning or emotion in which he remarked that “laughter produced by conventional farcical comedy purely galvanic, and the inference drawn by the audience that since they are laughing they must be amused or edified or pleased, as a delusion” (cited in Davis 2003, 86). However, Constantin (aka Kierkegaard) remarks: “What he loves is the way that farce affects its spectators—eliciting unique response and interpretations from every person who sees it” (cited in Hughes 2014, 137, italics in original). He adds himself into the equation noting that farce enables him “to experience a fluidity of identity that he finds impossible in his actual existence” (cited in Hughes 2014, 132). Additionally, he argues it “solicits its spectators to identify with the characters it depicts and to imagine themselves in their places” (ibid 2014, 132). Or, as Arditti states, the audience response is “the recognition that we might be in the same situation ourselves coupled with the relief that we are not” (1996, 2). Davis adds to this continuation with the “psychological satisfactions and perhaps the benefits of farce lie chiefly in the deliberate offence it gives to social norms” (2003, 90). Hence, my farce story is an everyday common theme which audiences may enjoy as the story mocks rituals of ‘social norms’. This ideology of farce affecting its audience elevates storytelling in which screenwriting is a platform that can easily accommodate this theory.

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In regard to themes and topics, similar to Ellis, Robert McKee argues that no topic or subject is taboo, even “dead babies… or the holocaust”, in telling a story or in a film (storylogue.com 2014). In the discourse of farce’s psychological purpose, Styan states, “Perhaps farce as a genre will now be recognized as the fundamental form it has always been. Farcical techniques now devised primarily as a means [to] break down resistance to the horror of the content” (1962, 219). Historically, Nicoll suggests that farce employed burlesque of serious myths through its laughter devices (1965, 25 and 40), and Davis states that there were “few taboos that were not broken by joking in the parade-farces” of the 18th century such as pregnancy jokes and innumerable puns (2003, 94). She explains that in analysing farce characters, acting in accordance to their situation in a farce story: “It is in the heat of these extreme measures, almost in a state of hysteria, that taboos can safely be violated without disturbing the veneer of good-breeding” (2003, 131–132). This freedom allows screenwriters to tackle any subject without censoring themselves. As an affirmative approach, farce screenwriting is an avenue that can give credence to further knowledge with laughter, and insightful narrative devices can lead to positive experiences, in the backdrop of an unmentionable topic.

In the scholarship for creative practice, as a foundation I start with Ellis. Although it is considered a low genre, Ellis—a dramatist—declares, “Farce is the most difficult of all writing for the stage, as so many different things have to be thought out during the construction” (1948, 5), as pertinent for screenwriting as playwriting. Other theorists also regard farce a complicated genre in which its genre and/or historical standing bear little in neither hierarchy nor significance. Bentley concurs with Ellis, and believes that writing a farce is “no small achievement” (1984, 382). In acknowledging how these difficulties may stop a farceur from starting, Bentley proposes that the farceur apply the opposite extremes at all times in their writing, and work in an uncensored method without limitations.

Bentley’s documentation of 20th century screen farce is chaotic and perplexing; Bentley’s own contrasting views swing back and forth from positive to negative. He argues that the period of great farce in the motion picture industry occurred from 1912
to 1927 (1964, 253). During this period, synchronised motion picture sound track was not common, and Bentley states, “farce was happily suited to the silent screen” (ibid) such as the Keystone Cop car chases. Then, Bentley argues that “modern farce” ended with Feydeau’s death in 1921, which coincided with Chaplin producing less farce (1964, 254). As Chaplin departed from farce, Bentley suggests that the farce scenes were the best parts of Chaplin’s satires, tragicomedy and drama (1964, 254–255). Bentley states that Chaplin’s farces mark the end of an era, not the beginning, in which he argues that filmmakers did not follow (1964, 254), although he does not discuss any specifics relating to farce cinema. However, Bentley reports that pantomime changed, in that the objects on the screen “became a vast new subject matter for farce and gave us what in many ways a new kind of farce” (ibid). He argues that certain aspects of farce developed and advanced further on the screen, beyond the limitations of the stage, such as the traditional pursuit and chase scenes, with the use of “trick photography” (1964, 253). Although Bentley’s assessment of farce’s future differs from Bermel’s and McLaughlin’s more positive assessment, farce films continue to be made. Hence, screenwriters can continue to write farce stories, and advance farce techniques to encompass more than putting editing devices of ‘trick photography’ into their scripts.

Finally, as a paradoxical argument for farce’s significance and purpose, Davis claims that in “farce’s wild rejection of the laws of normal rationality and seriousness”, it cherishes the “element of unreason”, which could be argued as an “important part of human nature”, and it allows an “indulgent regression to the joys and terrors of nonsense” from The Feast of Fools to the Marx

60 The Lumières brothers’ short film, L’Arroseur Arrosé, which premiered in Paris at the Grand Café on 28th December 1895, is the first to be credited with a person in a comedic role (Graves and Engle 2006, 42). It wasn’t until 1912 with the founding of Mark Sennett’s Keystone Studios in the United States that it developed on a large scale and had a major impact; he specialized in pure slapstick (i.e., bathing beauties, Keystone Cops and throwing pies), and also combined parody with slapstick (Graves and Engle 2006, 42). Sennet wrote, directed and/or produced over three hundred movies, and he was often called the ‘King of Comedy’ (ibid).

61 Also, alternate spelling: Keystone Kops.

62 It should be noted that Bentley neglects to mention or analyse continental films that were very popular such as Jacques Tati’s the Monsieur Hulot’s films, i.e., Monsieur Hulot’s Holiday (1953) and My Uncle (1958).

63 Middle Ages festival celebration, c. 1st January (Davis 2003, 87).
Brothers (2003, 87). From Kangas’ argument that farce “constitutes a phenomenon that cannot be accounted for in terms of, and thus delimits, the work of representation” as farce’s sublime description of the “sheer lunacy” and “sheer abandonment” of the audience, farce “can no longer be contained in forms or lines” due to its excess, a “plunge into the abyss of laughter” (2007, 108). Recent criticism and arguments have been made to “identify the correct value” of farce suggests Davis, especially with the more weight given to psychological factors (2003, 87). As for the creative work, Styan argues, “A reader’s greatest problem is to recognize the brilliant grace of exaggerated speech and action in stylization and timing which make the nonsense of farce acceptable” (1972, 196). I suggest that Styan refers to the humour (i.e., create silliness in the plot/story), the mocking of everyday life philosophies and institutions, and the horror of the violence (i.e., in society). These philosophies and institutions on the various schools of thoughts help shape my farce theory investigation as well as my screenplay. In relating to the reader’s greatest problem with farce material, I investigate the screenwriter’s greatest problem in the process of recognising how to access, create, structure and tell the farce story for the nonsense to be acceptable. Lastly I refer to Constantin as he remarks that audiences’ purpose in attending a performance, “farce promises that transformation is as simple as slipping on a costume or losing oneself in a show”, and to forget the world outside (cited in Hughes 2014, 133). It is the goal of my creative practice for my farce to do just that. The aim of my screenplay project is to find a method for screenwriters to incorporate farce tropes into a cohesive and manageable format and screenwriting framework.
Chapter 2 – Farce Theory: The Six Principles of Farce

Without theory, practice is only routine imposed by habit.
Louise Pasteur, in Bentley’s The Life of Drama, 1964, 19.

Introduction

Since this dissertation involves writing a screenplay in the farce comedy genre, it is the aim that this chapter provides the tools and understanding of the farce theories for the creative practitioner. If one continues in the shadow of the renowned farce artists, and applies the farce knowledge to a creative work, it is the hope that one can achieve a fraction of their expertise and success. In my struggle to formulate a set of farce principles, I start with the theorists who discuss the difficulties of farce for creative practitioners.

Firstly, Andy de la Tour states farce contains “more set rules than anything else; it’s like a piece of music or a sonnet” (cited in Arditi 1996, 2). In the 1980s, the famous British farceur, in his ‘The Rules of Farce’, Ray Cooney exclaimed that “Being asked to write the Rules Of Farce is akin to being asked to describe the Rules Of Life - where do you start and what do you leave out?”, in which he also questioned that “it implies that Farce—or any other kind of theatrical endeavour—can be learnt by studying some kind of manual” (2014a). However, due to a “certain amount of introspection” (Cooney 2014a), he wrote six ‘rules’ of farce which he remarks may be different from his colleagues, Alan Ayckbourn, Michael Frayn or Neil Simon. Cooney’s rules are explored in this dissertation. But, it is Bentley’s ‘seminal farce theories’ in The Life of Drama that I will be using as the foundation in my farce comedy screenwriting research along with Bermel’s and Davis’ theories. Although there are ‘rules’, I hope to also encompass the ‘unknown’ in the theorists’ criteria for this genre in how they may be applied to screenwriting.

64 The term I use is ‘principles’ in line with Eric Bentley’s writings. But, other theorists use the terms ‘rules’, ‘tropes’, ‘conventions’, ‘techniques’, ‘elements’, etc.
The principles of farce can polarise the theorists. According to Arditti’s different viewpoint, farce is the “most conservative dramatic form” (Arditti 1996, 2), in which Brian Rix establishes that “All farces have the same thread running through them, though they may be presented differently: people with reputations to lose caught in situations where they can lose them” (cited in Arditti 1996, 2). As a playwright, Cooney admits that he has been writing the same thing for thirty years, in which the “trimmings are more sophisticated, but the heart is still naïve” (cited in Arditti 1996, 2). Likewise, de la Tour remarks, “You can make it about anything you want. Whatever the cover-up, whether it’s a mistress in a cupboard or corruption in high places, it’s still a farce” (ibid). It is with this initial and variant background, I unpack the scholarship of farce theories to investigate the principles for screenwriters.

My initial research into the core principles of farce, focused on Eric Bentley’s seminal work. Farrell (1995) reports that Bentley has investigated and compiled the conventions of the farce genre in his heralded book, The Life of the Drama (1964), which he acknowledges as in-depth and astute. Bentley categorises plays into five different kinds: melodrama, farce, tragedy, comedy and tragi-comedy. He has divided the farce chapter in his book into ten sub-headings (see Table 1 below), which I compile into smaller, similar groupings; i.e., Bentley’s three headings for humour have been compiled into one heading. I have retitled Bentley’s farce headings. The initial groupings have been retitled to encapsulate a more pliable and conceptual understanding for the farceur in the screenwriting format; this compilation is to assist the screenwriter with more concrete advice that can be applied more feasibly. These principles will be detailed in depth, with a view to understand the key ‘workings’ of Bentley’s farce examination, both historical and cultural. I then apply to these principles the ideas and theories of other key farce scholars, such as Bermel and Davis, in order to further clarify the farce principles.

This organizational conceptual method of Bentley’s farce theories created a ‘fundamental challenge’ for me, since his theories are ‘descriptive’, not ‘prescriptive’. His chapter was categorized to discuss his analyses of farce (i.e., not to identify farce tropes, indicators or requirements). This became my challenge to group, identify and name the farce tropes. The current names selected is only a guide for screenwriters when choosing which trope to focus on (i.e., it may be revised with further research).
Table 1: Grouping: Eric Bentley’s Farce Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bentley’s Theories</th>
<th>Condensed Categories</th>
<th>Suggested Titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 <em>Violence</em></td>
<td>1 Violence, Brutality, Cruelty and Violence (includes <em>Violence, The Quintessence of Theatre, The Breath of Imaginary Freedom and The Dialectic of Farce</em>)</td>
<td>Violence and Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 <em>Scoffing at Marriage</em></td>
<td>2 Dating, Life, Marriage, Religion, Relationships, Sex and Society (includes <em>Scoffing at Marriage, The Breath of Imaginary Freedom and The Dialectic of Farce</em>)</td>
<td>Extreme Mocking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 <em>Comic Catharsis</em></td>
<td>3 Catharsis, Fun, Humour, Joking and Laughter (includes <em>Comic Catharsis, Jokes and the Theatre, Sweet and Bitter Springs, The Dialectic of Farce, The Quintessence of Theatre and The Breath of Imaginary Freedom</em>)</td>
<td>Humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 <em>Jokes and the Theatre</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 <em>Sweet and Bitter Springs</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 <em>The Dialectic of Farce</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Note: This is in Chapter One, and other sections of this dissertation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 <em>Mischief as Fate</em></td>
<td>4 Absurdity, Coincidence, Exaggeration, Fantasy, Fate, Improbability, Madness and Mischief (includes <em>Mischief as Fate, The Dialectic of Farce, The Quintessence of Theatre and The Breath of Imaginary Freedom</em>)</td>
<td>Plot, Story and Style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 <em>In the Image of the Ape</em></td>
<td>5 Characters, Disguises, Fools, Lovers and Masks (includes <em>In the Image of the Ape, The Quintessence of Theatre and The Breath of Imaginary Freedom</em>)</td>
<td>Wild, Uncensored Characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 <em>The Quintessence of Theatre</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>Note: These sections are touched upon in other areas of this dissertation, such as in the violence &amp; aggression, character and plot principles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 <em>The Breath of Imaginary Freedom</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Main Principles of Farce

Here, then, I present the six principles of farce as outlined in Table 1, which are led by the theories set out by Bentley, and are also informed by other key writers on farce such as Bermel and Davis. These six principles are then used to analyse the produced screenplay, Bridesmaids, in Chapter Three, and then form the basis of reflection on the writing of my own screenplay, The Wedding Jackpot, in Chapter Four.

Principle #1—Violence and Aggression

When people say there is too much violence in my books, what they are saying is there is too much reality in life.

Joyce Carol Oates

Although theorists differ on their views about violence and aggression being applied to comedy, there is a customary agreement with the first farce principle. In an historical opinion, Styan reports farce to be “savage” when analysing farce during the period before Molière (1962, 33–34). For creative practitioners, Ludwig Jekels suggests that comedy writers unleash a wide range of aggression (cited in Corrigan 1965, 169)—however in contrast, Rozik suggests that aggression is the hallmark of satire (2011, 76). Bentley lists ‘violence’ as the first element for farce (1964, 219), for which he acknowledges that violence occurs in other kinds of plays besides comedy and tragedy. He suggests that farce is “perhaps even more notorious for its love of violent images” especially compared to melodrama (ibid). Davis concurs that farce is “unquestionably hostile” (2003, 89), while Bermel goes even further with “Farce deals with the unreal, with the worst one can dream or dread. Farce is cruel, often brutal, even murderous” (1990, 21).

In connecting violence with humour, Eliot argues that farce, in its extreme, is “the terrible serious, even savage comic humour” (1943, 123). This may have instigated the discussion about violence and aggression in comedy, in which some theorists do not believe that these traits belong in comedy. It is the realm of farce, not comedy. Rozik suggests comedy is “light-hearted in nature” (2011, 76).

However, this is not to suggest that farce after Molière became less savage, or that farce was not savage. To investigate why Styan’s theories and analyses about farce perhaps not being savage after this period is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
why Bentley proposes questions about violence in art, such as what it signifies and the effects on humans (1964, 219). According to Artaud, one reason cruelty is necessary for humankind is because “Without an element of cruelty at the root of every spectacle, the theater is not possible. In our present state of degeneration it is through the skin that metaphysics must be made to re-enter our minds” (1968, 64). Although Artaud speaks of the ‘theater’, it aptly applies to film.

Bentley looks for the answers in Plato’s masterpiece, The Republic. Bentley cites Plato,67 in The Republic’s tenth volume, who argues that tragedies—such as in plays by Homer (c.7th-8th BC)—have an effect on the audience to sympathise and/or empathise, especially if they themselves are suffering or have suffered (cited in Bentley 1964, 219–20). Plato further argues that the same principle can be applied to humour as well as suffering. He suggests that “You are doing the same thing if, in listening at a comic performance or in ordinary life to buffooneries which you would be ashamed to indulge in yourself, you thoroughly enjoy them instead of being disgusted with their ribaldry” (cited in Bentley 1964, 220). He states that people have an impulse to play the role of the clown or buffoon, but keep their feelings restricted due to social parameters. Bentley agrees that humans throughout history have not distanced themselves from violence, but become accustomed to it (1964, 220–21). Further, they differ on their ideology of the effect of violence on the audience. Plato suggests that violence is harmful and damaging to the audience, and advocated censorship to protect the audience. However, Bentley agrees with Aristotle who argues that violence instead acts more as a catharsis than a corruption of the mind and/or soul.

The foundation of this theory was first debated notably with the ancient Greek philosophers. In Poetics, Aristotle, challenges and argues that the theory of violence in arts—especially drama—has a reason with his famous analysis,68 “through pity and fear effecting the proper catharsis of these emotions” (cited in Bentley 1964, 223). Aristotle’s catharsis of emotions can be expanded to include aggression, anger and estrangement. Bentley argues that Aristotle rejects “the notion that tragedy might

67 Plato lived c.424/423 BC–348/347 BC.
68 In referring to one of the seven characteristics of tragedy according to Aristotle.
reduce us to a quivering jelly of pity and fear, and is formulating an exactly contrary conclusion: tragedy is not only an excitement but a release from excitement. It will not burst the boiler with its steam because it is precisely the safety valve” (1964, 223). Aristotle argues that exposure to strong (negative) emotions in dramas gave people a chance to release emotional frustrations that they had, which thus is a positive psychological outcome. Hence, if an audience can respond to farce in the way of releasing their negative emotions (i.e., does not act out the emotions), then for farce writing, this suggests a positive goal towards increasing an audience’s enjoyment.

Bentley considers art to be serious, and art must tackle violence in order to get to the heart and to understand things. He argues that “Without violence, there would be nothing in the world but goodness, and literature is not mainly about goodness: it is mainly about badness” (1964, 221). Dr. Fredric Wertham argues against the violence and cruelties in comic books as well as in Grimm’s fairy tales and disagrees with being sympathetic or empathetic to bad characters or villains (cited in Bentley 1964, 221). Bentley disagrees with The Platonists who reject the distinction between fantasy and fact. He cites Charlie Chaplin’s movie Easy Street, in which the villain is disproportionate in size to Chaplin, and is physically attacked. But Bentley stresses that there has never been a protest from the audience about the violence and aggression in this classic film. Bentley believes that audiences can tell fact from fiction (ibid, my italics). Davis concurs in that commedia dell’arte, with its stylised acting and acrobatic mine in the sixteenth century, conveyed distance between real-life and their acts, and in modern times, the same effect of distance and separation with cartoons and puppet shows such as Punch and Judy (2003, 93). As a caution, King suggests that the “enjoyment of knockabout farce or slapstick” often depends on the distance established from “comic figures who are not represented as ‘rounded’ characters” (2002, 9). In writing a farce, a distance must be created for the audience’s enjoyment.

69 From Dr. Fredric Wertham’s book, Seduction of the Innocent (cited in Bentley 1964, 221). Bentley classifies Wertham in the Puritan tradition, which is intolerant and hostile to art; the Puritan tradition dates back to Plato, who is considered to be the founding father.

70 Please see Appendix D: Matrix—Commedia dell’arte
Characters in farce are different from other genres. Bentley states that another element of the “cruelty is the abstractness of the violence” (1964, 222). Actions such as in *Easy Street* where the villain’s head goes inside a street lamppost, being fumed by the gas and a cast-iron stove falling on his head signifies that “fantasy multiplies movements and blows by a thousand” (ibid). Davis suggests that due to the mocked victim’s “rudimentary motivation and their rigidity of character display more affinity with puppet-figures like Punch and Judy than with complex dramatic *personae*... The fantastic nature of their injuries is made evident” (2003, 93, italics in original). Likewise in television and film, cartoons use caricature of an outline and synchronisation of movement to convince the audience that the creatures and/or characters will rise “phoenix-like” from under the steam-roller which has just crushed over them (2003, 93). In agreement, Bermel reports that in farce:

characters seldom get badly injured, almost never die. Although a character doesn’t merely clash with other characters but also collides with the scenery and props, he stays more or less intact. Blood flows like wine in a heavy drama or melodrama. In farce the victim, who is apparently bloodless, looks dazed after a collision, then shakes his head, picks himself up, and goes off to the next collision. Farce shows us human bodies that are indestructible, sponges for punishment.

One of the clauses in an unwritten contract between farceurs and their audiences used to state that the character will… come out of their ordeals unscathed, because the audience must be permitted to laugh. When that clause was not honored, the play ceased to be a farce—for the moment, at any rate—and turned into something else… there are no rules in art. Death, like everything else, has become a legitimate subject for farce… Characters die and spring back to life (1990, 23).

As a farceur, this tells me that the dramatist’s methods for the violence and aggression principle, such as the one suggested by Davis have a history and a pattern that can be deconstructed and applied. One of Davis’ farce plot techniques is the ‘quarrel-farce’, in which characters argue back and forth (2003, 119). Some of these quarrel farces have a resolution, while others “achieve at least a temporary restoration of harmony—even if the fights seem destined to break out again before long”, and if there is no conclusion, the “effect is positively claustrophobic, for the acceleration and the violence together create a powerful momentum, which begins to assume a life of its
own” (ibid). This is a technique that can be applied effectively in the writing of a farce screenplay.

The ongoing debate on Aristotle’s meaning of catharsis may be inconclusive; catharsis is either the purpose of art (i.e., drama) or simply the end effect. Gilbert Murray (1957) suggests that the catharsis theory is more suitably applied for comedy than tragedy (cited in Bentley 1964, 224). A definite conclusion to this millenniums-old ongoing debate of the theory of violence (in arts) is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is interesting to note because it opens up the discussion for creative practitioners to experiment with this farce principle. I look to Bentley as he notes that historically violence could be and has been released with laughter: “It is generally agreed that a good laugh does us good, and that it does us good as a sort of emotional ‘work-out’ ” (1964, 224). I suggest to include violence and aggression as the past farceurs have, and not to limit imagination in regard to the story. As a future farceur, when I write my screenplay, I will consider how hostilities might be used to represent commentary on human existence.

Principle #2—Extreme Mocking

Plaudite, amici, comedia finita est.
(Applaud, my friends, the comedy is over.)
[Said on his deathbed].
Ludwig van Beethoven

The notion of morals and being moralistic is ‘ripe’ for farce. I start with Bentley as he favours making fun of institutions such as marriage and family (1964, 225). In theorising the mocking principle, Bentley questions: “if the aim is farce… we can do without all theories and notions except the most rudimentary moral distinctions which need no elaboration can be taken for granted. In the realm of farce, I know of no good current example” (1984, 216–17). In light of Bentley’s ideology, I continue with McKee’s argument that comedy “functions to attack cultural and social institutions” (cited in Jacey 2014, 245). In regard to farce’s appeal, Bermel theorises that part of the universality of farce “may lie in its disruption of familiar social rituals, from solemn ceremonies like a presidential inauguration, a wedding, or the unveiling of the
“statue” to more everyday rituals such as shopping, getting a haircut, eating out, mowing the lawn, shaving, applying wallpaper and making love (1990, 8). Davis adds that for simple farces, a ‘humiliation’ farce subjects “their victims to explicit degradation and celebrate their victories quite openly” (2003, 91). Bermel agrees: “As a by-product, our laughter may signify contempt for the victims of farcical events” (1990, 46). The concept of the infusion of mocking and laughter, for creative practitioners, are intertwined in the work in satisfying the audience’s enjoyment.

In investigating the origin of this principle’s lexicon, Styan states that “Illusion is the province of all theatre: a spectator goes to the playhouse in the expectation that he will be free to indulge it” (1975, 180–81). In Luigi Pirandello’s Six Characters in Search of an Author (1921), as per Lionel Trilling’s introduction, the word ‘illusion’ is derived from the Latin word ‘illudere’ meaning to ‘to mock’, and this comes from the Latin word ‘ludere’ meaning ‘to play’ (Trilling, cited in Styan 1975, 180–81). Trilling remarks that the theatre’s ‘favorite activity’ is “to play with the idea of illusion itself, to mock the very thing it most tries to create—and the audience that accepts it” (ibid). Corrigan concurs and adds, “One of the reasons we experience theatre without directly experiencing fear, pain, or anxiety is that it is always mocking the unreality of its own nature. The theatre can speak the unspeakable and show that which should not be shown because we are never allowed to forget that we are watching a play with players playing” (1981, 4). This is important to note for farce screenwriters, in which this principle’s dialectic nature suggests to push the boundaries in storytelling, with the ordinary or prestigious ritual. This dialectical element is poignant with its message of mocking the status quo as Bermel notes:

Farce does at least two things with, and to, such a ritual. It borrows or recreates it from life, rigidifying it, making it look exaggeratedly schematic, and therefore ludicrous... Farce will then often subvert the ritual, giving it an unforeseen, disorderly ending. Art is said to pluck order out of chaos. Possibly so, but in farce the orderly ritual has a way of generating into chaos (1990, 8).

As a further investigation into the purpose for mocking, I refer to Wyllie, in which farce “can carry the potential for social critique, either as a restraining factor, enabling social discontent to find a safe outlet, or as a focus for a will towards reform... The content critiques the way in which society operates, with the negative aspects of
social and sexual mores being held up for scrutiny and assault” (2009, 113). In contrast, Bentley has remarked that “American farce is marred by moralism” (1984, 216–17). In writing a farce, as a caution about the issue of themes, Artaud argues, “It is not a matter of boring the public to death with transcendent cosmic preoccupations. That there may be profound keys to thought and action with which to interpret the whole spectacle” (Artaud 1968, 58–9). Another theory, this one by a practicing farceur, is by John Cleese:

if you think about farce, because of the high level of energy, the kind of mania involved, people have to get very wound up. It’s easier to do that in the context of subjects that make people particularly anxious, which usually means taboo, (i.e., dealing with a dead person, a person pretending to be handicapped [deaf], etc.)… Anybody in comedy knows that if you get into taboo areas, if it’s done right, two things happen, which are both good. One is that you are exploring something that is a little unfamiliar and a little dangerous and a little exciting, and therefore, a little bit interesting. And secondly, it arouses a degree of anxiety, which means that people laugh more. I mean, the basis of sexual jokes, 99% of which are not the slightest bit funny, is that they harness people’s anxiety and embarrassment about sex, so that they get big laughs (2001).

As a background to this notion of mocking, this principle does not adhere to any restrictions in either medical or sociological studies as Bentley examines further. He reports that the idea of the family unit has been generally endorsed by the American medical association,71 i.e., psychological and social studies show that the family is vital for “proper psychological development”, in which a nuclear family strongly helps “to develop and maintain a personality free of dangerous (to self and society) characteristics” (1964, 225–226). Bentley criticises the idea that juvenile delinquency and sexual deviation are preventable, by either having a closer family unit, a religiously devout family or a loving family unit (1964, 226). He argues that the opposite does occur: “The close, warm family is also the seedbed of neurosis, vice, and crime” (1964, 226). This in essence typically frees the farceur of limiting any mocking restrictions that have been socially or culturally exalted albeit any study to the contrary.

71 Bentley refers to an article written by the Chief of the Division of Montefiore Hospital, George Silver (Silver, 1957), but he criticises Dr. Silver’s ideologies.
Historically, Davis examines Aristotle’s theory of the custom of lampooning, through the “act of mimicry of the burlesque impersonation of gods, heroes and even local characters” via masks and costumes for anonymity, was an “evolutionary stage in the development of comedy (Poetics V.1449b)” (cited in Davis 2003, 70–71). She further notes that Roman culture had its parallel in the abusive ‘Fescennine verses’ (i.e., improvised at weddings and festivals), and Mediaeval and late Middle Ages Europe had its communal precession or charivari, which mocked in effigy and/or in person (i.e., husbands beaten by their wives, cuckold and “similar undesirables”) (2003, 70–71, 92–83, italics in original). An example, Davis notes that in farce, a household may invert the normal social roles in which the wife wears the pants, or humiliation is caused by a cheating wife, i.e., the English drama, John, John the Husband, Tyb his Wife, and Sir John the Priest (c. 1530) (Heywood, cited in Davis 2003, 92). She adds that this is the “stuff of popular comedy which has always thriven upon the humiliation of unpleasant villains and foolish knaves” (ibid, 93). With the backing of the traditional mockers, modern screenwriters have the foundation of skewing social norms and can expand on this idea in advocating more social ridicule in their stories.

In terms of negating taboo subjects, Symons (1906) stresses against censorship, in which ‘forbidden subjects’ were ‘policed’ in European countries to prevent the exposure of the public’s ‘evil conscious’ (cited in Bentley 1968, 310). Additionally, Bentley questions and criticises the “dull psychological ‘explanations’ of villainy”, and how “virtue must be given overtones of a pep-talk on ‘the American way of life’ or a class in civics” (1984, 216–17). As an example, he states that the image of an orgy is too much for most people, and the Motion Picture Production Code sides with the established religions in this regard (1964, 224). The contempt of the limitations and restrictions Bentley scrutinises are what makes farces free for farceurs to enter into ‘dangerous’ territory without any implications.

In the discussion of targets, Styan states, “our hates and sympathies” are targeted against one character or a group, in which low farce, “is comparatively simple to choose the object for ridicule shrewdly” (1962, 254). In mocking social hierarchies, Eileen Warburton states that farce “depends on the existence of a conventional society, preferably one that takes itself a bit seriously”, especially as part of a socially rising class, i.e., French farce’s Bourgeois characters losing their covert position
sociologist theorist, Murray S. Davis notes that academics conclude that humour dismantles sociological structures (1993, 310). He claims “humour needs stiff cultural and social structures to snap… No structure, no snap, no laugh” (ibid). The idea of mocking the classes is a theme that farceurs can explore without censorship. A reason for this farce principle, and of particular interest to the farceur, Bermel argues:

Farce’s overturning of decorum, the order of things, satisfies an unspoken, unwritten pact between us and the farceur. His work will play up to our democratic impulses; it will fulfill [sic] our desires for political and social leveling [sic]. Farce takes the smugly successful and eminent down a few pegs… We enjoy equally watching farce elevate the humble, servants and slaves outwit their masters… when he beats out the unbeatable opposition (1990, 46).

In order for farce to work, farceurs can consider a societal ritual, convention or structure to mock as they start their story. Although, an awareness of the limitations may surface when implementing this farce principle in the writing of a farce comedy screenplay, the sociological factors of the consequence play an important part in any analyses. It is this idea that the farceur can look to Bentley’s suggestion that mocking with laughter would lead to “a much nicer place than at present it customarily is” (1984, 216–17). In order for farce to work, future farceurs must consider a societal ritual, convention or structure to mock as they start their story. Also, I will be aware of the censorship and/or limitations, if any, when I implement this farce principle in my attempt to write a farce comedy screenplay with the impetus to break my own barriers/boundaries.
Principle #3—Humour

Nothing in man is more serious than his sense of humor; it is the sign that he wants all the truth.
Mark van Doren

This section includes Bentley’s three sections on the nature and theory of humour. There are numerous contrasting theories about humour—its effect, design and purpose—in which selected humour themes and topics will be discussed in relation to writing a screenplay. As noted previously, comedy and/or humour may be the fabric of farce, but it has been given special attention by Bentley because the ideology of humour can be juxtaposed with what the audience expects when they go see a farce comedy. I have made humour its own principle since the motion picture industry expects the screenplays to adhere to certain elements when they decide to produce a farce comedy story, which is the element of laughter.

I start with Bertolt Brecht’s “Little Organon [sic] for the Theater” (1948) as he argues that the ‘business of theatre’ is to entertain: “It is this that invests the theater with its peculiar dignity; it requires nothing but humor, the one thing that is essential” (cited in Melchinger 1966, 105). As noted by Bermel, the numerous theories of comedy intertwine with the theories of laughter, which include “directly, incidentally, inadvertently, or inadequately” farce as well (1990, 40). The various theorists and farceurs list laughter as a principle of farce. As a farceur, Ellis agrees, writing in his chapter, ‘Importance of

72 See Bentley’s 10 theories of farce chart; Table 1. It should be noted that Bentley does not actually use the term ‘humour’ in any of his category titles for his farce chapter (1964).
73 It should be noted that an attempt to cover the range and/or all theories is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
74 There is a discussion of comedy in relation to humour. Some theorists state that comedy does not necessarily have to make people laugh (i.e., Bentley), while other theorists note that laughter is the foundation of comedy.
75 It should be noted that there are limitations of this analysis of this principle (humour). The focus is narrowed down to the ‘litmus test’ of farce (i.e., it must elicit laughter), and hence the limitations are reflected in this ‘laughter-production’ meaning. Further research into humour is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
Laughter’, that farce’s purpose includes laughter: “Considering the tragedies of the past war, laughter is more or less a duty of those who are writing to entertain men [sic] who have returned home, and to see that they get a few good laughs when they go to a theatre” (1948, 18). Cooney highlights that a farce “is intended to get laughs” (2014a). Arditti concurs, stating that for many audiences, “laughter is the litmus test of farce”, which he claims is a “perfectly respectable ambition” (1996, 3). As a caution, however, Bermel contends “simply as a matter of observation, that laughter is not the motive behind farce, only its principal by-product” (1990, 43). Since one of farce’s purposes is to generate laughter, it is prudent that in writing farce, the concept is also considered along with the other principles. There is a danger of focusing on this principle, without the consideration of the farce comedy screenplay, with all of the actions and dialogue, and albeit, not to assume it is a given, which could lead to a type of ‘light’ or ‘ tepid’ comedy.

The analysis of this principle starts with the end result, ‘laughter’. In what is laughter, William Hazlitt describes laughter as the “convulsive and involuntary movement, occasioned by mere surprise or contrast (in the absence of any more serious emotion), before it has time to reconcile its belief to contradictory appearances” (1909, 10, cited in Rozik 2011, 31). In Bergson’s analysis of laughter, he argues that “The comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly human” in which he states that a beautiful or an ugly landscape is not laughable (1956, 62). Yet, Rozik challenges Bergson’s claim noting that animals “can be ludicrous if human expressions or attitudes are detected in them” (2011, 32). In agreement, Bermel asserts that objects, machines, plants and insects can “behave like characters” in most farces (1990, 25–26). This bodes well for farceurs who would like to include non-humans in their stories, including in movies, animation and television.

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77 It is important to note that Ellis is stating his current realities of the world situation (i.e., WWII).
78 It should be noted that both men and women served in the war(s).
79 In reference to farce comedy, not necessarily farce tragedy. Due to the PhD scope limitations, I address this for farce comedy in the motion picture industry.
80 This is an inversion of Bergson’s ‘new law’ of comedy, whereby, “We laugh every time a person gives us the impression of being a thing” (1911, 58).
The purpose of humour has been debated in the academy, medical, scientific, philosophy and theatre circles since early Greek culture. From a playwright’s perspective, Ellis remarks that “ordinary citizens say he can forget his troubles when he sees a funny show. To him, it is a like a refreshing breeze, or a breath of sea air or a burst of sunshine after a storm. Laughter has this effect on frayed nerves. Normal people enjoy laughing, and know its *tonic value*” (1948, 18, my italics). This ‘tonic value’ or catharsis can be considered one of the foundations of the debate in humour studies. In dictionary.com (2014), catharsis, in regard to literary and literary critical terms, especially in Aristotelian literary criticism, means the purging, purification, discharging, relieving of and/or cleansing of the emotions through the evocation of fear, pity, tension and other undesired elements, through a work of art, i.e., tragic drama, tragedy, music. This definition fails to include laughter. According to McKee (Mckeestory.com 2012), laughter is not an emotion; laughter is the getting rid of the emotion. Although Rozik suggests that ‘catharsis’ has been variously understood and translated since Aristotle first wrote *Poetics* (Rozik 2011, 68), he argues it is through the “theory of drama” that explanations of “why increased and accumulated tension should lead to its eventual release” known as “holistic catharsis” (ibid, 69). This dissertation aims to analyse laughter as catharsis in regard to screenwriting.

It continues to be discussed by theorists such as Elder Olson who states that laughter is “a relaxation”, in which he notes Aristotle’s “*katastatis* is a pleasant emotion, for the concern of any kind induces tension; [and] the relaxation of concern involves…the settling of the soul into its natural or normal condition, which is always pleasant” (1968, 16, italics in original). Styan concurs with Olson in regard to laughter and the achieving of catharsis (1968, 42). However, Rozik suggests that it would be “difficult to say what is the natural or normal condition of the soul” (2011, 41). Furthermore, Rozik states that neither Bergson nor Hazlitt has explained the “psychical mechanism of laughter and its function in the psyche” in their respective theories of laughter, but the “psychoanalytic school” has made an impact with their insights (2011, 39). Although an in-depth analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation, this points to the farce screenwriter that the audience’s catharsis is within the realm of farce.

Further to Rozik’s discussion regarding catharsis, Gilbert Murray argues for the “close similarity between Aristotle and Freud”, however, Bentley argues that it is
Freud who advanced the idea of catharsis rather than the Aristotelian commentators (cited in Bentley 1964, 228). According to Freud, jokes “are fundamentally cathartic: a release, not a stimulant” (cited in Bentley 1964, 229). Similarly, Martin Grotjahn’s claims that Freud’s theory is “simple and straightforward: Laughter occurs when repressing energy is freed from its static function of keeping something forbidden under repression and away from consciousness” (cited in Corrigan 1965, 270). From Freud’s analysis of laughter as ‘the liberation of tensions in our minds’, Rozik suggests that laughter is the “simple release of accumulated tension through the lifting of a cultural inhibition” (2011, 39 and 69). It is part of a “childish glee” when we laugh freely, that laughter may be a release for us, according to Bermel (1990, 22).

Beyond just humour studies, Olson states that catharsis can be applied to both laughter and tears (1968, 11), but an in-depth analysis of the differences is beyond the scope of this dissertation and the focus is catharsis for the understanding and writing of farce comedy.81 Since laughter is a critical component in this genre, farceurs might consider the cathartic nature of the humour they are creating, which from a screenwriting perspective might include a deep consideration of the relationship between plot, character and theme.

In contrast to Bergson, Rozik argues that the “hallmark of comedy” is that laughter can be “employed” both as a “social corrective” and “fundamentally as a pleasant cathartic means” (2011, 41). Davis’ analysis of laughter concurs with Rozik in stating that it “becomes corrective—an excoriation of social misfits” (Davis 2003, 70), but also remarks that Bergson’s theories were aware and sensitive to these issues, albeit in contrast, as he was concerned with the various ‘forms’ in the world of comedy and humour especially in theatre (ibid, 121). This comes back to Bentley’s original essay on farce. The actual term, ‘the psychology of farce’, invented by Bentley, relates to the human (i.e., audience) need to experience or indulge in our unmentionable, anti-social wishes, fantasies or taboos without any consequences (Bentley 1958, x, xiii-xx; Bentley 1964, 229). The audience does not have to feel guilty, suffer for their repressed or pent-up thoughts, or to take responsibility for their actions. Bentley cites Freud noting that it appeals to a person’s innermost secret, or hidden thoughts. These

81 This is assuming that Olson means tragedy for ‘tears’.
wishes could be revenge (without retaliation), violence (without harm), adultery (without consequence), and brutality (without reprisal).

Freud argues that it is the ‘peripeteia’ (in all drama archetypal structures) towards harmony that releases the harmful anxiety, like the opening of a valve to release the excessive pressure. In Freud’s study, *Jokes and their Relationship to the Unconscious* (1905), he argues that similar to dreams, “fantasies of humor… bypass taboos established by our innate ‘cultural censor’ ” (cited in Davis 2003, 90). In analysing Freud’s theories, Davis further adds:

> The fantasies permit more primitive, underlying impulses to express themselves in ways which both our conscious and our unconscious minds would habitually forbid. We regress to forms of pleasure which are normally inhibited and rejected as childish, as uncivilized or possibly even as ‘sinful’. Jokes permit the delights of nonsense-talk, of what Freud calls ‘smut’, or free reference to sexual and anal functions, a vicarious indulgence of the body and all its senses; and give free rein to hostility against the curbs demanded by proper social behavior (2003, 90).

In contrasting viewpoints and theories about clean and dirty jokes, when a joke has gone too far, and what constitutes boundaries and/or limits, the theorists and commentators range the full spectrum. In their analyses, it can be noted that farceurs do not have to stick to one or the other, but have the freedom to explore, and not be bound by limitations. According to Freud, there are two types of joke: one is “innocent and harmless”, and one has a “purpose, a tendency, an end in view” (cited in Bentley 1964, 237). The innocent jokes promote laughter with a comic mood, while for the latter tendentious jokes, Freud further states there are two types of purpose: “to destroy and to expose—to smash and to strip” (cited in Bentley 1964, 237, my italics). Destructive jokes can be found in sarcasm and satire, while the ‘expose’ jokes are under bawdry, ribaldry and obscenity (Bentley 1964, 237).

However, Bentley analyses Freud’s interpretation by pointing out that Freud places satire alongside obscenity, and therefore suggests “there is a destructive force also in the joke that exposes” (1964, 237). This concept of what is behind the joke is further analysed here. Bentley concludes that both satire and the obscene fall under the “heading of aggression” (1964, 237). Davis remarks that in simple farces, where a
practical joker plays a prank or a joke on a gullible or defenceless victim without any purpose except humiliation, psychologists would relegate this as ‘hostile’ or ‘aggressive’ joking (2003, 89). Hence, Bentley deduces that jokes can be divided furthermore into two other categories: aggressive jokes and nonaggressive jokes (1964, 237). Davis argues that since farce is aggressive already, jokes go far beyond the “malicious innuendo and derogation” as told in “hostile” political jokes (2003, 89). When one is happy or laughs at another’s unhappiness, misfortunes, cruelty, pain or grief that is either obvious or just beneath the surface, this is known as Schadenfreude. Shaw argues against and is repulsed by this type of farce; considering it “uncivilized and primitive”: a childish behaviour in the delight of the bad luck of others or less powerful than themselves (cited in Davis 2003, 91). It does take a certain freedom and mentality to write farce, in which the story weaves the humour and jokes at the expense of the characters in the story.

Further to the ‘undesirable humour’, the spectrum of farce also includes gross-out humour. Since Attic Comedy and Aristophanes (i.e., the Greeks) (Henderson 1991, 1), elements of gross-out, the grotesque and obscene humour have been documented in dramatic form. Hurd notes that the Roman and Greek plays included farces “of the grossest and most absurd composition” (1811, 234). In addition, William Paul adds that the traveling performance art troupes of the Roman Empire, minstrels, jongleurs [sic], troubadours, commedia dell’arte, medieval fairs and Renaissance England fairs, with their puppet shows and theatrical spectacle, “inserted as many extravagancies, vulgarities and obscenities as the play would accommodate” (1991, 109). This was the even the case with biblical stories. In cinema, according to King, there has been a long history of the grotesque and the gross-out (2002, 63). Firstly, in regard to cinematic vulgarities, Paul credits Charlie Chaplin for “reinstating low

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82 See Merriam-Webster.com.
83 Alternate terms (sample only): bathroom humour, cock/dick/penis jokes, dirty humour, obscene humour, politically-incorrect humour, raucous comedy, raunch(y) humour, toilet humour and vagina jokes. Gross-out humour includes bodily functions and waste excretions — burping, childbirth, circumcision, defecation (i.e., constipation, diarrhea, dump, number 2, poop, shit), flatulence (i.e., fart, pass gas/wind), lactation, menstruation (i.e., period), snot and urination (i.e., pee, piss, leak, wee).
84 From literature circles, it has been known that Geoffrey Chancer’s famous The Canterbury Tales (1475) has elements of gross-out, vulgar or obscenity.
85 See William Paul’s article for more information about the traveling troupes.
comedy as Chaplin’s greatest achievement, not a mere means by which he arrived at higher ends” (1991, 111). As an example, in Chaplin’s City Lights (1931), the vulgarity includes anal humour (Paul 1991, 118; King 2002, 65). In the 1970s, movies such as Pink Flamingos (1972) and National Lampoon’s Animal House (1978) have ushered in this ‘sub-genre’ of cinematic comedy, with these two motion pictures establishing the ‘gross-out movie’ label, although earlier films have displayed elements of gross-out and the grotesque (i.e., the Charlie Chaplin films) (Gibron 2013; Phillips 2015; Yahoo.com/movies 2015).

In the theories of gross-out movies, Graves and Engle report that it is related to farce; and, it “spares nothing and no one for the sake of a laugh with no opportunity to violate good taste or courtesy overlooked” (2006, 30). As to sociological structures, Linda Mizejewski states that gross-out comedy is a “form of social mayhem” due to violating taboos “involving basic distinctions in designating oneself as human and setting up boundaries” to distance oneself from off-colour controversial subjects such as body excrement, discarded skin and amputated parts, in the goal of shocking an audience (2014, 103–104). Interestingly, and pertinent for my screenplay, antisocial comedy has traditionally been male characters and farceurs as comedy scholar Geoff King notes that women are far less likely to be cast in the role of comic anarchist because gender—women and men in their proper roles—is the anchor of the broader social contracts. It is important to note that there have been female farceurs such as Lucille Ball and Carol Burnett. King finds that the comic woman anarchist “represents a more serious challenge to the gender hierarchies on which so many social relationships are based” (King 2002, 133, cited in Mizejewski 2014, 104).

86 See Mikhail Bakhtin’s Francois Rabelais’ theory of ‘grotesque realism’, and its ‘high’ and ‘low’ body theories.

87 Note: King’s book is dated 14 years ago. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to categorise all farce plays and films to see the division of male and female farce actors, writers and characters throughout history.

88 Mizejewski’s point is that “these profoundly antisocial narratives involving pollution taboos enact a radical subversion of gender, challenging the kind of sitcom narratives appropriate for the ‘totally cute white girl’ ” (2014, 103–104). There are numerous studies on gender in relation to media, marketing, arts, entertainment, culture and communication. Any further analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
Graves and Engle state that teen comedies frequently fall into this category, with an even further sub-genre of high school and college comedy subjects, which emphasises the antics and “awkwardness of coming of age often structures the narrative only in the crudest or crassest terms” (2006, 30). In the push-pull debate between the theories of ‘why’ and ‘how’ in humour studies, the gap between the practice of analysing the various theories and applications are quite vast, as farceurs consider the variants, such as: the difference between higher or lower forms of comedy; the psychological and philosophical theories behind the cultural, behavioural and social of humour; acceptance and rejection of the numerous laughter debates; and, the importance of studying such humour theories. I would suggest for future farceurs to know their limits within this principle, and to dig deep to go beyond what is considered ‘normal’ or everyday humour. When I embark on creating humour to elicit laughter, I hope that I will be able to be brave enough to break my own limits and boundaries in order to write a farce comedy screenplay that makes people laugh, either comfortable or not as for them to have a catharsis.

Principle #4—Plot, Story and Style

Farce treats the improbable as probable, the impossible as possible.
George Pierce Baker

There is danger, destruction, torment!
What more do we want to make us merry?
Keegan, a mystic, John Bull’s Other Island, Bernard Shaw
(in Bermel 1990, 13)

When embarking on writing farce, Ellis remarks “Summa Ars [high art] is spoken very often, but its true meaning is frequently lost in the labyrinth of thinking about plot and characterization, etc. In that matter we have in hand at the moment, I am urging that it should be kept well to the foreground” (1948, 11). Although there are numerous plot theories and devices available to the screenwriter, there is a limited selection analysed in this section because the focus is on farce theory guidance for screenwriters. In analysing tragedy, Aristotle argues that the “most important of all is the structure of the incidents” in how stories are to engage and effect the audience (Poetics VI, 9). Aristotle adds that “The Plot, then, is the first principle, and as it were
the soul of tragedy: Character holds the second place” (ibid, 14). Frye (1957, 171–72) and Rozik (2011, 98) endorse that Aristotle’s theory holds true for comedy. What holds true for tragedy and comedy also applies to farce as Jonathan Biggins declares: “The first rule of farce is that it’s about plot and not about character” (cited in Jefferson 2015).

Levine stresses the “structure of a farce is critical”, as it needs “careful planning” with “constant roadblocks” in which “Complications on top of more complications” are added as the “vice tightens” continuously (2006). I also look to Michael Booth’s analyses of the “mechanical structures” of farce, which are insightful as they examine how to structure farce to create chaos (cited in Redmond 1988, 145–152). As an example, Biggins compares Frayn’s stage directions (i.e., Frayn’s play, Noises Off), to a Swiss watch:

You just have to do it exactly as it’s laid out for you and as prescribed… But at the same time, you do have to find some kind of emotional build—otherwise it just becomes repetition of the same thing. And some productions fall into the habit of trying to make it funny—which is always disastrous, I think. You have to play it straight, play it for real (cited in Jefferson 2015, emphasis in original).

The current lexicon of the word ‘farce’ is tackled and deconstructed next. Writing how Aristotle declares that “plot is the soul of the drama” (Bentley 1984, 267), Bentley adds that first a clarification of the colloquial use and/or abuse of the word ‘farce’ must be addressed. He states that remarks such as “It’s a farce”, or “It’s absolutely farcical” for a non-theatrical phenomenon mean that “farce is absurd”, which could be noted as not making any sense (1964, 244, italics in original). Essentially, he states, “If the ridiculous element is overstressed, it turns to farce” (1953, 45). Similarly, Eliot states that “the word [farce] is a misnomer”, in its common usage for the ‘ridiculous’ (1943, 123). Bentley elaborates further with “farce

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89 *The Oxford English Dictionary* (2014) reports one of the definitions of farce as “Something as ridiculous as a theatrical farce; a proceeding that is ludicrously futile or insincere; a hollow pretence, a mockery.” Likewise, the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2014) states farce as “something that is so bad that it is seen as ridiculous”, and “an empty or patently ridiculous act, proceeding, or situation.” *The Collins Dictionary* (2014) defines farce as “a ludicrous situation or action”.

is a veritable structure of absurdities” in which he clarifies that structure is emphasised since generally we regard “absurdities as amorphous” (1964, 244, italics in original). He argues that it is “only in such a syndrome as paranoia that we find reason in the madness: the absurdities which we would be inclined to call stupid are connected in a way we cannot but consider the reverse of stupid. There is an ingenious and complex set of interrelationships” (1964, 244–45). In his chapter, “In the Realm of the Unreal,” Bermel states that farce is the epitome of “the bad takes a turn for the worse” (1990, 20). Michael Billington recalls Jonathan Lynn’s description of farce, going even further with “the worst day of your life” (cited in Billington 2013). This tells us that farce stories are written with the consideration of an extremely tightly structured plot that involves a ‘living nightmare’.

In connecting plot with humour, I refer to Horton’s investigation if there are any plot models that are inherently humorous. He concludes that “No plot is inherently funny”, but if inverted, any plot can be hypothetically comic, melodramatic, tragic or conceivable all three at once (1991, 1). In the challenges in trying to locate the comic in plot structure, Horton advocates Palmer’s analysis in The Logic of the Absurd: On Film and Television Comedy (1988), as “the plot structure either are not specifically funny, not specific to comedy in any sense of the word, or they are not in fact plot structures, but refer to the minimum not of comic plot, the individual joke or gag” (Palmer 1988, 28, cited in Horton 1991, 1). Davis reports, “the simplest kind of farce requires little more than a suitable victim, a practical joker and a good idea for a prank” (2003, 89). In regard to screenwriting, since the plot structure is founded on the standard 3 ACT template, the farceur undertakes the extra consideration of adding humour into the plot, suggesting more than basic plot structure is needed.

Farceurs negotiate the territory of plot realism with ‘tragic’ influences and foundations. Murray argues that every play benefits if it has a “real base”, in which the scenes can be dramatic, even in subtext (2011, 58). Cooney, in agreement that plot is the start for farceurs, stresses he is not looking for a ‘funny’ storyline or ‘comedy’

Gerald Mast notes that there are “eight comic film plots, eight basic structures [in]… film comedies”, but an in-depth analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation (1979, 4). I have concentrated on Bermel’s (1990) and Davis’ farce plots for this dissertation (2003).
plot, but a “tragedy” (2014a). Wolff concurs: “The plot in a good farce should be able to be transplanted into a stark tragedy” (2010). He claims, “Most tragedies have as their theme the struggle of the individual against forces that are overwhelming and the individual's efforts to combat those forces as the tide runs stronger against him” (ibid). Danny Simon stresses that the “essence of a great comedy” is to make it real: “No matter how ridiculous things get, keep a link to the believable. Be sure that it is the audience that finds the events funny, never your characters” (cited in Wolff 2010). Cooney adds, “In real life, situations are an absolute tragedy for those finding themselves involved in it, but the audience instinctively understands what is at stake” (2014a). In short, making the plot more ‘real’ is more productive than simply inserting more jokes or a punch line.

Several farce plot structures are noted next for the purposes of screenwriting. I look to Albert Bermel and Jessica Milner Davis for specific classification and clarification. According to Bermel, a common play construction for farce is the well-made play that was popular in the United States and abroad since the nineteenth century (1990, 248). This is similar to several screenwriting templates and theories, since the plot is tightly structured, with an inciting incident near the beginning and a climax near the end of the story. In her book, Farce, Davis concludes that farce plots, “ultimately most conform to one of a limited number of patterns, using them either alone or in combination to achieve an all-important balance” (2003, 6). I have added her farce plots for screenwriters to understand how farce plots can be written.

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91 I also reference John Truby’s Cyclone structure. Please see under Distinctive Contributions in Conclusions.
Table 2: Jessica Milner Davis—Farce Plots

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Schemata of Farce-Plots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Humiliation or Deception Farces</td>
<td>in which an unpleasant victim is exposed to their fate, without opportunity for retaliation. These farces are unidirectional in their joking and require special justifications for the pleasure taken in the sufferings of others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Reversal Farces</td>
<td>in which the tables are turned on the original rebel or joker, allowing the victim retaliation in return. Often there are further switches of direction permitted, to prolong the mirth and ensure the “proper” conventional outcome.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Equilibrium or Quarrel Farces</td>
<td>where the plot focuses upon a narrow, perpetual-motion kind of movement, in which two opposing forces wrestle each other literally or metaphorically, in a tug-of-war without resolution, remaining in permanent balance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Snowball Farces</td>
<td>in which all the characters are equally caught up as victims in a whirlwind of escalating sound and fury. Often these plots are driven by an elaborate series of misunderstandings and errors, giving rise to many “crossed” lines between the different parties. The power of nature, of inanimate objects, tools and machines, in dominating mere humans is frequently the source of the joke.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Other story devices play key parts in farce plots that farceurs could use in designing their stories. These include coincidence (Bentley 1964, 245; Bermel 1990, 26); misunderstandings (Cardulla 2015, 179; Graves and Engle 2006; Bermel 1990, 26); accidents (Bermel 1990, 26); race against time or a ticking clock (Bermel 1990, 26 and 114; Truby 2008, 190; Levine 2006); repetition—of characters, events, phrases, problems, scenes, etc. (Bergson, cited in Davis 2003, 121; Rozik 2011, 53); inversion— repetition with a twist or contrast; reversals and oppositions (Bergson, cited in Davis 2003, 121); interference of series—misunderstandings, qui pro quo’s and “crossed-wires” (Bergson, cited in Davis 2003, 121); lies (Levine 2006); and deception (Happé 2002, 31). It can be suggested that this ‘interference of series’ also, to a certain degree, explains why the incongruity of a human behaving like a thing, and a thing behaving like a human can be a source of comedy.
At the same time, Ellis cautions farceurs to limit certain mechanical trope devices. He writes: “Try and avoid the constant going in and out of doors during the important situations. Remember you have to make your story interesting and hold the attention of the audience the whole time, and the constant opening and shutting of doors is enough to spoil the effect of an amusing scene” (1948, 40). It is important to note that farces have many elements, and it is imperative that farceurs implement a tight control over their plot in their stories. The essential message is to design a story with a plot that is mercurially tight. Afterwards, the other story ingredients are added to make it absurd as well as entertaining. I suggest that farceurs be patient with themselves as the story design develops during each revision. I would hope that my story design reflects the machinations of farce’s plotting, and that I have enough insight and perseverance to peel back the layers of the onion to get to the core and the heart of the story at the same time.

**Principle #5—Uncensored, Wild Characters**

Man is least himself when he talks in his own person.  
Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.  
Oscar Wilde

In the ongoing debate between plot and character, which is just as pertinent in screenwriting as it is farce, the theorists vary widely in their analyses and opinions as to which is more important. Frye affirms Aristotle’s theory that character is second after plot, arguing that “In drama, characterization depends on function” in which characters are revealed in what they ‘do’ in the play; and furthermore, “Dramatic function in its turn depends on the structure of the play; the character has a certain thing to do because a play has such and such a shape” (1957, 171–72). Rozik agrees with Aristotle and Frye, asserting that the comedic character is “a structured unit subordinated to the overall layered structure of the fictional world” as opposed to a “bundle of casually related traits” (2011, 99).

However, in Bentley’s theories, story tropes in farce go hand in hand with character tropes, in that they are not separate entities (1964). Styan observes that a play cannot be judged by character alone, that it must be considered along with the plot, “Since
Aristotle, the student of drama has been led into considering character as a separate entity, without full regard for its being cause or effect” (1960, 164). Furthermore, Styan states that “In drama, ‘character’ is not an author’s raw material: it is his product. It emerges from the play; it is not put into it. It has an infinity of subtle uses, but they all serve in the orchestration of the play as a whole; and so character finds this place in the scheme” (1960, 163). In Theatreprobleme (1955), Dürrenmatt reiterates, “The action is the crucible in which Man must become Word. This means that I am obliged to put my characters into situations which force them to speak” (cited in Melchinger 1966, 120–21). Screenwriters also debate this conundrum of plot vs. character; for example, if the story is character-driven, then the main element is character over plot. But, as we have seen previously, farce is plot-driven.

According to Rozik, a character’s “basic and essential trait… is its humanity. This trait justifies the interpretation of its behavior as human” (2011, 99). However, the opposite is suggested in farce. Bergson declares that “every comic character is a type” (1911, 148), and Styan adds that these comic characters are “presented with one side only towards the spectator, whereas tragic heroes tend to be many-sided individuals” (1962, 260). In Bentley’s analysis of characters in farce, he first claims that the “farceur is a heretic” who disbelieves that “man was made in God’s image”, hence calling “us” being portrayed in the image of ape (1964, 248). Billington notes that farce does not “deal with human character at its subtlest or most refined. What it does, from Plautus onwards, is propel stock figures into a living nightmare of mistaken identities, thwarted lusts and spiralling invention” (2013). In contrast to drama, Kierkegaard and Louis Mackey argue that “conscientious spectator[s]” cannot expect fine characterisation in farce, since “the characters in the farce are all sketched on the abstract scale of ‘the general’. Situation, action, and dialogue are all on this scale” (1954, 4). Additionally, Constantin Constantius [Kierkegaard] describes “the characters [as] thin” in farce (cited in Hughes 2014, 137). Wyllie concurs, “realism is dispensed with” in farce, and the “main characters are crudely drawn through vivid caricatures, while a series of stereotypes engage in almost pantomime situation” (2009, 106). This implies that when writing a farce, the characters are free from restrictions for farceurs, in setting up their flaws or their troubled minds. And, this poses important questions about how one might best to explore the archetypes and the stereotypes to also understand their characters more deeply.
Historically, I start with Aristotle, who suggests that in comedy, “an imitation of characters of a lower type, —not, however, in the full sense of the word bad, the Ludicrous being merely a subdivision of the ugly. To take an obvious example, the comic mask is ugly and distorted, but does not imply pain” (Poetics V, 1; Halliwell, 36, cited in Corrigan 1981, 9). In unpacking Aristotle’s ideologies, C.W.E. Bigsby delves deeper in this analysis, ascribing the world of farce is “a world of partial beings, role players whose mask is constantly in danger of slipping, even if this is conveniently reinstated at the climax of the play” (Bigsby 1982, 53-54, cited in Wyllie 2009, 113). Bentley states that “the farces of the commedia dell’arte were Atellan Farces raised to a higher power” in which characters were expanded to a “complete human menagerie”, thus it was no longer limited to three types of fool and one type of knave (1964, 251). Bentley claims that “commedia [has] deeper roots than social manners or even society itself” in which the characters “come in time to stand for the human in the most restricted sense, the human cut off from Nature. But originally they represented human nature as part of Nature-in-general, human life as part of all life” (1964, 252). In creating characters for farce screenplays, the characters’ attributes represent humans who are much less sophisticated than in dramas or tragedies. The challenge is for screenwriters to be open-minded and bold in developing farce characters, who are the opposite in nature in many current films in which the Hollywood landscape prefers their characters to be ‘nice’ and ‘normal’.

Although farce and tragedy share many traits, one distinctive characteristic of farce (and/or comedy) is the lack of the characters’ intelligence. To start, I highlight an initial problem in scholarship; Bentley disagrees with The Oxford Companion because it “seems to regret that the characters of farce are stupid. But they are deliberate monuments to stupidity, disturbing reminders that God has lavished stupidity on the human race with His own rivaled [sic] prodigality” (Bentley 1964, 250). Also, Bentley questions W.H. Auden’s (1907–1973) statement that “art can have but one subject; man as a conscious unique person”, by then suggesting that if his statement is true, “farce is not an art” (cited in Bentley 1964, 250). Rozik adds that there is

92 In the preface to Halliwell's translation, he makes the point that the Poetics should be read as a set of lecture notes. If this is the case, then the Poetics, like my dissertation, are designed as instructional for practitioners.
“something in the low mode of ludicrous character that is ironic in nature: assumedly, they know less” due to their status as lowly mode characters in comedy and farce (2011, 47). From a farceur’s perspective, Jason Bateman discusses the movie, *Horrible Bosses 2* (2014), in which he was asked about the stupidity of the characters. He replied that if the “characters were any smarter, it would be a drama.” As a dialectic of farce, Bentley analyses Blaise Pascal’s statement of ‘man as a thinking reed’, who describes the metaphor embracing “two characteristics: intellect and weakness” (cited in Bentley 1964, 250). Bentley argues that farce must entertain the opposite with “What wisdom can there be without a poignant sense of wisdom’s opposite, which is folly?” (1964, 251). This raises an important point about the farce story; that when developing characters, farceurs must delve deeper into characters’ psyches, to deconstruct characters to show the characters’ stupidity, simplicity, naïveté and foolishness without hesitation as a representative of the human race. Otherwise, as Bateman states, you are writing a drama instead.

While not focused on the film as being made and performed, the idea of acting is important because farce is not only different to the other genres, but it is known for its style of acting. The analyses of acting methods in farce have been structured to discuss both theoretical and practice point of views. To begin, Bentley states, “Melodrama is written” and “Farce is acted” (1964, 251). Along the same lines, compared to melodrama, Billington advocates Bentley’s argument that farce’s “starting point is the actor's body and its culmination is a universal milling around in which chaos descends” (Billington 2013; Bentley 1964, 251). In contrast, Styan argues that the acting itself can be a good guide to the nature of the convention of the play, but it should be noted that the acting itself is only one manifestation of that play, and does not solely dictate the genre or type of play (1960, 46). Murray cautions against the “fake style” of farce acting, especially in period comedies, i.e., Sheridan or Wilde, suggesting a fine line for actors to consider:

[the actors playing the characters]… which makes them into creatures that bear no resemblance to ourselves or anyone we know. Every good play works because its reality is recognizable to the

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93 Steve Kaplan, a screenwriting instructor, has also been known to say something similar about comedy/farce characters (kaplancomedy.com).
However, theory may clash with creative practice, as the farceur Ellis suggests, “You will find that by emphasizing the peculiarities in the characters, you can often get good laughs, so long as you don’t over-emphasize” (1948, 41). In writing farce, screenwriters need to be conscious of their characters’ antics and movements. For another angle on the exaggerated farceur that is useful for screenwriters, I refer to Bergson who observed that some comic characters behaved “mechanically” (cited in Bermel 1990, 30). The “Bergsonian effects” can depend on a “mechanical” approach and a “mathematical” pattern of events in the presentation of character (Davis 2003, 122–123). This informs the writing of farce characters, as screenwriters need to explore their characters in creating each with their own unique movements that can be understood on the page. The repetitions can suggest character personality and their inner mindset, either to portray a positive or negative trait, which is easily identifiable by the audience. For screenwriters, creating the characters’ outside reveals the characters’ inside. Or, creating the characters’ outside to reveal the opposite of the characters’ inside; hence, the screenwriter becomes the ‘trickster’.

Finally, in the analysis of characters in this genre, screenwriters can manifest their ideologies within this ‘type’ of ‘dramatic’ character, which is unlike other dramatic characters in other genres, in writing their stories. In noting that farce characters are worthy of having their stories told and that one principle does not make or break a genre, Styan argues that “The proper grounds for debate are the precise nature of the convention the play is written in and its suitability to its task, not whether one convention is better than another” (1960, 25 and 46). This, he argues, is an “academic red-herring which distracts from the business of appreciating the play as it stands”, and suggests this is “not to plead for Ibsen and pass judgment on Wilde” (ibid). The constructive of farce characters strips bare of what it means to be human, and the screenplay tells the story of characters who are human in their ‘ape’ heretic image. As the screenwriter breaks boundaries with their characters, the story becomes richer. In current times, dialogue and language has become uncensored in the arts and entertainment industry with sexual references, foul language, and racist and
sexist commentary. Farce comedies take many liberties in the language and the
tone such as in raunchy farce comedies. Future farceurs need to be aware of the
current climate, as well as write with a “polish” that would be representative of
the past famous farceurs. It is with discovering who I am that I will be able to
get inside of the characters and present them truly free of restraint in my farce
comedy screenplay.

**Principle #6—Pacing, Tempo and Timing**

Farce is tragedy played at a thousand revolutions per minute.
John Mortimer

Thomas states that *mood, rhythm* and *tempo* can be classified under Aristotle’s feature
of music or song (2014, 271, italics in original). He notes how “scholars believe that
Aristotle’s term referred to… music as well as the rhythms of the verse itself.
[Aristotle] observed that music and rhythm were capable of directly inciting emotions
and he concluded that these emotions enhanced the dramatic impression of plays”
(ibid). As a guide only, Thomas reports that there are distinctions between pace,
rhythm, speed, tempo, and timing; although there are no precise definitions in the
theatre, but notes that they are related concepts (2014, 272). Thomas’ definitions
may be used for drama in general, but farce is technically designed differently from
other kinds of dramas, especially in regard to speed. Farceurs write with the intention
of the story moving incredibly fast.

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94 Music/song is one of Aristotle’s six basic elements of drama (Thomas 2014, 271).
95 Thomas’ definitions are to be considered representative only (2014, 272); “Timing is the
temporal relationship between one spoken word and another, between a spoken word and a
physical action, or between two physical actions. Speed is the measurable rate of movement
or speech in real time. And pace means the observer’s subjective perception of speed.” …
Tempo “refers to how much and how often this type of information occurs in the play, that is,
the amount and frequency of such information” (italics in original). He clarifies that “tempo is
not related to the usual meanings of velocity or measurable speed but is closer to the concept
density, the quantity of information in a passage. When dialogue is crowded with
information about plot, character, or idea, the tempo is slow (very dense) because there is a
large amount of such information to deal with. When such information is limited, the content
is thinner (less dense), and the tempo is quicker because there is less new information to sort
out.”
Regardless of what the intentions of the story are, in technical terms, there is only one gear in farce; that farce is fast. As a basis for this farce principle, Bentley’s theories of pacing, tempo, timing and movement for farce are analysed in this section. He argues that the movement of a story is more involved than we generally realise (1964, 247). To start, I refer to Rozik who suggests one of the “aesthetic nature[s] of comedy” manifests in its “typical tempo” (2011, 88). In analysing genre and its expectations with tempos, Rozik claims that comedy differs with its own typical tempo:

It presupposes various intuitive models of tempo that characterize different personalities, occupations and activities, which can be harmonized with or not. In this sense, a particular enacted behavior can be faster or slower than expected; e.g., tragedy is… slower… and comedy faster than usual—with farce bringing tempo to paroxysm (2011, 88).

This shift in farce’s tempo and pacing is documented as having occurred in the 19th century. The prominent 19th century critic, Sarcey, called Labiche’s famous “vaudeville-farce,” The Italian Straw Hat, “a revolution in vaudeville” when it was first performed in 1851; Davis notes that the “pace and style of that somewhat leisurely genre was indeed revolutionized by this fast and furious nightmare” (Davis 2003, 124, italics in original). Although Murray reports that it is problematic to generalise about speed, he reports that farce is performed at “breakneck speed” (2011, 85), and that the “Enforced speed is of the essence” in farce (2011, 24). This is important to note, especially as this is a specialised technique within the screenwriter’s body of farce knowledge. The screenwriters’ skill will be enhanced when implanting this farce principle into the story as it takes practice to achieve this high level of script construction.

Generally, the theorists are in agreement in this farce principle with some instructional advice for the farceur. Levine states that as the story builds, the pace quickens (2006). He reports that farce is like a “snowball rolling down a hill, gaining momentum and size” if done properly (2006). Bermel states that not only must the

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96 Bentley investigates why farce directors “always call for tempo, tempo, tempo?” (1964, 247). He dismisses that directors prefer business efficiency and the widespread belief in theatre that “fast is always better than slow” (ibid, italics in original).

97 See Jessica Milner Davis’ description of a snowball farce in Farce Principle #4.
farce characters keep up the momentum, but they must also accelerate it (1990, 21). From a practicing farceur’s perspective, John Cleese notes that the “thing about farce, is that everything is happening in an exaggerated way... you may start it quite low key... it kind of winds up, and people get more and more frantic... with that, comes more frantic behaviour, more energy, and the possibility of huge laughs” (2001). In agreement, Warburton warns, “Timing is everything. Speed is essential. The swift unpacking of box within box, scene within scene, has to move like a well-oiled machine. The form allows no mercy to the slow actor, the stumbler, the line-blower” (2014). For Thomas, “the tempo of the plot influences the speed with which a scene is performed” (2014, 276). To sustain the right level of tension, he notes that the story beats may have to be performed fast (ibid). In regard to the farce characters, Ellis suggests to “keep the dialogue lively”, and to have the characters break it up with some “funny business” (1948, 8).

However, Murray cautions that it does not mean that the actors speak fast, rather it refers to fast cuing and pacing (according to the “full emotional weight” of each moment) (2011, 85–86). He stresses that “To get the right breakneck speed and the reality for the play,” the director must enforce the pace, as the pace is not real (2011, 125). In regard to Murray’s suggestion of the director enforcing the pace, in parallel, the screenwriter also enforces the pace. In the motion picture industry, drama and historical films are considered slow, and hence, they are written with a lot of exposition, description and backstories. In farce, the screenplay needs to indicate the pace of the story with the opposite writing technique of other genres.

The different theories about farce’s pacing, tempo and timing can relate to the actual story itself. Many original Greek plays were structured in “Real Time”,98 as Cooney explains that the action, plot and/or story is continuous for the two hours in the theatre, with one setting (i.e., the actual two hours in the existence of the characters in the play) (2014a).99 Generally farces are in ‘Real Time’ along with speed, there are no fade-outs, no dissolves, no pauses, no passage of time between the various acts of the play (i.e., between ACT I and ACT II) and no relief (Cooney 2014a; Levine 2006; Cooney 2014b; Levine 2006).

98 It was not indicated if tempo and/or speed were also factored in.
99 This is also his personal rule for his plays to be set in ’Real Time’.
Murray 2011, 124). Truby notes that the Greek dramatists such as Euripides, Aeschylus and Sophocles, used the central technique, where the story takes place in one location, following one storyline or action, and in twenty-hours (2008, 262). However, not all farces are written or performed in ‘Real Time’.

It is not only the pace that is affected, but also what is going on in the play. The pressure on the actors in keeping up with the farcical tone of the story can be immense and “unmistakable” (Davis 2003, 144), for which the screenwriter writes their characters’ movements as ongoing and with shorter action description. Ellis states: “few characters in a farce stand perfectly still” when they say their lines (1948, 8). He stresses plenty of action, especially funny, amusing situations, in which a small action can elicit “roars of laughter with a single word spoken” or a “simple action exaggerated by a comic character has the same effect and adds to the entertainment value” (1948, 9). He recommends, “Sometimes the madder, the better. Exaggeration in farce is possible” (1948, 9, italics in original).

Due to the characters having no time to be self-reflective and analyse their own actions, Bergson notes “once a pattern begins to impose itself upon events in a farce, the action is forced forward to complete the symmetry. The speed and impetus of events limit the characters to helpless gesticulation, in contrast to the decisive exercise of volition permitted a fully dramatic figure” (cited in Davis 2003, 123). Ellis observes that critics demand “epigrams, repartee, wit and brilliance”, but warns that farce is too fast to wait for audiences to appreciate the epigram, not “get it” or get the meaning too late (1948, 28). If there are pauses, and the actors stop to reflect, in a farce, then “Humanity has entered the realm of farce” (Davis 2003, 144). Davis notes that if a “character is allowed to claim attention for his point of view… the pace of the farce is interrupted and the butt of the practical joke is capable of creating a particularly awkward pause in the laughter” (2003, 145–46). Graham McCann claims that Fawlty Towers is the “most frenetic farce to have appeared on television”, in which production techniques, such as the hotel’s little staircase, became an absurd device to “help exacerbate the sense of frantic movement” (cited in McKay 2007).

100 The central technique, as described by Aristotle, is “the unities of time, place, and action” (Truby 2008, 262).
This suggests to the screenwriters that the characters, along with the plot, need a ‘Swiss watch’ mentality, not only for structure, but also in the character’s psychosis related to movement.

In investigating why this frenetic and frantic pace is occurring, the psychology of the characters could also be structured to behave in certain ways. Panic is the driving force that propels the action in a farce (Arditti 1996, 2; Hickling 2003), and as Cardulla stresses, there is a lot of ‘rushing about’ (2015, 90–91). One reason suggested is that the characters lie to save face, compounding “their troubles since they now have to deal not only with the original problem but also the lie and hence they behave even more bizarrely” (Arditti 1996, 2). Frayn argues that he wrote farce instead of ‘real life’, in which he differentiates the two, explaining that everyone has had one of those days where everything goes wrong, “usually as a result of some minor problem spiralling out of control”, in which "Panic causes people to respond to crises in irrational but perfectly believable ways" (cited in Hickling 2003). As part of the increasing frantic desperation, Ellis suggests, “As one embarrassment closes in your farce, be sure to open up another for development later” (1948, 8). This all points to the need to structure my story for each conflict or obstacle to chain-link into each other, or for extreme farce, to overlap and/or interconnect as my characters rush around in panic.

As another theory for farce characters’ behaviour, Bentley suggests faster tempo equals less than human (i.e., unnatural) (1964, 247). Bentley considers the “speeding up of movement contributes to the abstract effect” (ibid, 222). This interconnects with Bergson’s suggestion of faster pacing becomes funny due to humans behaving “mechanically” (cited in Bermel 1990, 30), or like “high-speed machines” (cited in Bentley 1964, 248). In his theories of laughter, Bergson believes that laughter and movement are connected in the way that “The attitudes, gestures and movements of the human body are laughable in exact proportion as that body remind us of a mere machine” (1956, 79). This leads to one of Bergson’s main theories of “mechanical inelasticity”: that laughter is caused by “Something mechanical encrusted on the living” (ibid, 84). He argues,
What life and society require of each of us is a constantly alert attention that discerns the outline of the represent situation, together with a certain elasticity of mind and body to enable us to adapt ourselves in consequence. Tension and elasticity are two forces, mutually complementary, which life bring into play (ibid, 72, italics in original).

Furthermore, the public will “be suspicious of all inelasticity of character” (Bergson 1956, 73), and thus laughter is a reaction to the “lack of elasticity” (1956, 66). Additionally, Rozik (2011, 33) notes that Bergson uses the synonyms interchangeably such as ‘rigidity’ (1956, 66), ‘mechanical inelasticity’ (1956, 67), ‘inelasticity’ and ‘automatism’ (1956, 76). This stress on speed in farce is highlighted in both actors playing and in the writing of farce. With the already added components, this principle of ‘Real Time’ imposes a mammoth demand on the playwright and the screenwriter (Cooney 2014a). How the characters are written on the page suggests how the audience will relate, or not, to them. In the context of screenwriting, then, the multifaceted layers of the farce screenplay are complex, with not only the story’s tempo, but how the characters act/react in their mechanical movements and behaviour. It takes an intricate and psychological bent to create farce characters that are also moving (both literally and emotionally) for the audience. As the screenwriters delve deeper within themselves, they can bring their farce characters to light in a bolder, extreme way. I end with Neil Simon as a fellow creative practitioner. As a farceur, the highest achievement would be as Neil Simon declares, “At the final curtain, the audience must be spent as the actors, who by now are on oxygen support. If the audience is only wheezing with laughter, you need rewrites or actors with stronger lungs” (cited in Levine 2006). There must be continuous movement of some sort, either a character, a situation, an object, an animal, etc. for this principle to work. For future farceurs and myself, implementing speed into the screenplay highlights a farce convention that reflects what can make audiences appreciate farce with perhaps realizing it as they escape their daily troubles. It is my determination to understand and deconstruct my own screenplay to showcase this farce principle at its best in order to make sure an audience doesn’t have time to think about their problems.
Conclusion

In researching this genre, I was determined to know what it is that a farceur needs to be equipped with in order to achieve what the past farceurs have done.\(^1\) My initial search began with Eric Bentley’s book, *The Life of the Drama* (1964), and his theories on farce, in which he has listed ten principles. From those ten principles, I have compiled them into six principles, with the aim of unpacking the scholarship of the principles of farce. Further, I then researched other notable farce theorists such as Albert Bermel and Jessica Milner Davis. With the background that most of the farce theories were related to the theatre, this chapter has provided understanding and guidance for my creative practice, in the endeavour of writing a farce screenplay for this PhD, and in creating a guide for screenwriters who would like to write farce screenplays.

From my point of view, farce feels hidden, in regard to how the farceur achieves it, and how it is written on the page. Albeit, the final end product, the play and the motion picture, shows the farce principles in action, without much or any analysis from the spectator. I have played farce characters (i.e., Molière’s *Tartuffe*), but had little insight on how to write farce. This chapter reveals through an in-depth examination the hidden methods of both understanding and writing farce. As I explored each principle, I uncovered the principle’s technique and method, which increased my understanding. This awareness led to my having more insights into the mechanisms of the philosophy and the writing of farce screenplays. For transparency’s sake, the complexities of farce sometimes overwhelmed me, with how much thought, and how much a writer exposes their soul, into creating a farce story. Even the smallest, subtlest details, are thoroughly thought through and investigated before it ends up in the final draft before it is shown to the audience.

Although theorists such as Arditti (1966, 3) and Bermel (1990, 15) note that farce is generally considered a theatrical genre, with Rix who “admits that bedroom farce is

\(^{1}\) The theories of creative practice, in regard to the methods/methodologies of producing a creative artefact, are vast, diverse, polarising and inexact. A further analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation. See books such as *Practice-led Research, Research-led Practice in the Creative Arts* (2009) by Hazel Smith and Roger Dean.
dead” (cited in Arditti 1966, 3), Bermel goes on to remark, “But farce came into a new prominence in the past seventy years, thanks to early Hollywood. And then it ramified like mad” (1990, 13–14). It is Bermel’s last comment that I keep in mind, as farce is worthy of further investigation, especially in regard to screenwriting, to contribute to the canon of farce knowledge. Furthermore, I look to Davis as she encourages how farce enables us to understand ourselves, not only better, but also more innately:

In celebrating its festive license to indulge our natural impulses, farce must equally celebrate that tyrannous rule. In the face of resistible forces—the mechanical demands of the body, the mechanical patterns of habit, the universal laws of mechanics themselves, and beyond all these, the mechanical manipulations of the plot—farce acknowledges our common helplessness (2003, 143).

After this examination into the farce principles, I heed Marcel Achard’s assessment that the “art of a master farceur is supreme”; furthermore, as Feydeau asserts of this genre, “It is not simple to combine the skill of a clockmaker, an inventor, a chess-player, a mathematician and a comic writer” (Marcel Achard, cited in Arditti 1996, 2). As a screenwriter who has never written a farce comedy, it appears daunting to begin, let alone finish such a creative endeavour. I vision this endeavour to climbing Mount Everest in the land of screenwriting. I keep the knowledge that Arditti remarks that farce’s laughter can radiate good health, and “So long as the lies are big enough, the plot convoluted enough and the person important enough, there will always be farce” (1966, 3); and as Levine states that “They’re incredibly tough to pull off but unbelievably satisfying when you do” (2006). To marry theory with practice, then, I next turn to the feature film, Bridesmaids, which I analyse using these six principles of farce. The intention of this is to understand how the screenwriters wrote their farce screenplay, under the aim of bringing to light the ‘hidden’ workings of the farce principles for creative practice knowledge. This then serves as a basis, upon which I can try and write my own screenplay, which serves both a creative artefact in its own right, and also a source for reflection on the process.
Chapter 3 –
An Analysis of the Screenplay, Bridesmaids

There is no method, but to be very intelligent.
T.S. Eliot

Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t.
Hamlet, Shakespeare

Introduction
In the previous chapters, I have compiled and examined the farce principles, especially by the main farce theorists Bentley, Bermel and Davis, with the focus on applications for screenwriting. By offering textual analysis of the film, Bridesmaids, using both the formalist method approach and the case study method approach, the critical analysis next aims to unpack how useful—or not—the farce principles were applied to a produced screenplay, and it is hoped that it may provide a deep understanding of how screenwriters use farce in their screenplays that is useful to practitioners like myself, and also screen scholars. It is my intention to use the case study as another method and as a model to understand the screenwriting techniques of the farce genre in this creative practice method approach. As noted throughout this dissertation due to its length limitation, I have either selected a few key scenes to analyse for the farce principle, or have provided an overview analysis for the farce principle. My analysis aims to investigate what new knowledge we can learn from applying the farce principles to the work, Bridesmaids, in order to see how it will influence the writing of my screenplay, The Wedding Jackpot.

Case Study Analysis—The Six Principles of Farce
This analysis will deconstruct how Mumolo and Wiig have included the principles of farce in the screenplay, Bridesmaids. This chapter and the subsequent reflective chapter have been methodically organised to interweave theories of farce with specific screenplay excerpt examples. The highlighted screenplay excerpt examples

102 The Bridesmaids screenplay will be referred to as the ‘screenplay’, ‘script’ or a variation of. Mumolo and Wiig will be referred as the ‘screenwriters’, ‘writers’ or a variation of.
aim to be helpful in the understanding of screenwriting for future farceurs. The discussion therefore provides a systematic analysis of the screenplay based on the findings thus far.103

**Principle #1—Violence and Aggression**

According to Bermel, art has no rules, and “Death, like everything else, has become a legitimate subject for farce” (1990, 23). In addition, Bentley argues that farce is most “notorious for its love of violent images” compared to other genres (1964, 219). But, its “brutality is unreal” (Bermel 1990, 22). The screenwriters, Mumolo and Wiig, have captured the “savage comic humour” (Eliot 1943, 123) within the aggression and violence of the screenplay as they also explore the extreme psychological states of the characters. Davis concurs that farce is “unquestionably hostile” (2003, 89), and that farce-related dramaturgy techniques and methods are designed “to produce some profound observations about the psychology of human behavior” (ibid, 119). Cruelty is necessary for not only theatre, but also humankind, and farce, as with any spectacle, has its roots in cruelty (Artaud 1968, 64). Mumolo and Wiig adhere to Bermel’s statement:

> In farce, characters seldom get badly injured, almost never die. Although a character doesn’t merely clash with other characters but also collides with the scenery and props, he stays more or less intact. Blood flows like wine in a heavy drama or melodrama. In farce the victim, who is apparently bloodless, looks dazed after a collision, then shakes his head, picks himself up, and goes off to the next collision. Farce shows us human bodies that are indestructible, sponges for punishment (1990, 23).

Mumolo and Wiig adhere to the ‘unwritten contract between farceurs and their audience’ as their characters are unharmed throughout the screenplay, in which the situations the characters get into create laughter (Bermel 1990, 23). The scriptwriters observe the rule that “Characters die and spring back to life” (ibid). Next, Mumolo

103 Please see Appendix E: Lovefilm—Top 10 Funniest Movies Ever. Lovefilm has rated *Bridesmaids* as the 8th funniest film in their study according to their website, which rated ‘laughs per minute’. Hence, *Bridesmaids* was selected as a case study (since a ‘litmus test’ for farce is laughter). There are caveats to Lovefilm’s study (as noted in the appendix).
and Wiig explore and unleash a wide range of aggression (Jekels 1965, 169) throughout the script, with three notable scenes of violence; the acts of violence and aggression range from nuances to the extreme. The three scenes of aggression will be analysed in this section. As part of this aggression, the screenplay is liberal in its use of profanity, obscenity, name-calling and swearing, and some dialogue is noted in the forthcoming analyses.

**Example #1**

The first scene of violence (Act II, 32)\(^ {104} \) occurs when Annie and Helen play doubles tennis.\(^ {105} \) The episode had been set up by Lillian’s suggestion for Annie to get to know Helen better at the end of Lillian’s engagement party (Act I, 26), and here it comes to blows when they meet for the first time without Lillian to buffer this rivalry. Lillian is blinded by Helen’s charisma, attention and love for her. Helen’s motive is clear from the start that she does not like Annie, and would prefer to be the maid of honour and Lillian’s best friend. Although coerced by Lillian, the reluctant Annie and Helen meet to play tennis, but it is really in the guise of Annie wanting to crush Helen after being humiliated by her during the engagement speech battle. The joke is that they do not really want to get to know each other. They really want to hurt each other.\(^ {106} \) There was never any question that their intentions were insincere. But, the set-up of Annie’s downward spiral, and eventual meltdown, began before the actual story in the screenplay, as parlayed in Annie’s backstory of when she lost her bakery, her boyfriend left her and she lost all her money.

\(^ {104} \) The page numbers refer to the *Bridesmaids* screenplay. I refer to the screenplays (*Bridesmaids* and *The Wedding Jackpot*) with the 3-Act structure. The reference citations are varied, i.e., Act 1, 5; on page 82, etc.

\(^ {105} \) The sports game scenario and its violence is similar to other movies such as the basketball game scene in *The Cable Guy* (1996), the water polo game scene in *Meet the Parents* (2000) and the American football game scenes in *The Wedding Crashers* (2005) and *The Wedding Ringer* (2015).

\(^ {106} \) The staple of a violent sports game scene in comedy is echoed in Dyer’s *Pastiche*. He suggests, “in pastiche, however, the fact that such imitation is going on is a defining part of how the work works, of its meaning and affect” (2007, 3). This continues the absurdity of the bridal events as part of the snowball farce. The snowball farce will be analysed further in the Plot, Story and Style section.
Mumolo and Wiig write the doubles tennis story beat as a two-step\textsuperscript{107} scene starting on page 30. The screenplay reader and/or audience\textsuperscript{108} are prepared for what is about to happen on the court with a verbal battle first. This is one of several ‘quarrel-farce’\textsuperscript{109} scenes, in which there is a certain kind of ‘symmetry’ to the dialogue in the quarrel (Davis 2003, 119). Then, the interaction between Helen and her step-children RYAN, 16, and ALYSSA, 13, adds to the escalating quarrel farce; Alyssa’s dialogue is written with the script direction of ‘with attitude’,\textsuperscript{110} and Ryan has no qualms about swearing at his step-mother.

HELEN
Do you need a ride home later?
RYAN
Fuck off, Helen.

This is the first time the audience sees Helen in a vulnerable position. Annie witnesses this interaction, but her ironic and sarcastic comment of ‘Sweet kids’ does not reflect her awareness of Helen’s dysfunctional home life. This foreshadows Helen’s apology to Annie near the end of the film, in which she complains about how hard her life is without friends and family.

It can be suggested that this verbal spat is a continuation of the verbal battle from Lillian’s engagement party. Plato suggests that the audience can sympathise or empathise with the character’s exaggerated actions: “buffooneries which you would be ashamed to indulge in yourself, you thoroughly enjoy them instead of being disgusted with their ribaldry” (cited in Bentley 1964, 220). The violence can occur between these two women after the engagement party scene; since we now know they are competing against each other for Lillian’s friendship. Bentley agrees with

\begin{center}
\textbf{\textsuperscript{107} It can also be called a two-part scene/set-up/process, or a two-tier scene/set-up/process.}
\textsuperscript{108} I will use audience and/or reader for this dissertation.
\textsuperscript{109} Recap: A quarrel-farce is one of four plot technique methods in Davis’ Farce (2003, 119), and occurs when two or more characters quarrel back and forth, sometimes without a resolution, sometimes violently, and/or sometimes with another character to help resolve the issue. It is interchangeable with the alternate spelling of quarrel farce for this dissertation.
\textsuperscript{110} The quotes from the Bridesmaids screenplay are in single quotation marks, within the body of the dissertation. There are also block quotes from the screenplay (with the original font and spacing).
\end{center}
Aristotle, who argues that violence acts more as a catharsis (1964, 220–21). Furthermore, Bentley believes that audiences have not distanced themselves from violence, but have become accustomed to it (ibid). Davis adds, “It is idle to deny that there is some pleasure in seeing butts of this kind [i.e., victims, cuckolds, rebels, villains, knaves, etc.] fooled to the top of their bent” (2003, 93).

The tennis game scene is just over half a page in length, yet it is densely written. Mumolo and Wiig prepare the audience for the violence with the set-up, ‘Helen and Annie stare intensely at each other across the net’ on page 32. Davis remarks, “aggression is both sufficiently precise to be psychologically valid and yet sufficiently delimited to qualify as play” (2003, 141). The audience can reliably predict that the rivals will try to best each other, reflected in the screen direction: ‘Helen smashes a serve to Annie, who returns it ferociously.’ Davis emphasises that in farce, the “message of the hostility between the two individuals is fully acted out” (2003, 89) as Annie does not shy away and definitely does not want Helen to win. This foreshadows that Annie might play dirty for this scene, but it is not in Annie’s innate nature to play dirty, nor does she in the rest of the screenplay. Yet, Annie will not play the victim in the tennis match to Helen’s joker or prankster role (Bentley 1964; Bermel 1990; Davis 2003). The writers do not let Annie waffle with her intentions, following Bentley’s rule that “In farce, we say: ‘I’ll murder you with my bare hands,’ playfully, or with that mixture of the grave and gay which defines the tone as farcical, but in a degree we also have to mean it” (1964, 243–44). We get a glimpse into what Annie will do when she is pushed to her limit, and it foreshadows her violence when she destroys Helen’s backyard at Lillian’s bridal party.

The screen directions and dialogue in Bridesmaids use Martin Scorsese’s film, The Color of Money (1986) as a reference, glorifying the violence of the rivals’ competitiveness.111 This highlights Dyer’s remark that “when something is actually labeled pastiche… [they] are explicitly named as such by their markers, the textual

111 It should be noted that the actual game of pool (billiards) in Scorsese’s movie was not violent. The pool players were quite civil in their pool match. The screenwriters are only referring to how it might be shot.
markets of considerable likeness combined with not too exaggerated elements of deformations and discrepancy” (2007, 4).

IN A SERIES OF SHOTS as cinematic and violent as the pool scene in Scorsese’s “The Color of Money,” we see Helen and Annie have an intense showdown. Annie unloads on the ball, hitting Helen in the left breast as hard as humanly possible.

The writers let the audience know that violence will be included cinematically in the tennis game as well as literally, with Annie making the first violent attack against Helen. As Mumolo and Wiig pay homage to Scorsese, Dyer argues that “Most (probably to all intents and purposes all) people know that a given work is like others that preceded it and, even while transforming those, is also imitating them” (2007, 3).

The next script description assaults the audience with the violence unleashed by Annie and Helen. The writers’ emphasise the violence with capital letters, and the action, ‘WHACK’, is repeated three times with exclamation marks. This reinforces that the tennis match is relentless and unforgiving. Aristotle’s theories of pity, anger and fear have reached their tipping point: for Annie’s ‘valve’ may burst, as she is desperate to destroy Helen (cited in Bentley 1964, 223). In the chaos of Annie making Helen pay the price for losing the engagement party speech battle, Annie ‘serves hard and runs Helen around the court.’ Annie’s only goal is to tear Helen apart. In Annie’s quest to beat Helen, she serves blindly.

WHACK! WHACK! WHACK! Annie and Helen smash the ball into each other’s breast, chest, neck, and “other female parts”, with insane intensity. It is super violent.

There is no indication of who won the game in the screenplay. Historically, violence has been released with laughter as Bentley states, “It is generally agreed that a good laugh does us good, and that is does us good as a sort of emotional ‘work-out’” (1964, 224). The writers created a build-up of tension between the rivals, Annie and

112 In essence, the writers are also acting as ‘directors’ in the screenplay, which is not the usual method of writing a screenplay (Batty 2012, 102; Dethridge 2003, 42–44; McKee 1997, 394–408).
113 In the movie, a reversal occurs as the unexpected happens. Annie puts her arms up in victory, as Helen frowns.
Helen, which started at Lillian’s engagement party, and the release or the catharsis occurred in this scene. Mumolo and Wiig effectively use violence in this sports scene as a means to push the relationship between the two rivals to the extreme, which the audience engages organically through the storytelling technique.

**Example #2**

The second notable violence occurs on page 82. Helen has already replaced Annie as the maid of honour. At Lillian’s bridal shower at Helen’s mansion, Helen’s gift to Lillian is a ‘pre-wedding vacation’ to Paris along with a final wedding dress fitting, and to meet the French designer of the dress. Mumolo and Wiig escalate the rivalry here with Helen usurping Annie by giving Lillian what she had always wanted: a trip to Paris. This is the tipping point for Annie; her ‘boiler’ not only bursts, but also explodes. This is Annie’s point of no return.¹¹⁴

Lillian jumps up and down, then grabs Helen and hugs her tightly. Annie watches them, then something (finally) snaps.

**ANNIE**

Are you fucking kidding me?

**JUDY**

Annie?

**ANNIE**

MOTHERFUCKING PARIS?!

We are now heading into the final grand explosion of Annie’s meltdown. Bentley compares farce’s violence to the world of the schizophrenic… leading to self-destruction in the end (1958, xx). As in the tennis game, the audience is prepared for Annie’s physical violence by first having Annie go on a verbal rampage. In her furious rage, Annie verbally attacks both Helen and Lillian. Annie’s accusations are really about Helen usurping Annie’s role as the maid of honour, and stealing Lillian. Bentley states, “Danger is omnipresent. One touch, we feel, and we shall be sent spinning in space” (ibid). Annie wanted to reveal to everyone that Helen is an unscrupulous, malicious, deceptive person, but it backfires as Annie continues her rant before she destroys the backyard. But, it is Annie that is made to look the fool.

¹¹⁴ This is the 75% point of the screenplay.
Helen stays silent during these allegations. Helen does not gloat at the bridal shower that she is the one who will make Lillian’s wedding perfect.

The writers have kept Annie’s baking acumen in the story, and have highlighted it for Lillian’s shower. The next bit plays on more than Annie’s jealousy; it plays on Annie’s lost dream of her passion for baking and losing her bakery. The pressure cooker effect of Annie’s spiral downfall from grace leads to her mental and violent meltdown. Everything has led to this point in time in Annie’s journey.\(^{115}\) The writers have used farce-related plot techniques to drive Annie to this breakdown, choosing to display a giant (eight-foot-tall) cookie in the middle of the backyard as the centrepiece for the first of Annie’s looming objects of destruction, a metaphor for Annie’s life.

The destruction directly relates to Davis’ “violence of the humiliation-farce” (2003, 119), as Annie is hell-bent on destruction. Annie verbally attacks the cookie first, ‘Look at that fucking COOKIE!! Did you really think this group of women would finish that cookie?’ before physically attacking it.

Annie storms outside. She takes swings at the cookie, punching it.

ANNE (CONT’D)

Stupid fucking cookie!

She rips off a large hunk, shoves it in her mouth.

Annie can envision Helen’s ultimate triumph as Lillian’s maid of honour, and as Lillian’s new best friend. The scene escalates, as Annie has no choice but to fight with the cookie. However, what Annie really wants to do is fight for what she believes is unfair. Filled with a rage of jealousy, she believes that Helen has stolen her best friend, and stolen her good life, and there is nothing she can do about it. Rozik recalls Aristotle’s pity and fear being “aroused by unmerited misfortune” (Poetics XIII, 1–2), and in “contrast to Bergson”, in comedy, it is “not a lack of emotions that

\(^{115}\) Annie’s journey: The momentum of the breakdown had been a long time coming from losing her bakery, her boyfriend breaking up with her, losing money from the bakery, losing her jewellery job due to fighting with customers, losing the pose-off to Kahlua, ruining several bridal events, losing her maid of honour role and her best friend to Helen, her roommates invading her privacy and kicking her out of the apartment, having to move back home as a middle-aged woman, Ted using and abusing her, and losing Officer Rhodes.
characterizes comic laughter, but only a lack of pity” (2011, 42–43). The physical battle with the cookie is a losing battle.

She tries to take the cookie off its stand to carry it. It’s too huge. She falls backwards and the cookie falls on top of her. Annie punches her fist up through the cookie and struggles awkwardly to get out from under it.

She storms over to the chocolate fountain and tries to tip it over. It’s way too heavy. She starts to empty the HOT chocolate with her hands onto the ground.

Not only has Annie lost to Helen, now she has lost to the cookie. This is Annie’s deep end. She has truly lost it. She does not even realise that anybody is watching her as she destroys Helen’s backyard. The physical violence ends when Lillia goes out to confront Annie. This starts the quarrel farce between Lillian and Annie on page 84.116

Everyone is watching Annie. She is fighting and punching the air like a crazy person, chasing a swan. A little girl starts crying. Lillian storms outside seething.

The quarrel farce ends when Lillian un-invites Annie to her wedding (Act II, 85). As per Davis, in some quarrel farces, characters may remain ‘unchanged’ (2003, 119), but here, both of these characters have now changed for the worse. Annie finally admits defeat: the humiliation farce plot has exacted its toll. The step-daughter taunts the fight between Lillian and Annie. It is a comic image that is devastating for Annie, after not being able to totally destroy the chocolate fountain, nor the giant cookie.

The bridal shower violence results in a domino effect consequence, as Mumolo and Wiig increase the stakes in Annie’s dating life (Act III, 86). In escalating to a ‘boiling’ point, the trio of players will collide, and the combustion ruins Annie’s love life. After Annie leaves the bridal shower, she sees a porcupine on the highway, and ‘slams on the brakes to avoid hitting it and BOOM! [She] is rear-ended, hard.’ Although she saved the animal, now her car will not start. The car crash symbolises Annie’s love life. It is, of course, Officer Rhodes who is dispatched to the car crash

116 The quarrel farce dialogue between Lillian and Annie will be discussed in the Humour section.
scene. A quarrel farce ensues between Annie and Rhodes, during which they yell at each other about their feelings before Ted comes to pick Annie up. Annie and Rhodes are both upset because they care about each other, but due to the ‘claustrophobia’ (Davis 2003, 119) of the situation and timing, this does not resolve itself. The snowball farce plot of Annie’s love life peaks here.\footnote{Annie’s love life will be discussed in Plot, Story and Style.}

**Example #3**
The third notable violent scene occurs on pages 91–92. Annie is watching *Castaway* as a depressed recluse who has been hiding out at her mother, Judy’s, house.\footnote{Annie is, so to speak, licking her own wounds as she watches a movie, *Castaway*, which parallels her own life. This is the first time Annie cries, along with Tom Hanks. And the writers mock Annie, to keep the tone light.} Megan visits to find out why Annie had not returned her calls, but changes tack and decides to give an aggressive, then violent pep talk instead. First, Megan paces and ‘gets in Annie’s face’ as she continues talking, but Annie is not listening. The stakes are raised quickly when Megan resorts to violence.

She pokes Annie. Then continues to prod and push her as she talks.

\begin{verbatim}
Megan (CONT’D)
You don’t want help. You want a pity party.

Annie
No, I don’t. Stop it.

Megan
You’re an asshole Annie.
\end{verbatim}

Davis remarks that “In a farce, the victim is shown both inviting and suffering ridicule, and the insult is delivered directly and physically to the person of the victim” (2003, 89) as evidenced when ‘Megan shoves Annie.’ The violence is interspersed with the tough love motivational speech with ‘Megan sits on top of Annie and holds her arms.’ Annie was not expecting this since she was just crying and watching a movie. Megan is trying her best to get Annie out of her depression, and is at her wit’s end.
When Annie hits Megan, she immediately apologises—the build-up and release of the violence ends quickly on page 92, when ‘Megan looks like she might get mad, but then she smiles.’ Davis remarks that violence is rarely accepted as real and adds, “With puppets, the fantastic nature of their injuries is made evident… [and] film and television cartoons… use caricature of outline and synchronization of movement to reassure the viewer that their creatures will rise phoenix-like from beneath the steam-roller which has just passed over them” (2003, 93). The reader is left feeling cathartic, and relieved that neither character is hurt, and most importantly that Annie is no longer depressed.

Mumolo and Wiig deploy a level of violence and aggression that suits their story, Bridesmaids, along with the unique situations that they have put their characters in. As a creative practitioner, this tells me that the level and variety of violence and aggression is widely acceptable within this genre. I would benefit from exploring this principle in-depth for my screenplay with the model that these two writers have successfully developed and were able to maintain throughout their screenplay.

**Principle #2—Extreme Mocking**

According to Davis (2003, 70–71), Aristotle considered the custom of lampooning through the “act of mimicry of the burlesque impersonation of gods, heroes and even local characters” via masks and costume for anonymity, as an “evolutionary stage in the development of comedy” (Poetics V.1449b). Mumolo and Wiig use extreme mockery as a form of ‘play’ in their screenplay, in which it ‘mocks the unreality of its own nature’ and the audience accepts the story knowing it isn’t real (Trilling, cited in Hickling 2203) investigates the differences historically between English and French farce, as French farce is essentially more mean-spirited than English farce which concentrates more on getting laughs. Examining this farce element between different countries is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
Styan 1975, 180–81; Corrigan 1981, 4). The concept of morals is ripe for farce as it favours not only a disruption of familiar social rituals such as marriage and the family, but also a subversion of those rituals (Bentley 1964, 225; Bermel 1990, 8). If “The theatre can speak the unspeakable and show that which should not be shown” (Corrigan 1981, 4), then the power of film can have the same resolve. For my purposes, Mumolo and Wiig’s screenplay showcases extreme mocking in order to depict similar lampooning as the Greeks, and for current audiences, their ‘illusion’ is amplified. Davis remarks that for simple farces, a ‘humiliation’ farce subjects “their victims to explicit degradation and celebrate their victories quite openly” (2003, 91), which can be said of Mumolo and Wiig’s screenplay.

When choosing targets or characters to be mocked, Styan argues that in “farce it is comparatively simple to choose the object for ridicule shrewdly” (1962, 254). The Bridesmaids screenplay mocks the seriousness of wedding traditions and matrimonial ceremonies. It also pokes fun at sex, dating, relationships, friendships, family, divorce, racism, society, intelligence, poverty, class structures and sexism right from the opening scene. In advocating this farce principle of the mocking the status quo (Bentley 1984, 216–17), Mumolo and Wiig have set up the farce tone as Bridesmaids ridicules its characters and rituals, where rationality is tossed out from the first page; the screenwriters are fearless in their attempt to mock all manners of society.

Example #1

Mumolo and Wiig start by showing an insightful irreverence with the juxtaposition of counterpoint scenes, as they set the tone by opening the story with a bedroom farce. They skewer the stereotypical lifestyle choices of the middle-aged male species with ‘The ultimate bachelor pad. A Porsche is parked in front of it’ (Act I, 1). I will discuss the extent to which the writers have used the world of the story and its characters to evoke a sense of mocking: ridiculing the institution of marriage, dating, etc., in which Annie does not understand herself and so is trapped in this vicious cycle with the other characters. The audience feels for Annie in the sex scene with Ted; McKee asserts, “At first glance creating empathy does not seem difficult” as the audience “recognizes the character’s humanity, senses that he shares it, identifies with the protagonist, and dives into the story” (1997, 142).
Mumolo and Wiig are not afraid that their farce will offend from the first line of dialogue, by Annie, ‘I’m so glad you called’, in which we know that Ted called her for a late night hook-up. From Ted’s line, ‘I’m so glad you were free’, the audience infers that Annie is most likely single and she was waiting by the phone for him to call her. She has low self-esteem since she will drop everything to drive over whenever Ted snaps his fingers. Right from the opening scene, the audience is aware that Annie becomes the permanent target of mockery and humiliation throughout the screenplay. The writers have set up the main protagonist so we empathise with her.

If the aim is farce, then “we can do without all theories and notions except the most rudimentary moral distinctions which need no elaboration and can be taken for granted” (Bentley 1984, 216). The writers aim for farce as they begin with a sex humiliation farce that is described ‘In a series of close-ups and jump cuts’, as Annie and Ted are in the middle of ‘very long, vigorous session’ of ‘sweaty sex’, in which ‘she’s now bouncing on top of him’, but Annie states that they are ‘on different rhythms’, as ‘He bounces Annie SUPER FAST’ (Act I, 2, emphasis in original). Albeit Bentley’s statement, I look to Davis as she remarks, “The force which impels all these characters of [Parisian] farce is, of course, the human appetite for sex and its demand for satisfaction” (2003, 136), which the screenplay seems to be suggesting through its skewering of both Annie and Ted. The next morning, Annie puts on make-up to look pretty for Ted when he wakes up, since he is the prize, not her. Although Ted says, ‘You look beautiful’, this ends in both a humiliation and reversal farce for Annie as Ted switches gears with ‘You slept over’. Ted continues with ‘I thought we had a rule against that’. He mocks her since this is his rule, not hers. He tricks her by saying, ‘I’m kidding’. But, really he is setting her up to kick her out as Davis asserts that “love, fidelity and suchlike aspirations of the spirit are no more than a joke in farce” (2003, 136). Ted continues playing with her emotions which highlights farce’s aim of puncturing ‘social pretentions’ (Bermel 1990, 39), then he finally says:

120 From Annie and Lillian’s conversation in Joni’s restaurant (Act I, 5), it is assumed that all of Annie and Ted’s meet-ups are only sexual encounters.
Bentley argues that “The close, warm family is... the seedbed of neurosis, vice, and crime” (1964, 226), and can be applied to relationships in general—as Ted shows no remorse when he kicks Annie out of bed as he controls and abuses the casual relationship with her. Davis notes that “cowardice invites mockery and the revellers taunt the outcast mercilessly” (2003, 92) in which the mocking and humiliation never stops for Annie. Annie is presented as a victim to be mocked as ‘Annie stares. Awkward moment leading into...’ her next humiliation as ‘Annie does the walk of shame out of the house’ on page 3. Unfortunately, she is locked inside Ted’s gated house, which she cannot figure how to open and dares not go back inside to ask Ted, because this would be the ultimate humiliation. Annie’s predicament is complicated further when she does the only thing possible to escape Ted’s rejection. Also, a non-human acting as a human is suggested by the dog staring at Annie; it is mimicking its owner, the old neighbour.

This invokes Bentley’s statement that terrible incidents are not as shocking as they normally would seem since “normal folk share [the culprit’s] wishes though they do not carry them out. And art like farce embodies such wishes: wishes to damage the family, to desecrate the household gods” (1964, 226). Davis pinpoints the fundamental human truth underlying farcical jokes: “the helplessness of mankind in the face of an unpredictable universe. As long as the [character] is imperturbable in defeat and disaster, laughter remains broad and uncomplicated; but when his terror begins to show, it renders our laughter more and more alarming” (2003, 149). Annie is shown to have lost her conventional moral code and self-respect when she tries to please Ted, and he in turn ridicules Annie. A theme for Annie is that she is constantly
punished by being mocked and humiliated by those in her life. Annie deliberately seeks her own martyrdom in this one-sided casual sexual relationship. Dyer states that travesty “has been understood in terms of lowering, either in the sense of bringing something down to a more familiar level or of debasing it” in which classic travesty, “the effect is liable to be comic” and “often by including elements of deflating common sense and lewdness” (i.e., Carry On movies) (2007, 38).

Example #2
Since Annie is in a constant state of distress, she is never comfortable in any scene as she is unhappy with her life, which reinforces her victim mentality. In the opening story world, Mumolo and Wiig make sure that Annie is not too high up on her horse that she does not also ridicule herself. The writers invite more public mockery of Annie’s unhappy relationship problems as she serves an Asian couple looking for engagement rings at Cholodecki’s Jewelry [sic] Store (Act I, 8). As both a reference and transference, Annie offends the unsuspecting Asian couple first with the fact they are couple that communicate, but Annie considers this delusional with ‘Look at how you guys are making this decision together, that’s sweet. You guys love each other, huh? Oh that’s sweet. That will go away’. Annie is both guilty of farce’s mockery of “formal poise” (Bermel 1990, 39), and obliviously mirroring the mockery. She then goes on a further litany of contemptuous and sarcastic insults offending the Asian couple, which cover relationships, trust issues, racism, being blind-sided, and touches on dating serial killers.

ANNIE (CONT’D)
You can not trust anybody. Ever.
Especially someone you’re in a relationship with, you know? Cause they’re living with ya. You don’t know who you’re sleeping next to.
It is scary. I mean look at him, he might not even be Asian. It’s scary. So, did you guys want to look at these engagement rings?

In the first of several rivalry farce scenes, Annie is put in another dangerous situation as per Bentley’s theory of farce’s chaotic combustible nature (1958, xx). Don, her boss, is not only enraged by Annie’s customer service conduct in ‘selling life long happiness’, he becomes a prankster in matching Annie’s ridicule against her. He shames Annie in a salesperson ‘Show me your “love-is-eternal” face’ pose-off contest
with the pretty Kahlua (Act I, 9). When Annie first poses, Don remarks: ‘That’s not eternal’. When Annie tries again, Don skewers her final pose with, ‘That looks like you have menstrual cramps’ which highlights that “In farce, the victim is shown both inviting and suffering ridicule, and the insult is delivered directly… to the person of the victim” (Davis 2003, 89). The writers zero in on Annie’s incompetence, as she loses to the sexy Kahlua, when Don asks, ‘Why can’t you be more like Kahlua?’ Annie can only defiantly respond, although not self-reflectively, ‘I’m trying really hard here’.

Later on page 74, the bookend skit of Annie’s job sets up another quarrel farce in which there is a thematic continuation of Annie always being mocked. Davis suggests that if the mocking and aggressiveness softens, and if “any feelings have really been hurt”, farceurs should be aware of the balance for audience’s detachment, such as “Chaplin, the target of much violent joking himself, never risks alarming us by perpetrating the violence on others” (2003, 144–45). But, Annie provokes first, in exchanging barbs with ‘A snotty 13-year-old rich GIRL… with an iced coffee, chewing gum’ (Act II, 74). The young teenager asks to see a necklace that says ‘Best Friends Forever’ to give to her best friend for her birthday. Annie jumps on this to attack and skewer someone she thinks is a naïve, young person. Again, the writers use transference for Annie’s angst in this quarrel farce, as she feels bitter that Helen has stolen her childhood best friend, Lillian.

ANNIE
Are you sure you want it to say forever?
(off the girl’s “duh” face)
I don’t think you guys will be together forever. No offense, but the friends you have when you’re younger, sometimes you grow apart. You’ll get older and maybe she’ll find a new best friend. And maybe she’ll be more successful than you are, and prettier, and richer, and skinnier, and they end up doing everything together.

This teenager not only competes against Annie in slinging back insults, but this quarrel farce is also able to get under Annie’s skin as she retaliates against the wise-
beyond-her-years 13-year-old girl. Rozik reports that farce freely and liberally uses language that “refer[s] explicitly to sexual organs and relations” (2011, 53 and 55), as Annie pushes back with a final sexual insult.

ANNIE
What, do you have four boyfriends?

GIRL
Exactly.

ANNIE
Have fun having a baby at your prom.

GIRL
You look like an old mop.

ANNIE
You know, you aren’t as popular as you think you are.

GIRL
I’m very popular.

ANNIE
(miming a blow job)
I’m sure you are. Very popular.

GIRL
You’re an old single loser who is never going to have any friends.

ANNIE
You’re a little cunt.

Annie’s vengeance is heightened by how ridiculous the exchange is, which equates to how Annie’s life is in despair. Annie may have won the fierce quarrel battle by calling her a ‘cunt’, but it is Annie who suffers from this aggressive bout of insults as she has lost the war. Unfortunately, it concludes with Annie being fired from her job. When Don fires Annie, there is very little sympathy for her in this exchange. In regard to ‘satirical purpose(s)’, Davis states, “Satire does not require empathetic figures for its provocative statements... perhaps it risks falling into what [James Leslie] Smith has called ‘the melodrama of protest’ ” (Smith 1973, 72–77, cited in Davis 2003, 142). Due to her limited self-awareness and her unapologetic behaviour, Annie only shows remorse when Don tells her that he has told her mother about her being fired.

Example #3
Davis analyses the humiliated victim as someone who invites their own scorn, by their inability to deal with the situation (2003, 93). Hence, Annie invites her own
scorn by her inability to deal with all her own situations; she can neither accept it nor amend it since she lacks both flexibility and determination (ibid). A shift in tone is created at Lillian’s engagement party (Act I, 22), in which the first quarrel farce between Annie and Helen occurs in their ongoing rivalry farce. Annie is no threat to Helen and her devious methods. Helen relishes with pleasure in usurping Annie. This highlights Annie as the epitome of a sacred victim. The engagement speech battle is about three pages of the screenplay. There is now immense pressure on Annie to compete, not only to keep up with Helen, but for Annie to outdo Helen. Yet, Annie is more uncomfortable than when she was first introduced to Helen. After Annie’s first time up at the engagement speech battle, the rivalry starts:

ANNIE  
(laughs)  
I actually don’t want to go on with a long speech, so I’ll just say this. I’m so happy to be a part of this celebration. You two deserve each other as well as a lifetime of happiness. So, cheers!

She raises her glass, people clap. Helen stands clapping and takes the mic from her. Annie looks a bit surprised. Helen gives her a smile motioning Annie to sit.

The power struggle of higher and lower status begins as Helen, who ‘represents the good-living’ as opposed to Annie who represents the opposite (Davis 2003, 93), shows the guests that it is she that is in control when she unexpectedly grabs the microphone from Annie. Helen’s speech mocks Annie’s friendship with Lillian, in usurping Annie, saying that Helen and Lillian are close. Not to be outdone with this ‘scoff in public’ display (Bermel 1990, 13), Annie’s reaction to Helen shows how absurd and anxious she is. In a continuous tit-for-tat, Helen goads Annie into action as she grabs the microphone from Helen since Annie does not want to be outdone by Helen in front of the entire wedding guests. Complications arise as Helen ups the stakes in being obnoxious as she grabs the microphone from Annie, again. But, each time, it is Helen who comes off as the winning rival as she ridicules Annie’s level of friendship and love with Lillian. It is an ineffectual battle as Annie’s pathetic attempt is clearly outdone by Helen, as Annie’s idiocy gets more and more severe.
There is an immediacy to Annie’s powerlessness, mocking and humiliation in each scene of the screenplay. As the suffering escalates and the “bad takes a turn for the worse” (Bermel 1990, 20–21), Annie can feel her life slipping away in her fall from grace as she cannot escape the ridicule by Helen and others. Davis asserts that when “victims ‘ask for’ punishment by their stupidity, they are tortured shamelessly; where they provoke retaliation by their role as ‘kill-joys,’ they are often people whose humiliation would outrage social conventions—representatives of authority and propriety” (2003, 90). Whether it is a deception, a reversal or snowball farce, each time Annie tries her hand at something, she fails, either by chance or design. Mumolo and Wiig skewer the contemporary cultural image of weddings and other societal norms. They unveil and reflect on the extreme opposite of the sacred nature of the wedding ritual events and proper propriety behaviour whilst revealing what goes on behind the scenes. In reflecting on my farce screenplay, I note that this is the type of ‘popular comedy’ I wish to write “which has always thriven upon the humiliation of unpleasant villains and foolish knaves” (Davis 2003, 93). My aim is to escalate the humiliation as Mumolo and Wiig have done, “Yet, as Shaw complains, normal, decent people see nothing wrong in enjoying a farce of this kind: comic mayhem is what they expect when they go to see a farce” (Davis 2003, 90). Despite Shaw’s complaint, it is my intention to please the audience with my farce comedy screenplay.

**Principle #3—Humour**

Humor is everywhere once you strip away the grief.
Chrissie Hynde\(^{121}\)

The central aim of farce is laughter (Arditti 1996, 3; Cooney 2014a), with a focus that farce’s “pleasure of joking is clearly partly festive and indulgent, partly aggressive and hostile” (Davis 2003, 90), resulting in Bentley’s theory of farce’s “special opportunity” for “comic catharsis” (1968, 229). Additionally, Bermel states there are two main laughter-releasing mechanisms in farce: “characters who are only partially engaging, and the improbable situations in which they are caught up” (1990, 22).

\(^{121}\) Hynde 2016, 311.
contrast to Ellis’ suggestion of polite and clean jokes for farce (1948, 19), Mumolo and Wiig do not restrict or censor their comic scenes and incorporate a cross-section of humour throughout Bridesmaids from the subtle to the extreme, from simple jokes to slapstick, from mildly pleasant to in-your-face, from sweet comedy to toilet humour. Although there are other ‘micro’ jokes related to Annie’s life throughout the script, the writers’ main joke is to see how long it takes Helen to usurp Annie as the maid of honour, in which the audience is on in the joke. In Bentley’s ‘psychology of farce’, audiences are allowed to indulge in anti-social wishes, taboos and fantasies without any consequences (1958; 1964, 229). The writers create humorous scenarios for the rivalry between the protagonist and antagonist as McKee argues that comedy should be funny, and people should laugh, otherwise it is not comedy (storylogue.com 2012-16). The following examples will analyse what and how the screenwriters have attempted with this farce principle, keeping in mind Jenkins’ question, “What makes a film funny? Really funny?... Funny is subjective” (2012).

Example #1
In the first sequence of the screenplay, Mumolo and Wiig use both salacious dialogue and visuals for humour as they present the impropriety of the characters as Annie and Ted have loveless sex. Although this is about ongoing, casual relationships, it highlights Bentley’s support of Freud’s theme of encouraging the ‘scoffing’ of marriage since Freud (1905) claims it is an ‘open secret’ that “marriage is hardly an arrangement of satisfy the sexual demands of the husband” in his book on jokes; Freud states that this ‘secret’ of anti-marriage is told in numerous male jokes (cited in Bentley 1964, 229). In the opening scene, the voice-overs let the audience know that it is a bedroom farce comedy scene and are permitted to laugh. Bentley relates this with “the psychology of the comedian in the theatre”, knowing the particulars of what, when, how and why of the comedian’s joking (1964, 234). The sexual comedic impact can be felt through the contrasting dialogue, as they are out of sync with each other.

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122 Bentley (1964) argues in his farce theories that laughter is the gauge for measurement, but opposes analysing and counting laughter, as it is not what this whole goal is about. McKee claims that comedy is a pure art form (genre) since it is quantifiable, instant and knowable (Mckeestory.com 2012).
123 Albeit, not a sex/bedroom farce comedy movie as per McKee’s review (cited in storylogue.com 2012-16). The opening scene lets the audience know what kind of movie they are watching (see Batty 2012; Dethridge 2003; Field 2005; McKee 1997).
other which also sets up the characters’ different wants and needs. Annie is romantic and in love, and Ted just needs sexual gratification.

**ANNIE (O.S.)**
I love your eyes.

**TED (O.S.)**
Cup my balls.

**ANNIE (O.S.)**
Ok, yes, alright, I can do that.

**TED (O.S.)**
Oh, there it is!

When Ted kicks Annie out of his house, the intention is that we empathise with her as the mocked victim’s own martyrdom (Davis 2003, 93). Then, Mumolo and Wiig take advantage of the potential for the screenplay to show us a visual comedic trope for Annie’s ‘walk of shame’ and her attempts to open the gate. Annie’s pathetic attempt is displayed for all to see, as Davis notes like Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*, “Any audience will readily grant that the plot against [Annie] is a delightfully entertaining practical joke in the best spirit of farce” (2003, 146). Annie and the other characters’ improprieties increase as decency, politeness and respectability decrease, the writers tossing out any political correctness from the start. Davis states that in farce, the jokes “go far beyond the malicious innuendo and derogation found in such ‘hostile’ political… jokes” (2003, 89). Additionally, Rozik (2011, 31) notes that Hazlitt (1909, 13) employs ‘absurdity’ and ‘incongruity’ as synonymous in such statements as “We laugh at absurdity; we laugh at deformity.”

Bentley claims, “the art of farce is but joking turned theatrical—joking fully articulated as theatrical characters and scenes” (1964, 234). He argues that the aim is laughter, which is carefully prepared and modulated. Mumolo and Wiig incorporate jokes and visual gags if the scene becomes too emotionally heavy, such as when Annie and Lillian talk about Annie’s ‘adult sleep over’ with Ted (Act I, 6, emphasis in original). Lillian asks, ‘Oh, did you let him sleep over IN YOUR MOUTH?’ Then, Lillian says, ‘You’re supposed to slap it away.’ This leads to ‘Annie imitates a penis.’ Rozik states that laughter is triggered only after being prepared in the set up for the audience (2011, 41). Then on page 8, when Annie tries to justify her and Ted’s casual sexual relationship, Lillian says, ‘He also told you that you [sic] need dental
work. He’s an asshole.’ This leads to Annie showing ‘food covering a tooth’, and saying, ‘I don’t need dental work.’ Lillian joins in the funny moment with Annie, as Ellis remarks, “There is great art in writing good dialogue—witty conversation. And it has to be subtly humorous—or very funny in a farce to ‘get over.’ ” (1948, 31).

Example #2

On the subject of taboo topics and in the joking realm, Bentley claims, “the theatre stands with the art of telling jokes, not with the art of writing books” (1964, 234). He gives the example of a family member telling an ‘Irish’ joke, and thus allowing everyone to “really let go” while being “high” as any whiskey (1964, 234). A memorable124 scene involves scatological humour with the bridesmaid’s party. Mumolo and Wiig’s outrageous improprieties highlights Bakhtin’s theory of the “grotesque realism” (cited in Paul 1991, 111); it is divided into ‘low’ and ‘high’ evaluations in which the “lower body” or “material bodily lower stratum” (cited in Mizejewski 2014, 95; cited in Paul 1991, 111) can be represented by grotesque physical terms (i.e., mouth, the genitals and anus) such as ‘fart’ jokes (i.e., The Sarah Silverman Program), and is considered inferior compared to the nobler or greater reliance on the mind, wit, spirit or cerebral’s “upper-body” humour (i.e., 30 Rock) (ibid). Gross-out scenes emphasise the “Sexuality, bodily functions, and other excesses”, often driving the humour (Graves and Engle 2006, 30). Mumolo and Wiig’s lack of reverence in lampooning the gender division for tasteless gross-out humour highlights “these jokes [in violating social taboos] are not designed primarily as dramatic vehicles for satirical comment upon the way for the world. Their spirit tends rather to an indulgent, perhaps an ironic acceptance of the human condition” (Davis 2003, 141). The food poisoning sequence (Act II, 34) is an example of extreme gross-out humour employed by Mumolo and Wiig.

The writers set-up the pre-toilet humour bathroom scene as soon as the bridal party enter the bridal shop, Belle En Blanc’s Main Fitting Area, for their fitting. On page 39, Megan says, ‘This is some classy shit in here—’, but then, ‘A burp escapes

124 I mean memorable in terms of what became popular (and remembered) amongst the movie-going audience as well as what generally was considered a funny scene. I do not mean memorable in terms of any awards, prizes, medals, records, discoveries, academic acknowledgement, etc.
Megan’s mouth!’ Megan apologises and says, ‘I’m not even confident on which end that came out of.’ The writers increase the comic tension with the Annie and Helen’s rivalry, with the bridal party getting sick and trying on the bridal dresses. Later, they all have on different bridesmaids’ dresses, they all feel sick except Helen (Act II, 41–42). In this subversion of gender toilet humour, Mizejewski investigates female gross-out humour that goes to the extreme from “cherished ideals of femininity” to women’s bodies as degraded or filthy (with every stereotype in between) (2014, 92). In this well-structured scene, the writers demonstrate that nothing is taboo in preparation for one of the most sacred rituals for a couple. It is not a picture that most audiences would expect for ‘lady-like’ behaviour. Mumolo and Wiig set up a clear juxtaposition with the bridesmaids vomiting and having diarrhea in the pristine bathroom of the best bridal shop in town.

The single toilet bathroom is as PRISTINE and WHITE as the fitting area. Everything is just right. Calm and quiet. Classical music plays softly.

BLAM! The door bursts open as Rita runs in. She projectile vomits into the toilet...but the seat is down. Everything sprays onto the back wall.

RITA
Shit!

Rita slams the top open and heaves again into the bowl as Megan runs in holding her backside.

MEGAN
I need the toilet! I need the toilet!

Rita ignores her as her head is in it and she grips the sides, barfing. In desperation, Megan hikes up her dress, hops up onto the counter, and SITS in the SINK. Rita looks back at Megan.

RITA
No, Megan! Megan, no!!

MEGAN
Look away! Look away!

Mumolo and Wiig alternate the bridesmaids’ vulgarities in the bathroom with the stand-off between Annie and Helen in the Main Fitting Room, which creates an escalating tension that takes the audience into account. Becca enters and vomits on Rita’s head that is over the toilet bowl. As above, the three bridesmaids increasingly
get worse (Act II, 44), as Megan says the climax lines for the last bathroom scene, the type of jokes which Freud (1905) argues, “permit the delights of nonsense-talk” (i.e., ‘smut’), and allows unrestricted “references to sexual and anal functions”, and the “vicarious indulgence” of the all the body’s senses, which in thus permits free rein to the hostility against the restraints demanded by “proper social behavior” (cited in Davis 2003, 90).

BECCA
(noticing her on the sink)
What are you doing?

MEGAN
It’s comin’ out of me like lava!
Don’t fucking look at me!!

Megan’s line acts as a joke so the audience can relax with a cathartic release, and continue enjoying the farce comedy. Davis (2003, 70) and Rozik (2011, 41) note that laughter becomes a social corrective for the audience as laughter is a pleasant catharsis. This type of humour appeals to an audience that thrives on lewdness, obscenities, vulgarities, indecencies and the risqué, but can be indelicate and offensive to others. The climax of this sequence occurs when Lillian goes to the bathroom in the middle of the street and soils a beautiful wedding dress. This incident is shown in a very public (and dangerous) place, in which Lillian cannot hope to not draw attention to herself. It is for both the audience and the people on the street in the film, in this sense to laugh at her, not with her. Also, it could be viewed as a moment of acceptance - she cannot avoid her fate. The grotesque figures of the bridesmaids in the pristine bathroom ribaldry scene can be described as lewd and disgusting, as we pass into the realm of Bentley’s ‘forbidden wishes’ of what constitutes the opposite of a clean, safe, boring bridal event (1964, 230).

125 Bridesmaids ‘lit up the blogs and websites which debated about this gross-out comedy scene’ (Wallace, cited in Mizejewski 2014, 12).
126 The resolution of the food poisoning-bathroom scene occurs on page 45, when Annie drives herself and Lillian home. Lillian is upset as she tells Annie, ‘I shit in my shorts. I shit myself.’ This is to escalate Lillian’s awareness that Annie is a terrible maid of honour in choosing a non-health-inspected restaurant, and it sets up for Helen to take over the maid of honour position after the airplane scene.
Example #3
Another scene that creates laughter is the airplane scene (Act II, 54). At this mid-point in the story, we have witnessed Annie’s downward spiral, and Mumolo and Wiig have set-up the protagonist to endure more ridicule, i.e., Annie is afraid of flying. Bermel states that farce “specializes in making circumstances that are normal for some characters abnormal for others… while in farce they keep venturing out of reality” (1990, 55–56). Additionally, Murray states: “If the audience believe that the characters in the play believe in the situation, then the play is funny. If they don’t, they aren’t, or at least not as funny as they should be” (2011, 122). The writers have interlocking humorous bridesmaids storylines on the airplane: Megan and Jon, the air marshal, converse about Jon being an air marshal and where he keeps his gun; Rita and Becca discuss sex and relationships; and, Annie keeps going into first class to be with Lillian and Helen. Each of the sectioned off bridesmaids segments are written with a comic story arc. Murray suggests, “Gags are, of course, mechanical but a good farceur will make them seem natural and therefore funnier. That old chestnut—the double-take [sic]—is hysterically funny if done for real in shock surprise. No gag should seem like a gag, and the actors should never seem to be asking the audience to laugh” (2011, 125). The writers have successfully interwoven each of the gags that have produced laughter.

Ellis states, “The incidents in a play which bring forth the biggest laughs are always the natural ones, never the ones that are ‘forced’ ” (1948, 18). This highlights Helen’s chance to deliberately sabotage Annie’s attempts to give Lillian a great bachelorette party in Las Vegas. Annie is mocked precisely because she was right about Helen and her devious ways. Annie is too stupid to realise that Helen will do her best to make Annie a fool in order to usurp her. After Annie has taken the pills and scotch that Helen had given her, a drugged Annie enters first class to be with Lillian and Helen (Act II, 60). Helen remains cool, collected and calm as Annie goes off the rails due to being high.
Although Dryden criticizes farce as “The persons and actions of a farce are all unnatural and their manners false” (cited in Arditti 1996, 3), the Bridesmaids screenplay shows irreverence within their humour. Artaud’s “humour with its anarchy” (1968, 56) stresses the absurdity and the foolishness of the unfair hierarchy of Annie’s social status, her rage against her rival, Helen, and her nemesis on the airplane, Steve, The Male Flight Attendant (Act II, 61). This memorable scene highlights the contrast of Bentley’s disdain of comic laughter being measured (1964, 233), since this is often remembered for generating laughter.

Rozik suggests that “Foolish failure is comic in the sense of promoting the comic mood” (2011, 39). Artaud claims, “HUMOUR AS DESTRUCTION can serve to reconcile the corrosive nature of laughter to the habits of reason” (1968, 56, emphasis in original). Goodman argues, “comedy deflates the sense precisely so that the underlying lubricity and malice may bubble to the surface” (1968, 78). Annie is constantly shattered in her life, never allowed the appearance of dignity, and not being
able to salvage anything until the end. In the last scene on the airplane, although Annie does not fall over, ironically she is tackled by Megan, which highlights Ellis’ statement that “a man [sic] falling over … [is] always sure of getting a good laugh” (1948, 15).

*Bridesmaids* presents a deep irreverence in its farce in order to create humour with the end goal of laughter as we witness Annie’s objective of retaining her maid of honour role and keeping her best friend, but failing immensely at both endeavours. Biggins believes that Frayn’s play, *Noises Off*, is more than just about making people laugh; it “say[s] something about the nature of life—the eternal repetition, the mistakes, how we just muddle through the best we can. The message seems to be that life is far too important to be taken seriously” (cited in Jefferson 2015). Warburton warns for farceurs, get it wrong and the audience yawns, but “get it right and the audience is howling hysterically” (2014). I apply Murray’s hypothesis, “It is very hard work and requires a lot of nerve, but the sound of an audience rocking with laughter is one of the most rewarding sound you have ever heard” (2011, 121) with the hope that “Laughing may cure some of what ails us” (Bermel 1990, 43), as a positive endeavour to create my screenplay to be as humorous as *Bridesmaids*.

**Principle #4—Plot, Story and Style**

Although this principle is labelled as the fourth principle in this dissertation, the first rule of farce is that it is plot focused (Biggins, cited in Jefferson, 2015). One critic has labelled farce as the “Punch and Judy for grown ups” (Unknown, cited in Warburton 2014), and as Bentley claims, “farce is a veritable structure of absurdities” (1964, 244). Bentley adds that only in paranoia can audiences find reason in the madness, clarifying that “the absurdities which we would be inclined to call stupid are connected in a way we cannot but consider the reverse of stupid. There is an ingenious and complex set of interrelationships” (1964, 244–45). The screenplay adheres to Jonathan Lynn’s description of farce as “the worst day of your life” (cited in Billington 2013) as the writers present Annie’s life as one disastrous downward spiral with each event worse than the previous one. Bermel’s ‘In the Realm of the Unreal’ (1990, 18) suggests that this is Annie’s worst series of ‘days’ in her life. The writers have managed to combine farce plot theories together such as the well-made
play (Bermel 1990), quarrel farce, humiliation farce, deception farce, reversal/exchange farce and snowball (or circular) farce “to produce some profound observations about the psychology of human behavior” (Davis 2003, 119). The main overarching plot device in Bridesmaids is that which Davis identifies as the snowball farce plot, which starts off with Annie’s ‘normal’ world including being asked to be Lillian’s maid of honour, and the ending highlights that “The usual snowball leads to a comic explosion” (Davis 2003, 135). This ‘comic explosion’ occurs when Annie has her meltdown and destroys the backyard display at Lillian’s bridal shower. As the general physical-comedy mayhem starts at the beginning of the script, we follow the shenanigans of Annie’s attempts to give Lillian the best bridal events and wedding. For this farce principle discussion, I will do a general overview analysis of the screenplay, as this is structured differently from the first three principles.

Snowball farces are typically written in a 3-Act structure (Davis 2003, 129–30). Davis states that “Act I begins in quite normal surroundings of respectability, where a snowball is set rolling by a temporary aberration on the part of a leading character” (ibid). Styan argues that the author assumes their audience will accept the improbabilities or impossibilities as we the audience consent to “stretch our beliefs in order to exercise our imagination” (1960, 188). Bentley further suggests that in order to stretch and reach to the highest level of absurdity, farceurs should create from the perspective of the common person and situation (1964, 241). Hence, Annie is a failed small business owner with substantial debt, who must now help organise her best friend’s wedding. In the main plot between Annie and Helen’s rivalry, Davis explains that in analysing farce characters, acting in accordance to their situation in a farce story, “It is in the heat of these extreme measures, almost in a state of hysteria, that taboos can safely be violated without disturbing the veneer of good-breeding” (2003, 131–132).

The story of Bridesmaids adheres to Ellis’ theory that “Farce is supposed to be ‘light fare’, but though it is slight in the general effect, there is often a big idea running through the apparently small plot” (1948, 7). In Bridesmaids, the ‘small plot’ is being the best maid of honour for her best friend’s wedding turning into a fight for survival. Cooney states that audiences know what is at stake for the characters in the play (2014a). Wolff states that the “individual is usually tortured because of his [sic] own
character flaws and his inability to control those flaws under stress” (2010). Annie’s “moments of human weakness which motivate the plot”, turns her life into snowball farce, out of control, picking up speed, disintegrating her ‘normal’ life and eventually her friendship with Lillian (Davis 2003, 129-30). Annie cannot seem to help herself as she continues to attempt her foolish rivalry with Helen, such as the engagement speeches at Lillian’s engagement party. She is blinded by her own anger and her own destruction as she continues to destroy her own life, especially by the indignation set upon by Helen.

The screenwriters do not adhere to Feydeau’s theory of two characters that must not meet, so he brings them together as soon as possible (cited in Arditti 1996, 2). The maid of honour rivalry between Annie and Helen does not start until page 21. In the context of the theatre, Murray states, “when the play is properly wound-up and set loose don’t forget that the plot itself will provide the laughs as it twists and turns and unravels… The characters had been properly established and the audience wanted to enjoy… discomfiture… revenge and… bewilderment” (2011, 138). Additionally, Murray remarks that in many great comedies, “one character is left out in the cold” (2011, 128–29). Here, Helen not only usurps Annie, but also intentionally excludes Annie in various friendship activities with Lillian and Helen, such as the trip to Miami (Act I, 23), and going to the salon (Act II, 85). This highlights the disintegrating and unequal friendship as Davis states that snowball farces act as a “leveling device, which reveals to the audience, if not to the characters on stage, the equal culpability of all” (2003, 129–30).

Next, Davis suggests: “Act II finds these indiscretions leading to disastrous consequences, which are offset by equal problems for many of the other characters” (2003, 129–30). While highlighting Davis’ suggestions, this screenplay also demonstrates Cooney’s idea that “Moments that are set up in Act One and pay off in Act Two are taken up by the audience without a pause” (2014a). The action of Bridesmaids keeps turning as Annie attempts to keep her role as the maid of honour, which demonstrates Ellis’ rule that “You also must have to bring in situations” (1948, 10) with the “vice tighten[ing]” (Levine 2006) as the complications mount higher. The writers create conflict and drama in escalating Annie’s problems, stressing Bergson’s ‘interfering’ series, event or person, which Helen is the ‘interfering’ person.
in the bridal events. Ellis stresses, “As one embarrassment closes in your farce, be sure to open up another for development later” (1948, 8). In this screenplay, Annie is constantly usurped by Helen, as well as the other mishaps with her roommates and her job. Mumolo and Wiig control Annie’s chaos with balance, in order to create detachment from the mayhem she causes. As Davis notes that story management devices contain “[Such] detachment, allied to what Leo Hughes calls the dramatist’s ‘wholly-abandoned and delightful pursuit of the improbable’ ” (Hughes 1956, 49, cited in Davis 2003, 142). But at the same time, as Murray suggests the writers give “life to a complete world so that every scene [is] filled with human detail. The audience [is] involved with the fates of everyone” (2011, 136).

Next, for the last Act of the script, Ellis stresses not only must you have ‘good curtains in farce’, but the “third act must have a new idea in it. Like war, it is the unexpected that earn the big reward” (1948, 8). Additionally, Davis remarks: “Act III can bring either mutual recriminations, or a shaky restoration of the façade of respectability, just in the nick of time” (2003, 129–30). However, Ellis also states that “There’s nothing new in the world, it is only the way in which it’s treated that make it appear so”, he goes on to suggests that “There are original ways of handling old plots—by giving them an unusual twist” (1948, 41). In having a ‘new idea’ for Act III, the chaos in Annie’s life has increased as the rivalry had bled into her ‘normal’ world, the writers continued the rivalry to the end, but have created a twist in the reversal farce that ‘earns a big reward’ as Helen asks Annie for help in finding the missing bride, Lillian. The status between Annie and Helen has now reversed.

Davis suggests, “Comic dilemmas are a normal part of the human experience, and reach out beyond the circle of characters on stage to embrace the audience as well, who are after all only human. Given the chance, we all share the same temptations and suffer the same indignities as prisoner of our bodies” (2003, 129). Even within the ‘madness of farce’ (Bentley 1964, 247), the audience feels sympathetic towards Annie from the start; the screenplay having captured Annie’s dilemmas and misfortunes in her ‘rendezvous with madness’ (Bentley 1964, 244). It is hard to fathom how to write a farce story, as I learn what Mumolo and Wiig have accomplished with this successful project. One challenge I can see already is the complications of farce plotting. Learning to let the plot reveal the jokes and the twists
can now be an added skill in writing my own screenplay. Let us now see how Mumolo and Wiig have created their farce characters.

**Principle #5—Uncensored, Wild Characters**

The characters in *Bridesmaids* are uncensored, showing all sides of our humanity; they portray mostly fleshed out characters as emotional beings that are far from perfect, with numerous flaws and neuroses (i.e., ‘warts and all’). Brecht (1951) has remarked that “Of course live, well-rounded, and naturally inconsistent people must appear on the stage of a realistic theater, together with all their emotions and their immediate remarks and actions. The stage is no herbarium or zoological museum full of stuffed animals” (cited in Melchinger 1966, 107);¹²⁷ human beings, ranging the full spectrum scale from joy to crisis to having a meltdown; including other traits such as being vulnerable, immature, crazy, vile, manipulative, misogynist, racist, ignorant, sexist, insecure and dangerous. In regard to the *Bridesmaids* characters, occasionally Bentley’s principles can be seen in action, namely that “Farce concentrates itself in the actor’s body” (Bentley 1964, 251), in their depiction of the characters’ movements although some of the scenes are written more like a teleplay.¹²⁸ Exaggeration and mechanical caricatures (i.e., Bergsonian effects) lead to a “mathematical patterning” of gesturing and events (Bermel 1990, 30; Davis 2003, 122–123). For this principle, I will focus on the main characters, the protagonist and the antagonist/opponent, with a brief analysis of the supporting characters.

**The Protagonist**

The protagonist, Annie Walker, is established as an ordinary woman to whom the audience can relate, albeit also a deflated victim of her own circumstances. There is no in-depth description of Annie except her age as ‘mid 30’s’ on page 1. In order to inform an audience, Ellis suggests to “Build up your characters bit by bit” before the story progresses too far (1948, 40). Annie is portrayed for the audience to sympathise with her from the first sequence as she is having sex with a handsome man, whom she

¹²⁷ Brecht 1951. ‘From a Letter to an Actor’.
¹²⁸ A teleplay is written with minimal general description and action, and consists mostly of dialogue. In continuing TV series, i.e., *Law and Order*, it consists of mostly slug lines or scene headings, no (or very little) description and then dialogue for a page or two.
wants to please (i.e., Annie puts on make-up in the morning to look pretty), and eventually gets kicked out. Davis notes that “When the actors of farce demand our sympathy, an even more decided shift in tone takes place” (2003, 143), even if Bentley claims that the “farceur is a heretic” (1964, 248). Annie is presented as someone who had followed her dream of opening up a bakery, then experiences business failure, becoming so crushed by this dream that her passion for baking dissipates. Cooney remarks that in farce, the characters are “Ordinary people who are out of their depth in a predicament which is beyond their control and they are unable to contain. Tragedy again” (2014a), and Levin stresses that “the greater the jeopardy the crazier they can act” (2006). As the story progresses, Annie is slowly driven to the edge as she spirals downwards, a person full of insecurities with an obsessive personality disorder, tapping into her uncomfortable anger management issues, shaken more each time by Helen’s manipulative tactics, and on the brink of a psychotic mental breakdown as she hits rock bottom.

It is suggested that Annie’s coping skills were lacking before the screenplay story began, when she loses her bakery, her boyfriend leaves her and she loses all her money, as “Type-characters are moreover quite unconscious of their limitations” since they are driven by their rigidity, acting and reacting blindly (Davis 2003, 122–23). Annie is not good-humoured as she struggles with her bad luck, often self-sabotaging by being highly emotional. And, perhaps being delusional or foolish enough to think she can compete with Helen. Similarly, as Pinero’s farce characters are the “reverse of irrational”, Annie’s responses are dictated by a “very careful calculation of what the market will bear”, in which she is not unfeeling, but as a human, has to look out for herself especially against her rival, Helen (Davis 2003, 131). Although Annie’s frenetic behaviour is believable, truthful and recognisable (Cooney 2014a), Taylor remarks that characters in a play “are made to act according entirely to the dictates of their own natures, the only improbability permitted being that they do it with greater abandon and lack of self-consciousness than most people in real life do most of the time” and those characters “accept the logic of extreme

129 Annie wears her emotions on her sleeve, and she cannot seem to control her emotions a lot of the time, even telling customers at the jewellery store her problems on page 8 or fighting with customers on page 74.
solutions, [and] never do things by half-measures” (1967, 55). Annie’s “basic and essential trait is [her] humanity”, and “this trait justifies the interpretation of [her] behavior as human” (Rozik 2011, 99). Annie changes from being timid to courageous to brazen when she destroys the bridal shower backyard. Her new character is unlike her, but Helen had pushed Annie to the limit.

The Antagonist / Opponent
After setting up Annie’s abysmal ‘normal’ world, the stakes are raised through the introduction of the antagonist, Helen, during Lillian’s engagement party (Act I, 21). Helen is described in the most ridiculous and in-depth terms as the opposite of Annie. The writers showcase Helen as a motivated rival for Annie in the game of one-upmanship. From the initial description, she is no wallflower, and she loves being the centre of attention.

In slow motion, like a goddess, the gorgeous HELEN turns and looks right at Annie. Smiling. She's BEAUTIFUL. She walks toward them, wearing a much-too-fancy, floor-length GOWN. Everything about her is perfect. Annie swallows, straightens her plastic beads.

Annie’s world is further shaken emotionally and psychologically, as she needs to ‘swallow’ and adjust her ‘plastic beads’, whereas Helen’s social mask does not crack until when she asks Annie for help (Act III, 95). This signals that Annie is threatened and jealous of this newest rival and perhaps her greatest nemesis. Bentley states the whole purpose of farce is to show deliberate stupidity (i.e., humans to be deficient intellectually) (1964, 250). In farce, humans “may or may not be one of the more intelligent animals”; they are certainly animals—not one of the least violent either—which “may dedicate what little intelligence he possesses precisely to violence, to plotting violence, or to dreaming violence” (Bentley 1964, 250). It is obvious from the initial meeting that Helen is not pleased with the subordinate role of being one of the bridesmaids, especially since she is the host of Lillian’s engagement party.

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130 Described with camera directions (i.e., perhaps for maximum impact). It is advised not to insert camera directions in screenplays, since the screenwriter should not be telling the director how to shoot the script (unless it is written by a screenwriter/director). See Batty (2012); Dethridge (2003); Field (2005); McKee (1997) et al.
Lillian introduces Helen to Annie with ‘Helen is married to Dougie’s boss. Mr. Harris. Perry.’ This signpost suggests Helen is the ultimate trophy wife, and is of a higher (financial) status than Annie.\textsuperscript{131} Helen is a representative of the ‘good-living’\textsuperscript{132} compared to Annie (Davis 2003, 93). In terms of characters dreaming of violence, Bentley suggests the idea that Mona Lisa’s smile may not have been that she was plotting murder, but signifying that she was dreaming of murders that she would never commit (1964, 250). Mumolo and Wiig have portrayed Helen, not only as an ‘alpha bitch’, but also in common usage terms, as a ‘sweet bitch’. Channelling Mona Lisa, Helen remarks, while smiling, ‘Maid of honor! There she is! It’s so lovely to meet Lillian’s childhood friend!’ Since Helen is also passive aggressive, she additionally needs to say that she and Lillian are ‘literally joined at the hip’ in front of Annie to unsettle and embarrass her. Helen shows her true colours as being sweet on the outside, and evil on the inside. Helen’s first line of dialogue sets her agenda, Helen showing that she is up for battle as the spurned maid of honour, as in Dyer’s pastiche in homage (2007) of ‘hell hath no fury like a woman scorned’\textsuperscript{133}

Mumolo and Wiig portray Helen as detached, cold even;\textsuperscript{134} she never waivers in conspiring against Annie as a narcissistic control freak, hence the audience cannot warm to her until such time as she needs Annie’s help in locating the missing Lillian on her wedding day. As the story progresses, Helen’s egotistic, opportunist, malicious and fierce behavioural disorder unfolds as she revels in taking over the bridal events. She is more sophisticated than Annie as well as being more devious. She thinks Annie lacks the smarts to outmanoeuvre her, but psychologically, Helen is very insecure.

\textsuperscript{131} Mumolo and Wiig describe Annie as smoothing out her dress and being ‘self-conscious’ at The Hunt Club, where the other guests are ‘dressed expensively’ or in ‘fancy clothes’ (Act I, 17).
\textsuperscript{132} Helen enjoys the fruits of the ‘good-life’, while Annie struggles as per Annie’s ‘normal’ world set-up. It can be argued that in the triangle of Annie, Helen and Lillian, the latter two are the representatives of the ‘good-living’ (Davis 2003, 93).
\textsuperscript{133} Quote from \textit{The Mourning Bride} (1697), by British playwright, William Congreve (1670–1729). Original quote: “Heaven has no rage, like love to hatred turned, Nor hell a fury, like a woman scorned.”
\textsuperscript{134} Helen could be considered a borderline sociopath or a psychopath, as she is a liar, two-faced, devious, cunning, lacks empathy and has no remorse. In Act III, she cries; however, sociopaths and psychopaths are actors/actresses, and very clever in not only disguising their feelings, but also projecting pseudo feelings or behaviour (i.e., crying) in order to get ahead, get out of trouble or escape. Annie shows remorse after several incidents.
about her friendship with Lillian and meeting her rival, Annie. She continuously tries to break up their friendship, as well as overcompenstates in her friendship with Lillian who she does not want to lose to Annie. Hence, Helen will continuously usurp Annie at each event.

The Trio of the Main Characters
The trio of characters, Annie, Helen and Lillian, supports Freud’s view that it takes three to tell a joke: “the jokester, the butt of the joke and the listener” (cited in Bentley 1964, 232). This can also be referred to as “the comedian, straight man and the audience” (ibid). Bentley adds, “This trio of vaudeville suggests in turn the ironist, the imposter, and the audience of the traditional comic theatre” (ibid). Taking into account Freud and Bentley’s character analyses, it could be suggested that Helen is the main jokester, Annie is the butt of the joke and Lillian is the straight man [sic] or the audience. On page 4, Lillian is described only as Annie’s ‘best friend’ and as being in her ‘mid 30s’. Lillian is contrasted to Annie and Helen as more emotionally functional, more emotionally ‘normal’. Instead, they have Lillian as a counterpoint; hence, Lillian is less eccentric. This is not to say that Lillian is a boring character, but rather that this serves the plot, which is a better choice for the screenplay. The stereotype of the bride as bridezilla is flipped, with the bridesmaids playing this role instead.

The Supporting Characters
Cardullo suggests that “Indeed, the characters deceive us into believing that they are people, when they are not” (2015, 84). Additionally, Rozik states that a fool is a person “who acts unwisely or imprudently, and this applies also but not only to an absent-minded person” (2011, 37). Hence, the supporting farce ‘stock’ characters (Constantin, cited in Hughes 2014, 138–39) are depicted as unreal, colourful, eclectic fools, such as the rest of the bridesmaids, the roommates, the employees, the customers, the airplane cast and the love interests. Mumolo and Wiig have written the bridal party to consist of contrasting characters that cover the range of bridesmaids (Act I, 17-20), not only of a stereotypical selection, but also of society: Rita, in her 30s, is the tired housewife, has three sons, voluptuous and cynical; Becca, 30, is newly married, cute, sweet, perky and naïve; and Megan, also in her 30s, is the only other single woman besides Annie, tomboyish, brash and sex-obsessed.
The two love interests are contrasted as, Ted, 40, handsome (Act I, 1), cute (Act I, 6), and Officer Nathan Rhodes, 30s (Act II, 26), evidenced through their actions, rather than description. Ted is written as a one-dimensional stereotypical alpha male, who is abusive, self-absorbed and self-centred with a high sense of entitlement, while Rhodes is a more fleshed out, well-rounded thoughtful, caring, mature male. Although Ted is never given a job description, since he lives in an ‘upscale, modern’, gated house, and drives a Porsche (Act I, 1), it is assumed that he has a high-paying job, while Rhodes is a police officer. In Annie’s love triangle, as well as the other characters in the story, “the participants in the joking [of the violating of social taboos] are not usually self-aware characters who reflect upon their mischief and its consequences. They are type-characters whose automatism is obvious and whose playful plight demands little sympathy, whether they are the first or the last victim of the round” (Davis 2003, 141). Ted treats Annie disrespectfully, as seen in the first sequence when he reminds her about the sleep-over rule. In contrast, Rhodes is laid back and wants Annie to stay over. In analogous terms, Rhodes is an island of calm for Annie while Ted is like a tornado. The audience can see the choices for Annie. Ted is the “shiny thing” (Wendall 2012), meaning Ted is handsome, charismatic, flashy and rich. Generally, audiences also want the ‘shiny thing’, and wish for Annie to have the shiny thing, at least initially. Like Lillian, Rhodes is not meant to be the boring counter point, rather, the juxtaposition and stable influence for Annie. It is noted that Ted does not have a last name; perhaps, suggesting he is not a whole person. Again, highlighting the extreme difference between the two love interests.

Annie’s sibling roommates, Brynn, 20s, and Gil, are the typical roommates from hell, who are obnoxious, gross and hideous (Act I, 10). Brynn is in the US on a tourist visa, and cannot get a job. She is a couch potato who watches TV, while Gil has an unspecified job. Brynn is portrayed as dim-witted, not having a clue about life, e.g., gets a free, disgusting tattoo that becomes infected. They do not respect Annie’s

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135 Annie (or any female?) is not allowed to sleep over at Ted’s house. He kicks Annie out of bed in the morning.
136 In the screenplay, it is suggested that Brynn and Gil are close, hence would be very similar to each other. In the movie, the siblings do not sound the same (i.e., not the same accent). Brynn is played by Rebel Wilson, and has an unusual accent. It is different from her sibling’s, Gil, who sounds British. It is suggested that they sound different for comic effect.
boundaries, as Brynn reads her diary, and Gil tries on her clothes. Since Gil and Brynn evict Annie, they do not consider her as an equal roommate, and/or perhaps, Annie rents the apartment from Gil.

Since farce “excels in violent transgressions”, it profits from a lack of inhibition in using “foul language or indecent language and obscene gestures referring to tabooed themes”, with words “refer[ring] explicitly to sexual organs and relations” (Rozik 2011, 53). For Annie’s work place at Cholodecki’s Jewelry [sic] Store (Act I, 9-10), Mumolo and Wiig have written Don, Annie’s sarcastic, creepy boss, as an AA recovering addict who only hired Annie as a favour to Judy, Annie’s mother, who is his sponsor. The first customers, the Asian Couple, are so uncomfortable—even terrified—of Annie, that they flee the store. The Asian Couple are a normality counter point to Annie, who appears to be crazy, even sociopathic. Due to his condescending and competitive behaviour, Don compares employees to motivate them and/or to disgrace them, i.e., compares Annie to Kahlua. On page 74, Annie quarrels with a 13-year-old girl who is described as rich, snotty, chewing gum and has an iced coffee. The insult slugfest with the girl is a marker for how grotesque Annie’s behaviour has become.

137 On page 34, Gil says the last few lines about not reading Annie’s diary and trying on her clothes. In the motion picture, Brynn says the last few lines. Perhaps, to gather an ironic laugh, the director and/or producers have used the actor, Rebel Wilson, who is a big female, to say those lines since Kristen Wiig, who is much slimmer, would have much smaller clothes. The irony being Brynn would never be able to fit into Annie’s clothes.

138 In comparing Annie to Kahlua, Don touches Kahlua, and then says for Kahlua not to sue him for touching her. Hence, the “obscene gestures” of inappropriate touching as taboo (Rozik 2011, 53).

139 It could be argued that Don is a businessman and small business owner who is driven only by financial goals, hence does not realise he is embarrassing and humiliating Annie in front of the other staff. Since Don does not seem to understand this and/or does not care, he has borderline sociopath personality disorder. He tolerates Annie working for his store, and would like to fire her.

140 This store rivalry is one of many ‘rivalry farces’ in the screenplay (Davis 2003). Don sets up this rivalry, not Annie.

141 This foreshadows the rivalry between Annie and Helen as well as the theme of high and low status. Kahlua is described as a ‘very pretty African-America woman’ on page 9, who is also sensuous and knows how to pose to sell to customers. Just as Annie and Helen are presented as opposites, Kahlua is clearly the higher status to Annie’s lower status, even though they are both low-waged sales clerks.

142 Mumolo and Wiig use the girl as a parallel transference to Annie’s desperate attempts against Helen, and how much Annie has suffered because of Helen.
In the tragic image in Thomas Middleton’s play, *A Mad World, My Masters!* (1605), the cast of fools tells us it is a world of fools that we live in (Bentley 1964, 251). The *Bridesmaids* characters are “exaggerated type-characters” (Davis 2003, 97), in which these characters are not “as a little lower than the angels but as hardly higher than the apes” (Bentley 1964, 250). The farceurs, Mumolo and Wiig, present their characters “in the mass, in the rough, in the raw, in anything but fine individual flower” (ibid), as targets for disgrace and ridicule (Davis 2003, 97). The writers have paid homage (Dyer 2007) to perhaps the greatest of tragedies, *King Lear* (Shakespeare 1603–1606), “When we are born we cry that we are come, To this great stage of fools” (Shakespeare, cited in Bentley 1964, 251). Since “All characters are their creators’ puppets” (Bermel 1990, 24), I have learnt that such characters are “imitations of imitations” (ibid) of fools, and when writing my characters, I need to be more aware of the need to show their humanity, flaws, inconsistencies and vulnerability, as well as their deliberate stupidity, and mechanical, grotesque behaviour in the ‘stage of fools’.

**Principle #6—Pacing, Tempo and Timing**

Story movement such as pacing, tempo and timing is more involved than generally realised; comedy is faster than usual and tragedy is slower than usual, with farce at breakneck speed (Bentley 1964, 247; Ellis 1948, 28; Murray 2011, 85; Rozik 2011, 88). Labiche’s *The Italian Straw Hat* (1851), a “revolution in vaudeville” (Sarcey, cited in Davis 2003, 124), ushered in the new story movement for farce, from leisurely to this ‘fast and furious’ pace (Davis 2003, 124). Generally, farce does not allow for pauses, dissolves, fade-outs or passage of time because this genre does not allow for either the characters nor the audience to take a breath or reflect (Cooney 2014a; Levine 2006; Murray 2011, 124). Overall, Mumolo and Wiig did not adhere to farce’s principle of active and fast pacing, tempo and timing. Also, the screenplay is not structured in ‘Real Time’ (Cooney 2014a; Levine 2006; Murray 2011, 124). Seger argues, “A shorter timeline… increases the drama, since short timelines are more dramatic. Sometimes they apply pressure on the characters to get something done quickly” (2008, 8). She could have been describing farce as she adds, “When creating a tight timeline, the action can become unbelievable” (2008, 23). Although the
screenplay does not indicate the exact timeline, the story timeline starts before Lillian’s engagement and ends on Lillian’s wedding night. The average length between an engagement and the wedding is about 14 months,\textsuperscript{143} but in the screenplay it appears to be a few weeks to a couple of months due to the timing of the bridal events.

In general, Mumolo and Wiig have written \textit{Bridesmaids} as a moderately paced screenplay.\textsuperscript{144} Due to a lack of “enforced speed” (Murray 2011, 85), the pace lags or can be considered flat in certain scenes, as well as inconsistent pacing. This up and down, fast and slow, and stop and start, may be useful for farce of this length for certain stories. Ellis suggests that farceurs always keep an eye ‘on the curtains’ of the Acts (1948, 8) in which the writers have written \textit{Bridesmaids} both in the 3-Act structure and a sequence approach (see Field 2005; Gulino 2004; Hauge 2011; McKee 1997; Vogler 2007),\textsuperscript{145} along with the individual sequence arc approach, with several overlapping sections. Some of the sequences are long and elaborate such as a) the bachelorette luncheon, the bridal shop and driving back home sequence, and b) the conference phone call for the bachelorette party, the plane ride to Las Vegas and the bus ride back sequence. Along with the sequences are many \textit{bits} in which the writers have added for comedy effects (Thomas 2012). It is worth mentioning that on the first viewing of the movie the sequences did not feel long, since there was some forward momentum with the direction. When comparing the screenplay to the movie side by side, reading the scene, then watching the clip, the movie seemed to have more pauses than on the screenplay. This can account for the extended running time exceeding the screenplay page count.

\textsuperscript{143} Jessica Zaleski reports the engagement figure from The Knot wedding website’s 2014 Real Wedding Study in ‘How Long Is Too Long to Be Engaged?’ (2015).
\textsuperscript{144} It should be noted that there is a discrepancy and disconnect between the screenplay and the motion picture. Some sections do read slow, but when viewed and compared, it moved along moderately. Other sections read fast, but when viewed and compared, it moved along slower than on the page. Other sections were filmed differently than from the screenplay, i.e., Megan falling onto the sofa in the bridal shop (not in screenplay) and Annie winning the tennis match (not in screenplay).
\textsuperscript{145} Ellis suggests trimming it down afterwards only after you have written it out at full length (1948, 8). Mumolo and Wiig have revised \textit{Bridesmaids} numerous times, with the help of Judd Apatow and Billy Mernit (youtube.com).
The set-up of Annie’s ‘normal’ world[146] moves quickly, in which a lot is covered. In screenwriting theory, the normal world contains visually as much as possible to hook an audience in and lay the foundation for the story.[147] However, the sequence of Lillian’s engagement party is typical of how Mumolo and Wiig have written _Bridesmaids_, which is comprised of many scenes and set-ups (see Field, McKee, Hauge and Vogler) such as going to pick up Judy,[148] driving up to the country club, meeting all the bridesmaids, the bridesmaids speech battle, Lillian asking Annie to get to know Helen, and finally, with the backend of the engagement party is the driving ticket scene with Officer Rhodes. In the first twenty-five percent of the screenplay, the usual standard screenplay set-up shows the main characters who will be in the story, and the supporting cast who will either help or oppose the protagonist.

Characters are often seen standing around and talking such as the beginning of the bachelorette luncheon sequence (Act II, 34). Yet, Ellis states, “few characters in a farce stand perfectly still when they’re speaking. There should be some action” (1948, 8). Ellis may have been talking about the characters in the theatre, but this can apply to movies as well. Characters can go on an emotional journey, with a character arc, whether it is in a play or in a film. It is the pauses and the stopped action that have _Bridesmaids_ move at a slower speed. It is perhaps a naivety in the work by Mumolo and Wiig to set out to write comedy, but are influenced by Apatow and Mernit (with a lean towards romantic comedy structure). I have included a screenplay excerpt in which Mumolo and Wiig write the screen directions specifically with the characters to just stand and talk.

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[146] The main story arc consists of Annie’s normal world (including Lillian telling Annie about her engagement), Lillian’s engagement party, the bridal party luncheon with the bridal party dress fitting, the bachelorette party to Las Vegas, Lillian’s bridal shower, Annie’s _Castaway_ moment, Annie and Helen looking for Lillian, Annie talking to Lillian, and finally, Lillian’s wedding. The sub-plot story arcs are Annie’s relationships with Ted and Rhodes, living with roommates and getting evicted, having to move back in with her mom, Judy, and her bakery closing down which sees Annie working in a jewelry store, but ultimately getting fired. Annie’s normal world: casual sex with Ted, hanging out and talking about relationships with Lillian, her jewelry job, her apartment and roommates, and visiting her mother, Judy.

[147] See screenwriting books from Batty, Dethridge, Field, Hauge, McKee, Truby, Vogler et al.

[148] When Annie arrives at The Walker residence, she finds out that her mother forgot that she had to go to AA that night, although she doesn’t drink. Hence, that sets up for Annie to go alone to Lillian’s engagement party at The Hunt Club, in which Helen is the host on page 15.
Then, inside the restaurant, they sit and talk about Lillian’s bridal shower for about full three pages. But, the writers do “keep the dialogue lively” (Ellis 1948, 8) while they are eating, both in the topic of conversation (i.e., a happy, eager topic of Lillian’s bridal shower) and coming in on cue, not in regard to the actors speaking fast (Murray 2011, 85–86).

In another stationary scene (Act I, 34), Annie confronts her roommates, Gil and Brynn. The conversation runs about a page and a half long, which ‘Annie, Gil, and Brynn sit on the couch.’ The dialogue becomes a quarrel farce, which is funny, confrontational and cements their rivalry. Ellis states farce is “too quick to wait” for pauses for audiences’ reaction (1948, 28), but there are many pauses in the story in which both the audience and the characters can take a breather. This goes against Ellis’ argument that a farce actor “would certainly NOT stand still and stare out of the window” (1948, 9, emphasis in original), as “subtlety hampers speed” (Arditti 1996, 2). If the window is substituted for a photo, then Mumolo and Wiig again break the farce rule of having a non-active character and scene after Lillian announces her engagement to Annie (Act I, 15), as ‘Annie lays in bed looking at a photo of her and Lillian as kids.’ Although Annie is reminiscing about their childhood, this shift of tone accentuates a break in the farce where the pace becomes less frenetic. 149 Davis states, “When each character is allowed to claim attention for his point of view… the pace of the farce is interrupted and the butt of the practical joke is capable of creating a particularly awkward pause in the laughter” (2003, 145–46). This leads us to Annie and Lillian in the aftermath of the bridal shop sequence; again, the description is non-active, ‘A green looking Annie drives a green looking Lillian, who is back in her regular clothes’ (Act II, 45-46).

149 Annie misses Lillian and all the good times they had as children. Lillian’s engagement has signalled that life has entered another phase (i.e., leaving the past and moving into the future). Lillian has somebody who loves her. Annie has no one and will get left behind. The best she can hope for is casual sex with Ted.
Whenever there is a pause, and Annie reflects on her behaviour and to what just happened to her, then “Humanity has entered the realm of farce” (Davis 2003, 144). On page 76 (emphasis in original), Mumolo and Wiig use the same non-active device as Annie and Lillian sit on the bus and converse for one full page; the description reflects non-farce action, ‘The bridesmaids are BUMMED. Annie sites next to Lillian.’ This is a crucial scene in the snowball farce as Lillian replaces Annie with Helen as the maid of honour.

After each downtrodden event, empathy is created for Annie and her mistakes. Annie acknowledges her various acts of irrationality and foolhardiness, at different times, to Lillian, Judy, and especially to her sounding board, Rhodes. Here, the writers have created a mixture of farce and pathos—sometimes bordering on melodrama—throughout the screenplay, which in a farce, characters have no time to reflect and explore (Davis 2003, 123). Annie self-reflects, but this does not last very long. She not only goes back to her old rash and irrational self, but she is spiralling downward into depression and a mental breakdown. Davis remarks that “For many critics, empathy is the means by which farce redeems itself and becomes significant—becomes comedy”, and adds “farce is comedy with self-awareness left out” (2003, 143). Unlike Ellis’ experience of having to forgo any wit and the epigrams in farce (1948), Mumolo and Wiig do have a message via Megan giving Annie a pep talk after Annie watches Castaway (Act III, 90).

*Bridesmaids* adheres to the farce principle of a short timeline for some scenes. Hence, the ending comes quickly as Annie, Helen and Lillian “rush[ing] around dealing with it [the problem or predicament]”, instead of sitting down and talking about it (Cooney 2014a). The climax timeline occurs all on the day of Lillian’s wedding, but the lead up is eleven pages long (Act III, 95-105).

Bentley has suggested that farce would be suited to TV and film due to the ability of editing to create faster pacing (1964, 253). Murray suggests tightening the scenes (i.e., cueing), for if the play is too slow, the “audience will see through the inevitable mechanical contrivances” of the playwright (2011, 124). Levine states that as the story builds, the pace quickens (2006). As analogous to Davis (2003), Levine equates farce, if done properly, to a snowball barrelling down a hill, picking up speed and
gaining size (Levine 2006), in which the audience must not have time to think with its ‘galloping pace’ (Murray, 2011, 124).

How does a screenwriter ‘enforce speed’ on the page without directly writing it in, such as with dialogue and screen direction? Although Ellis stresses that speed is required for farce to be a success (1948, 28), Mumolo and Wiig have been able to achieve success with their unevenly paced, moderate tempo farce story. It is my intention to be aware of the pacing, tempo and timing of my farce screenplay so the characters will be in a state of panic where they will have little time to process any self-reflection as their lives spiral out of control. According to Field, “To create this sense of urgency, the visual elements of the action are written in a fast pace and rhythm; the tempo of the scenes gets shorter and shorter, faster and faster, until the sequence explodes into a frenzy of action” (1994, 288). This may be a challenge that I will underestimate in my screenplay, as perhaps this is one of the most difficult principles to enact on the page. It is the hope that I will be able to answer this challenge with the screenplay reader (i.e., the agent, the actor, the director, the producer, etc.) in mind.
Chapter 4 –  
*The Wedding Jackpot: A Reflection on its Successes and Failures*

Creativity requires the courage to let go of certainties.  
Erich Fromm

The chief enemy of creativity is ‘good’ sense.  
Pablo Picasso

Introduction

In the previous chapters, I investigated farce comedy tropes and elements; specifically looking into the principles offered by Bentley’s, Bermel’s and Davis’ farce principles. Then, in seeking to understand what can be learned about writing farce from applying the farce principles to the case study, I analysed how these principles were observed in Mumolo and Wiig’s screenplay, *Bridesmaids*. In this chapter, on the basis of this research in this research-led practice methodology, I reflect on my screenplay, *The Wedding Jackpot*, in relation to the farce principles researched and discussed, assessing what I perceive to be its successes and failures. The actual story was conceptualised, and then developed simultaneously throughout the PhD. As I undertook to write an original farce screenplay, I made decisions along the way and was influenced by the theories. It was not until the end, by stepping away from the screenplay and looking with a more critical eye, that I could see how the whole process worked, or not. It was not until the later stages that the screenplay showed my attempt at the farce principles in action. This also led to creating new methods out of necessity, which are discussed under Distinctive Contributions in the Conclusion.

In taking into consideration of the textual analysis of *Bridesmaids*, and then the difficulties with the writing and analysing of my own screenplay, I acknowledge Styan’s drama theory, which I suggest can also be applied to motion pictures, as he declares:

Dramatic criticism, like any other, finds it hard not be a generalizing activity, whereas the live theatre experience is always particular; criticism is docile or reflective or dead, whereas perception in the theatre is wild and immediate and alive… Moreover, matching
theory and practice is a very chancy business. On the one hand, a fine theory can be meaningless in the theatre—the time-honored joke is ‘When did you last have a catharsis?’ On the other hand, something can work in the theatre which no theory can explain—like the provokingly unreal sound of the breaking string in realism’s own Cherry Orchard. At least, an [sic] hypothesis in dramatic theory, unlike one in literary theory, can be tested. The ultimate question, Does it work?, can be asked (1975, 1–2, italics in original).

In finding how useful or not the theories, techniques and the case study example to the writing of The Wedding Jackpot, it is the aim of this chapter to show and reflect on how useful they have been and where not, how I have had to adapt them for screenwriting. I have discovered that one must unpack more than just theories and analyses to become a farceur, and I have come to the assessment that the successes and failures of this screenplay partly lie in my attempt to go to the edge of brilliance that Ayckbourn, Chekhov, Cleese, Cooney, Coward, Feydeau, Frayn, Labiche, Molière, Morton, Orton, Pinero, Plautus, Simon, Thomas, Travers, Wilde, et al., all centrally occupy. It became my challenge to include all the six farce principles on every page, or at least in every scene (if the scene went longer than a page). My successes and failures are sometimes obvious, and sometimes I am oblivious if it actually works. In already stating that genre means a kind or type of work, “it can designate very broad practices” as I identify Dyer’s example of John Ford, who knew he was making Westerns: “One of the concerns of what follows, then, is to explore the differences between knowing what you are doing (straightforward genre production), reflecting on this in a work and pastiche as a specific form of that reflexivity” (2007, 92–93). This leads to how the six farce principles were applied to my screenplay in order to develop a new screenplay practice. The critical evaluation of the farce theories, the methods/systems, the processes used, the decisions, the intentions and the overall context for the story and structure of the screenplay will be examined.

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150 The past famous farceurs are named alphabetically, and this has no bearing on their work, literature hierarchy, popularity, etc. It must be noted that I do not compare myself to the past famous farceurs, but only to learn and understand from them.
It does this by offering a selection of reflections on what I feel the screenplay has achieved, within the standard screenplay format. First, Ellis suggests the title of a farce should not be underestimated as it “is the most important” element… as it must be “good-striking”, “something slick”, “something in its flavor”, and/or “strike an original note, which promises originality of theme or of treatment” (1948, 6). I created the title, *The Wedding Jackpot*, in reference to the plot. In taking on this challenge of writing a farce screenplay, I am reminded of the difficulty of writing farce as Ellis argues: “farce is the most difficult writing in dramatic form, and those who cannot write it, sneer at those who can” (1948, 28).

Furthermore, although the various theories are observed when writing my own farce screenplay, I refer to Styan’s theory, “What is ‘dramatic’? It is difficult to find two people who agree, because it is difficult to draw principles from many plays each working to its own ends… The secret lies in the way a degree and kind of attention is elicited from the audience” (1960, 64). In this academic creative practice, however, I am also reminded that Dürrenmatt’s drama theory challenges the present situation I find myself in: “For me the stage is not a showcase for theories, cosmic philosophies, and declarations, but an instrument whose potentialities I am trying to discover by experimenting with it” (cited in Melchinger 1966, 119). To clarify:

The problems which I face as a dramatist are problems of practical technique which I encounter as I work rather than before I begin — or, to be more precise, I usually encounter them after I finish my work, as a result of a certain curiosity to discover what I have in fact really done. I would like to mention these problems also with reference to the danger that the general longing for profundity has not been given its due and that the impression might therefore arise that a clumsy novice is writing these words. I do not, of course, have any idea how one might undertake to speak expertly on the subject of Art, and consequently I can speak only to those who fall asleep when they read Heidegger (Dürrenmatt, *Theaterprobleme* 1955, cited in Melchinger 1966, 119).

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151 The motion picture industry demands that screenwriters write in the correct, usual standard screenplay format (Field 2005; Hauge 2011; McKee 1997; Truby 2008). However, some screenwriters have devised their own screenplay format. Dan Gilroy, who wrote and directed *Nightcrawler* (2014), did not use the standard screenplay format.

152 As of 2015, there was no movie with this title on IMDb.com; no book with this title on Amazon.com; this title was not on the Library of Congress copyright website; there are many wedding contests around the world, but none with this exact title.
In my attempt to write extreme farce, the landscape of farce movies needed to be observed and acknowledged in order to gain further insight into where my screenplay would be placed with the other farce films. One of the new findings is what I termed The Farce Scatter Graph Line Chart, where I locate movies onto a chart, and the spectrum ranges from ‘no farce’ to ‘hard farce’. Hence, my extreme farce became known as ‘hard farce’. I look to Davis in her analysis of the degrees of farce. She acknowledges that there is a range within farce:

Borrowing an opposition of terms from Jean Anouilh, who published his plays grouped under titles which described their general spirit (‘pièces roses’, ‘pièces noires’, ‘pièces brillantes’ etc.), I suggest that a mild degree of empathy, as in the examples above, tends to produce farce “en rose.” A softly romantic and festive mood allows the audience to enjoy its joking and to rest assured that contrition will duly be tendered to the offended dignities. It is equally easy, however, for empathy to swing the farcical mood in a different direction, producing farce “en noir.” Here, the mixture of laughter and sympathy, or the rapid alternation between the two, is bought to a halt long enough to produce the additional element which creates black humor—alarm, and even terror (2003, 148).

The Wedding Jackpot was written alongside the farce investigation. As previously stated, the engagement between creative practice and its iterative and recursive nature was continuously ongoing throughout the PhD program. Through the seven revisions of the treatment and the sixteen drafts of the screenplay (with three main story arc revisions), I keep Cooney’s remarks in the foreground, that his first farce drafts are not a “Rolls Royce”, as he “never get[s] it exactly right the first time” since he is a perfectionist for whom “Every single moment has to work” (2014a). As Ellis states, “Entertainment is not easy, and does not come ‘overnight’ as many seem to think it does, in a flood of inspiration” (1948, 6). It should be noted I have written this screenplay in a similar style to Shane Black (Lethal Weapon franchise, The Last Boy Scout, Last Action Hero). Black is known as a screenwriter who writes in a staccato

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153 A treatment is usually a long summary of the screen story in prose. It can range from a few pages to almost a novel. It has been famously rumored that James Cameron wrote a 70-page treatment for the Aliens movie, which he wanted to direct. Besides the story itself (i.e., plot), it may contain camera directions, feelings, thoughts, mood, history of the characters, etc. It can interchangeable with an ‘outline’, which is usually referred to as just the story (i.e., plot). In some movie circles, it means the same thing.
style, with one word to describe a scene, half sentence descriptions, one action per line, etc. It is considered a ‘greasy lightening read’, as your eye moves down the page faster than normal for a regular screenplay (imdb.com). I have structured this reflective chapter with the motion picture industry in mind, in that I have analysed either the first page, the first 10 pages and/or Act I, with one or two more scenes and/or sequences for each of the six farce tropes. This is purely to contain the analysis and to keep to word count; and, it is hoped that the tropes are evident on the pages of the screenplay with the ultimate goal of ‘practice performing theory’. The critique will represent how the farce tropes were used or found to be in operation, exemplified at certain points, and to have a deeper understanding within the story itself.

*The Wedding Jackpot*

**Principle #1—Violence and Aggression**

In the story world of my screenplay, I immediately explore violence and aggression with the first line of description to show the world as it really is for both the reader and audience. As Bentley claims, “for if art did not treat violence, it could not go to the heart of things” (1964, 221). In order to convey the stress, with the energy level at extreme as part of ‘hard farce’, the opening line is set in a downtown shopping district, in which the busyness with packed shoppers buzzing about creates a sense of unease, perhaps even touches on the apocalyptic. Here people do not dodge bullets or flying objects (i.e., a pie) as the shoppers collide due to being ‘phone zombies’. This scenario is played out worldwide, and readers can instantly relate to this. Readers may see themselves as these shoppers in this farcical situation.

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154 Historically, Hollywood and/or script readers tended to only read up to the first 30 pages and the last 10 pages. It was referred to as doing a ‘30/10’ read. In today’s crowded screenplay market, these readers typically only read the first 10 pages before deciding to continue reading. While attending several workshops by Wendall Thomas (2011–2015), she has stated that she can tell if the screenwriter is good or not within a few pages; that she would like the screenplay to be good from page one.

155 Similar to the referencing format in the Bridesmaids screenplay chapter, I have indicated the references in The Wedding Jackpot screenplay with the 3-Act structure and/or page numbers. The reference citations are varied, i.e., Act 1, 5; on page 82; first page, etc. Therefore, ‘Act 1, 5’ indicates that the reference is on page 5 of the actual screenplay.

156 Bentley gives other examples such as bullets passing through people, heavy blows with objects only causing irritation and rake prongs imbedded into people simulating pin pricks (1964, 222).
To set a tone of danger and anarchy in the sequence, the next action is these shoppers tripping over two banners. But, instead of reacting normally, such as just brushing themselves off and continuing on their way, they kick the banners. This is two-fold—it shows how seemingly normal people can become violent, and also mocks the state of the world. They expect not only other people to move out of their way, but also expect inanimate objects to move out of their way. They blame the banners for hurting them. This is not to say what the world is coming to, but it has already arrived now, with the living dead’s sense of entitlement and feel they are not accountable for their actions (which goes partly with the theme of the story), and not really living life (i.e., they are living their lives on their phones).

Bentley argues to include violence in the dialectic of farce in which violence is contrasted with softness (1964, 243). Here, then, I play with this idea (Act I, 1-2), in which I have a double-flip on the contrast/juxtaposition. Initially, I decided to include children running wild, and generally attacking Grace. In this world, children are not nice. A crying child should initially elicit our empathy, but this boy instead chokes Grace with her lanyard ID when she picks him up. This sets up the (ironic) idea that not only is no one nice in this world, but not even children are nice. Bermel notes that “One of the clauses in an unwritten contract between farceurs and their audiences… state[s] that the character will come of their ordeals unscathed” (1990, 23). Grace, seemingly unscathed, takes the brunt of the violence and aggression without regard to her safety. This is in line with what Bentley has to say about Chaplin’s violent scenes, which are “dramatized by a context of great gentleness”, and Harpo Marx’s violent and serious scenes occurs when he has his “most delicate of instruments, the harp” (1964, 243). Since farce is known for its juxtapositions, Bentley argues that this gentleness is not a compromise for the violence, but its purpose is to heighten the effect and impact of the violence, and vice versa (1964, 243). Then, I flip the contrast again, on the second page, where Grace saves a young girl from being trampled on. In my writing process, I often juggled the two—of violence and gentleness—in which I found it unnatural at first. I must admit that it became a technical writing exercise of aligning the two together, instead of the more organic process.
Similar to *Bridesmaids*, there are several ‘quarrel farce’ plot devices (Davis 2003), as the verbal battles represent the character’s inner life in *The Wedding Jackpot*. Another influence is J.M. Morton’s *Box and Cox* (1847) (cited in Davis 2003), which helped guide the way I wrote several of these quarrel farces, such as between Grace and Pandora, when Pandora will not give Grace her money. Davis highlights the ‘positively claustrophobic’ effect if no resolution is forthcoming (2003, 119). For example, in the *Bridesmaids*’ tennis match, Annie argues back and forth with Helen, and Grace argues with several opponents in my screenplay, but unlike Annie who was able to win a battle, there is neither a win, nor a resolution for Grace. It was intentionally written this way to create the effect of the ‘vice getting tighter and tighter’; the reader has no breathing space to feel relieved for the protagonist. The end goal was to have an immense relief at the climax at the actual wedding contest, when other the characters get their due. One quarrel farce example occurs when Grace argues with Deb in Grace and Polly’s apartment when Deb is announced as Polly’s new roommate (Act II, 89–92).

**DEB (CONT'D)**

It'd be bad to be a divorce statistic. That's not the right statistic you want to be involved with. Better to have the before statistic.

**GRACE**

Divorce is ok. It's common, like 50%, closer to 60%, maybe 70%. See it's for everybody.

**DEB**

It's a dirty 70% statistic.

**GRACE**

No, it's a clean statistic, a clean 80%.

**DEB**

Better to be clean than dirty, right?

**GRACE**

No, better to be dirty than not clean.

In another example, Grace argues with Sofia at the wedding gazebo arches and wedding wishing wells design event at the hardware and garden centre (Act II, 87–88). Sofia finally finishes Grace off in regard to her designs, as Grace’s arch bursts into flames and sets off a domino effect of more catastrophes. Unbeknown to Grace, there is no chance for her to win. This dramatist method creates a link between the
violence and the story momentum, even though the scenes are unreal and preposterous. Davis notes that this “assumes a life of its own” as the tension is never released and the characters are exposed to ridicule (2003, 119).

As it is the nature of farcical violence, Bentley claims, “In farce, hostility enjoys itself” (1964, 255). To highlight an extreme scene, Annie destroys Helen’s backyard with all the displays of the bridal shower and escalates to verbally attacking others before being stopped and then kicked out by Lillian. At her tipping point like Annie’s, Grace destroys the dinner tasting wedding event in the hotel kitchen (Act II, 71–75), in which she also verbally attacks Ian and Mark. She loses Mark, who leaves, but she does not know how to handle this situation since she has never been in love, nor cared about someone to this degree. This becomes a life experience for Grace on her character arc. Rozik endorses Jekels’ (1965, 263) catharsis theory (i.e., Aristotle’s “purging of the passions”), stating that “Extreme dependence creates anxiety, which is a precondition for holistic catharsis” (cited in Rozik 2011, 77). Both Annie and Grace experience a catharsis in releasing their pent-up emotions due to their state in life and their low social hierarchy. Unfortunately, they do not realise the damage in the moment. I highlight this violent after-effect behaviour from a comedian’s viewpoint, Anthony Morgan, who analyses comedy from a psychological standpoint:

Doing something like stand-up comedy produces in you a lot of anger and sadness. If you are doing it properly, the anger is a black murderous rage, and the sadness a bottomless pit of despair. This builds up over time, and dissipates slowly, even in a tranquil environment… The alternative is a cornucopia of drugs and being involved in unexplained deaths a lot more than normal people (2015, 9).

A limitation I had as a farceur was to find a balance between violence and gentleness, and also how much violence and aggression is too much. Some scenes might be considered risky. With the backdrop of some theorists who say no subject is taboo, such as McKee and Ellis, it is important to explain some subjects are on the edge for readers or audiences. Even if I write farce and portray a scene to ‘hard farce’, I ask myself if it’s too much for the reader or the audience. I question myself if I went too far; hence my own censorship comes into play. A question that has evolved with this
farce principle is—How much does a farceur push the limits, in following the rules too much versus knowing in your gut what feels right?

For example, at The Wedding Expo (Act I, 14), Patches, the male pony, chases the bride contestants on the stage. Initially, I wrote that Patches humped the bride contestants, but he knocked over the bride contestants, and then Patches simulated having sex with the fallen women and ejaculated. This was a tricky as well as a hard scene to write because I did not want to suggest that Patches was simulating raping the women or, that bestiality and/or sodomy was fun in a non-consensual situation. To avoid the scene seeming like just another gratuitous rape scene or a bestiality scene, I decided that Patches would get excited without humping the bride contestants. I wrote the scene with the end result of Patches’ sperm all over the bride contestants, letting the audience imagine what had occurred. I asked myself if I was censoring myself too much in this scene after I made the changes to clean the scene up. Another option could be that Patches urinate or defecate on the brides, but then I would be censoring myself, and hence, would veer away from being a farceur. The scene was about connecting sex to marriage, and how they are not mutually exclusive.

To be a farceur, I literally had to strip my soul bare for this first farce principle. This was one of the harder principles to be immersed in. I noticed there was a dialectic nature within myself as per the theory of the audience enjoying the characters’ misfortunes (See Bentley 1964; Bermel 1990; Davis 2003). Often, I could not gauge my personality or behaviour (in going to the extreme sometimes), in comparison to the average person on the street, in regard to what is acceptable in the current social climate and the market for the motion picture industry. I wanted to see ‘fools hurt to the extreme’. But, whenever I wrote a scene, I had to instil the ‘en noir’ (Davis 2003, 148) in myself to push it towards being more violent and aggressive. I initially would write a scene without any violence or aggression, and then revise it to include it. It is not in my nature to seek violence or aggression. Hence, I discovered that my creative capacity’s set point was in the ‘vanilla’ range for violence and aggression.

Perhaps—as I questioned myself—if I do have a ‘soft’ version of life, how can I tell the farce story with violence and aggression? But having said that, I must admit that it became easier with each revision to include violence and aggression into my
screenplay, as I understood and was influenced by the farce theories. It was not about the farce theorists saying this is what must happen because these plays have violence and aggression, but a more in-tune innate understanding, perhaps on a psychological level, of farce’s allowance of this particular principle. Slowly, I was able to expand the boundaries of my own censorship. I am unsure if, as Bentley remarks that we become accustomed to the violence, that I became not only accustomed to it, but actually sought it out. As a farceur, I feel what is key in implementing this farce principle will be in the ability to understand myself, as well as the marketplace, and how deeply or innately I can express myself in order to fully grasp this principle in a screenplay. It became clear that I would have to have a multi-step process of writing this principle, which enabled me to increase the violence and aggression on the page each time.

Principle #2—Extreme Mocking

One of farce’s universal qualities lies in the disruption of ‘familiar social rituals’ to homely ‘everyday rituals’ (Bermel 1990, 8). Like Bridesmaids, I initially and specifically designed The Wedding Jackpot to have an overall theme of mocking common rituals, in the form of the wedding tradition and matrimonial union. The farce theorists state that society’s institutions (i.e., the wedding, marriage and family) are not only ripe for mocking, but must be attacked (Bentley 1964, 225), especially in a “conventional society, preferably one that takes itself a bit seriously” (Warburton, 2014); even extending this mocking to ‘taboo themes’ (Rozik 2011, 53), such as the ‘Nazi and concentration camps’ and ‘dead babies’ (McKee, cited in storylogue.com 2012-16). Bermel states that “Farce means to puncture social pretensions” (1990, 39) in which farceurs not only skewer the custom, situation or event, but also the people (i.e., characters) involved. The Wedding Jackpot consists of numerous scenes in which I attack the ideas and the values that society has placed on a pedestal, from the macrocosm of the wedding rituals to the microcosm of getting rejected, either by the design schools or by ‘the hot guy’. In regard to censorship and political

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157 One ‘taboo theme’ film that might be an example would be Mel Brooks’ The Producers (1968). Perhaps other films might include The Great Dictator (1940) by Charlie Chaplin, and Monty Python’s Life of Brian (1979). The TV series, Fawlty Towers (1975), had a lot of taboo themes.
correctness, Cleese remarks, “And the P.C. Lobby, the politically correct lobby is something I don’t understand. A lot of what I see on television now, both here and in America, seems to me much riskier than we would have gotten away with, even in the Python days” (2001). I have attempted to ridicule the small to the large on each page, in which no topic, object or subject is safe from being mocked. Bermel states:

farces date back to men’s and women’s first attempts to scoff in public at whatever their neighbors cherished in private: standing in the community, habits, customs, affectations, eccentricities, weaknesses, virtues that are vice, friendships, enmities, work, play, the responsibilities and constraints of belonging to a family, a tribe, a clan, a race… (1990, 13).

It is ironic in this technological age that society mocks itself where people generally no longer do anything in private. Right from the first line of *The Wedding Jackpot*, similar to my story design of the first farce principle, extreme mocking highlights the idea of people wanting the world to know what they are doing even if they make fools of themselves. As a nod to Charlie Chaplin’s *Modern Times* (1936), I mock (with violence) and criticise what society has evolved into in the current 21st century.

In Grace’s world, people are portrayed in the reality from the expected to the unexpected, and vice versa, in which the shoppers walk and text, and the result is that they all collide into each other, and then collide into the wedding banners. The wedding banners foreshadow both the upcoming event, and sets up the ridiculous world of the film, too. No one pays attention to his or her lives, or to anything else outside of their phone. Bermel argues, “But farce goes a step further. Before the onslaught of the farcical events, characters are at the mercy of the inanimate world, those malign objects everywhere that wait for the most propitious—the most devastating—moment to spring to life” (1990, 47). Bentley’s remarks that farce’s ideology favours “running away from… not only social problems but all other forms of moral responsibility… from the conscience and all its creations” (1964, 255). Additionally, Cardulla reflects on Bentley’s statement: “It relieves its audience of moral responsibility only for the duration of the play” (2015, 90–91). As in Chaplin’s film, it is ironic that technology has many downsides for humankind, and it is in our nature to ridicule ourselves. The screenplay’s opening mocking scene was an
appropriate way into the screenplay, and set up the world for the audience to know and engage quickly that this is a ridiculous world.

In my attempt to write ‘hard farce’, I designed this story world to be set where nothing is taken seriously, in which I would be able to skewer the ideas and values to an extreme degree. I chose to set it in an artificial world as possible, which became the world of consumerism, marketing and materialism, i.e., the department store, The Wedding Expo, The Design Your Wedding Contest events and the Internet. Another element of this artificial world is the idea of holidays and special days, such as Christmas, Boxing Day, New Year’s Day and Valentine’s Day. Grace, Polly, Ian, Deb and Glen are immersed in this world, where everyday is a ‘sale day’ or a ‘shopping day’, and they do not know life beyond the walls of the department store as they live in this make-believe world. They are part of society that has left the authentic world behind, which became easy to ridicule. Historically, as found in Bermel’s theory, Davis states that the ‘mimicry and buffoons’ new theatrical material to be mocked were sourced from the “literary and political movements [issues] of the time” (2003, 71). She adds that however, if their (story) “innovation becomes too controversial for the economic well-being of the troupe, the traditional material can offer a safety-net for their survival” (2003, 70–71). In my screenplay, I offer no ‘safety-net’ for myself (nor the audience) as I mock the artificial lives and concepts of today’s society. I was diligent not to veer into what I call the ‘vanilla’ world of storytelling, where there is no mockery, and only ‘sunshine’ and ‘flowers’. After all, The Wedding Jackpot is ‘hard farce’.

As with Bridesmaids’ Annie, my protagonist, Grace, is the main target for the “object[s] for ridicule” (Styan 1962, 254), but I scoff at all the characters “for the lack of self-knowledge” (Cardulla 2015, 90–91), even Mark Filetstake, who tries to live an authentic life with his volunteering at the cafeteria in the community centre. Bentley cites a crime reported in a newspaper (uncredited) of a typical model American family, an attractive couple with attractive children, living the American dream in a model American home, in which a sister and a mother were killed by their “mildest and most candid-looking” son. Bentley states that this incident is not as shocking as it normally would seem since “normal folk share his wishes though they do not carry them out. And art like farce embodies such wishes: wishes to damage the family, to
desecrate the household gods” (1964, 226). Mark is no different underneath, as he wishes to write the most popular story in the newspaper so he can get back at his ex-fiancé for destroying his life. His desire is not motivated as a reporter, but to prove the world wrong about him, which then becomes his downfall as he ridicules himself. As per mocking the traditional marriage ritual, I have flipped the roles, and have Grace asking Mark to marry, albeit inauthentically [sic] for the wedding contest, adding another irony (Lee, in Jacey and Batty 2014, 61–63). Mark declines to be Grace’s fake fiancé for the wedding contest, but still wants to be friends with Grace just to get the wedding story (Act I, 24).

MARK
I’m just not into love, weddings, marriage...commercialism...bullshit.

He eyes his article on his old laptop.

Photo: Grace, with her Number Twelve Bride Model, holds their arms up, the number ‘12’ sign, Grace’s bouquet.

MARK (CONT’D)
This wedding story is hot. My rating is climbing. We can be friends? When’s the first wedding design event? Need a lift?

Grace backs away. Exits.

GRACE
(sotto)
Friends? My sham. Good to know you stopped pretending to care, be real...

As a farceur, I have created an unrelenting mockery of the normal conservative society structure, such as the wedding ritual, and turn it into one of the moral crises of our contemporary society. At The Wedding Expo (Act I, 9), Grace is in her element with all the designs, decorations and artwork. In stereotyping my characters as the opposite of refined and sophisticated, Grace acts like she is out of her mind (i.e., high) like an addict on drugs. She becomes a representation of mockery equal to the other future brides at The Design Your Wedding contest (Act I, 9–16). But going further, I skewer the ridiculous behaviour of the brides with ‘The Eleven Bride Contests race to the tables full of flowers, ribbons, tinsel, etc. They all fight. Chaos.’ And then, ‘The gong rings. All race back, stomp on Grace. Grace crawls back, throws her bouquet to her Bride Model. Grace collapses.’ I was careful to constantly check to make sure I did not shy away from the criticism and ridicule, especially in creating the design
events for the bride finalists, where I had hoped to increase the mockery. This had become a study in how our world had evolved, how our society has fallen down, a world of no manners, no concern for others, etc., a further commentary on contemporary western society.

The rest of the screenplay displays similar scenes of mocking the status quo, to ‘puncture’ and obliterate any sense of decorum and safety, such as Grace trying to juggle Ian and Mark during the wedding design events in her scheme to win the contest, and Grace trying to impress her boss, Glen, for the promotion, but having the opposite effect of disgusting him. These are all attempts at ‘hard farce’, as reflected in the farce theories to ‘go for it’ and challenge myself to go to the edge. As a farceur, then, I have come to realise the importance of not censoring myself from extreme mocking in showing the vices such as greed, narcissism, lust, fraud, etc., as readers and audiences will enjoy how ‘they’ are portrayed in farce comedy as per Cleese (2001).

**Principle #3—Humour**

With the contrasting and ironic background that “For the English, it’s all saucy vicars and mislaid underwear. But for the French, farce is a serious art form” (Hickling 2003), I initially tried to straddle the middle, without success, as someone who has never written a farce comedy story. In order to make *The Wedding Jackpot* funny, I needed to first design the story with a strong narrative drive from beginning to the finale, as per screenwriting theory to plot the beats onto a story template. This is similar to John Cleese and his writing partner, Connie Booth’s, method in writing *Fawlty Towers* (2001). Their plots were “very well constructed”; they would have the “plot worked out” before the dialogue (2001)—likewise, Truby stresses that writers must tell a story first, and the jokes next (2009). He states that writers “mistakenly believe that a Comedy screenplay is all about the jokes. They jam the gags in from page one, and don’t understand when the script hits the wall about fifteen minutes in. Why does the script suddenly stop being funny? The writer forgot the storyline” (2009). There was an extensive trial period of working through both the treatment and screenplay phases, in shaping the story while incorporating the six farce principles.
The major story arc for *The Wedding Jackpot* changed three times in order for the story to encapsulate the farce theories that I was analysing. This was an extensive trial period of working through both the numerous treatment and screenplay phases. As any creative project, it takes time and talent to master and finish, but in writing a farce story, I needed to understand all the intricacies of the entire story before I could begin and complete this farce principle. Once knowing what my story was about, the next step was working on finding the jokes and the visual gags that would complement the story. Since I am not a comedian, the process of this principle took time, as I was unsure if it was funny enough. As an artist, I struggled as I kept questioning and doubting myself, thinking I was a boring person who was writing farce comedy.

The farce theories guided me in shaping the humour for my screenplay. From the first page of *The Wedding Jackpot*, the screenplay is layered and littered with visual gags. To begin, Bermel explains several differences: “In order to differentiate between farce and comedy, we should start by looking at the distinction between wit and humor. Wit is usually verbal, while humor is generally physical and visual. It’s true that most characters in comedy get their laughs from their lines, while characters in farce generally get theirs from their antics” (1990, 53). As part of the process of creating the screenplay, I will start with an initial example to demonstrate the struggles I had, but also the opportunities created by a deep understanding of the farce theories.

On the first page, I initially had the shoppers trip over the wedding banners outside of the hotel, without any reaction. On one level, this worked because I was interconnecting the wedding theme with the theme of people losing touch with the world (due to being on their phones). This also foreshadowed the upcoming wedding expo scene and the main story arc of the wedding design contest. However, on reflection, in subsequent revisions, I noticed that it was missing another humorous beat. In order to remedy this, I added that they illogically kick the banners as an absurd reaction to thinking that the banners are to blame for hurting them. A limitation I noticed was that this was the second scene, and I wrote that the banners ‘fight back’, in the sense that the shoppers get entangled with the banners (as per Bermel’s theory of objects behaving like humans/characters). But, I decided a more powerful visual gag would have Grace getting entangled with the window display decorations and mannequins in the third scene on the first page. This was an
important part of introducing her character, portraying her as chaotic, clumsy and klutzy. In keeping with farce’s dialectic nature, this initial portrayal of Grace is juxtaposed as her being an ingenious designer, which the reader and the audience would not necessarily expect of such a gross person.

I set myself the challenge of adding a visual gag to each page, or at least for each scene. The reason for this was to achieve the ‘hard farce’ ideology. The visual gags run the gauntlet from actions such as stumbling, falling, chasing, colliding and climbing, to body fluids such as spitting, defecating, sneezing, blowing one’s nose, gagging and ejaculating. Upon doing this, I noticed I started entering the realm of the grotesque, and ventured into extreme gross-out territory. An example to highlight this idea is the centre table floral arrangement design event (Act II, 45–48), where by the final screenplay draft, the characters are covered in blood, snot and vomit as well as tears. During the revisions, I attempted to interlink the fun elements with the violence.

Davis claims that in farce, “the pleasure of joking is clearly partly festive and indulgent, partly aggressive and hostile” (2003, 90). In The Wedding Expo, during the Design Your Wedding Contest (Act I, 9–16), it was my intention to build this scene with funny visual gags. However, through several drafts, I started to understand that my screenplay had a particular place on the continuum of farce, which previously reported that I have termed it ‘hard farce’. In ‘hard farce’, the scenes are loaded with extreme, edgy and risky visual gags. The Wedding Expo scene is similar to the bookend finale scene of the contest wedding on Valentine’s Day (Act III, 107–118), where the visual gags are non-stop.
In the writing of these visual gags, I entered farce’s ‘special opportunity’ of catharsis (Bentley 1968, 229), as I visualised myself in Bentley’s theory that farce “in general enables us, seated in dark security, to enjoy the delights of complete passivity while watching on stage the most violently active creatures ever imagined by man” (1958, xiv). Similarly, Rozik suggests that the comic character’s actions embody the lifting of the inhibition such as in a foolish failure (2011, 40). What I wanted was for my audience to experience the ‘comic catharsis’, which acts as a ‘release, a safety valve, to help relieve’ and endeavour our innermost frustrations, worries and inhibitions of our modern civilisation, which in essence, acts as therapy (Bentley 1968, 229). Whether my screenplay achieved that goal is unknowable at this stage, but my

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158 In the discussion of audience enjoyment vs. discomfort, I highlight a few in this footnote, but further investigation is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Rozik argues that Bergson’s theory based on Aristotle’s ‘which is not painful’ dictum does not mean the “lack of pain” in a character, is associated to mean a “lack of emotion” in an audience (2011, 34). Also, Corrigan elaborates with slapstick remaining “funny only so long as it is quite clear that no real pain is involved [i.e., for the slapped character]” (1965, 4–5).
attempt signifies the farce principle for myself and other farceurs as achievable if one can expand their own personal boundaries.

Although I did not test the screenplay with an audience test such as with a score sheet or a laugh meter, other farceurs can test the current audience climate as Ellis remarks that there are “many degrees of humour” (1948, 18). Script readers are a form of audience, and I was part of RMIT’s H.E.L.P. creative writing group and Melbourne’s Screenwriters Meetup. In having submitted several pages to each group, there was a mixed reaction from the participant script readers. Hence, this reflects the theoretical thinking that farce ‘does not gel’ and ‘does defy analysis’ on the page. However, when I verbalised the brief story synopsis to friends, family, acquaintances and strangers, they would smile, chuckle or laugh. This signalled to me that perhaps I was on the right track with the humour in the story.

Ellis argues that the “vast opinions in the audience” correlate directly to the “various kinds of taste”, which will generate the laughter if they find the joke to be exceedingly funny, or not, if they “take it as a personal insult… even indirectly” (ibid). However, in general, Davis stresses, “It is idle to deny that there is some pleasure in seeing butts” of mocked victims fooled to the extreme (2003, 93). With this, I note that movies such as Bridesmaids and The Hangover franchise have been successes, and my screenplay hopes to pass the ‘litmus test’. As I push the boundaries of ‘good taste’ with the joking and the grotesque in The Wedding Jackpot, I see that it evokes the tradition of the past performance art troupes whom “inserted as many extravagancies, vulgarities and obscenities as the play would accommodate” (Paul 1999, 109). The gross-out style of the story design in my work “spares nothing and no one for the sake of a laugh with no opportunity to violate good taste or courtesy overlooked” (Graves and Engle 2006, 30). By the final draft of the screenplay, I had felt exhausted, in creating comic ‘foolish failure’ in “promoting a comic mood” (Rozik 2011, 39). It is only with the knowledge that farce is one of the forms of joy, so to speak that I finished the creative artefact.

As a farceur, I attempted to also inject a commentary within my story as a ‘social corrective’ device on the world we live in. I wanted more than the farce theory of “a man falling over… always sure of getting a good laugh” (Ellis 1948, 15). Although
one of the characters, Mark Filetstake, is representative of the ‘ordinary’ citizen, the overall theme of how people have succumbed to their own vices and must seek both redemption and authentication was used as my ‘social corrective’. Similar to the previous farce theorists, McKee states that comedy appeals to the intellect; it takes ‘brains’ to recognise, laugh and then denounce the cruelty, hypocrisy and greed (cited in storylogue.com 2012-16). Likewise, Bermel asks:

If an author wants to teach, inform, or alert his audiences, why does he pick farce as a genre over comedy? One reason maybe that farce is more bitter, more cruel, more downright unfair. The dislike that farce arouses has stronger components of violence and contempt. Therefore, it more tellingly reflects and echoes the corruption, treachery, hypocrisy, brutality, and injustices of life. Or not so much reflect and echoes as refract and distorts. For farce doesn’t try to reproduce life; it selects, manipulates, exaggerates (1990, 45).

In this principle, there was a continuous struggle as I implemented humour into *The Wedding Jackpot* screenplay, for as a farceur, I wanted to proclaim as Cardullo proclaims: “Farce alone gives us unbridled pleasure; comedy, pleasure and principles at the same time” (2015, 91). Although in farce, “the humor [is] unrefined” (Constantin/Kierkegaard, cited in Hughes 2014, 137), the point for farceurs is not to be in the realm of drama and tragedy for its sophistication, nor polished wit as in certain comedies, but for farceurs to delve into the comic mayhem and chaos, which I thoroughly attempted. Many scenes were rewritten to contain wit, a joke and/or a visual gag. As a non-comedian, I felt the weight and the burden of having to continuously come up with a ‘comic catharsis’, especially with Ellis example that laughing aids soldiers who ‘seek forgetfulness’ of “their suffering and misery” (1948, 18). At the back of my mind, I wanted to honour the past famous farceurs, especially having ‘unmentionable wishes’ fulfilled for audiences to enjoy. Explaining it here affirms the importance of the negative acts of violence, aggression, brutality and cruelty in farce. In considering the laughter element when writing the story, the intertwining of laughter and violence leads to Frayn’s theory as he defends farce’s innocent pleasure of mocking and laughter with criticism as self-protection, “In laughing at it you have lost your moral dignity, and don’t like to admit it afterwards—you don’t like to concede the power of the people who have reduced you to such behavior” (cited in Arditti 1996, 3).
As a final word for farceurs, and perhaps echoing story expectations, Ellis suggests: “Whether your characters are funny or not, your audience should know them when they leave the theatre, if you have drawn them true to life, and with sincerity” (1948, 23). Farce is the only art form where ‘unrealistic and fantastical physical violence’ can occur normally with humour. It is only in writing my screenplay that I was able to truly understand this combination of farce principles. Just like audiences around the world, I had laughed at the pie throwing, slipping on banana peels, steam rollers going over people, car chases, stuffing too many chocolates into your mouth until you look like a chipmunk, et al., but until I delved deeply into the design of my story, I did not know the full extent that humour could play in the story.

**Principle #4—Plot, Story and Style**

In attempting to write my first farce screenplay, I adhered to Levine’s theory that the “structure of a farce is critical” (2006). Of all the farce principles, this was the most painfully difficult to accomplish and complete. As well, it also took the longest to understand and achieve. As noted in the Distinctive Contributions in the Conclusion, there were many treatments of the story summary and revisions of the screenplay. Initially, I thought I had ‘carefully planned’ with “constant roadblocks” and with numerous “Complications on top of more complications” (Levine 2006), yet I was constantly lost and confused with my own story. I had mapped the story on several screenplay templates, noting the story beats at the required page number or at the percentage marker of the total page numbers, as per screenwriting theories; however, there were too many elements, locations, incidents, etc., to keep a track of. This is similar to Bermel’s well-made play discussion, in which there are general story beats such as the inciting incident near the beginning and climax toward the end (1990, 248).

This became a learning process, in revising and rewriting, in designing my own labyrinth farce plot. From this, I created a story plotting method that clearly showed where the story was at and where it needed to go. This new plot device method is
called The Ping Pong Method since it visually shows all the beats bouncing from one situation and location to another. The analogies of a farceur to have the abilities of the combined skills, logistics and talent of a ‘comic writer, chess-player, an inventor, a clockmaker, Swiss watch maker, and a mathematician’ are accurate in my own view now after having attempted such a huge endeavour (Truby 2008, 265; Marcel Achard, cited in Arditti 1996, 2). It was not until much later that I implemented Levine’s other theory that in farce the “vice tightens” continuously (2006). This consisted of shortening some scenes, moving the story faster, and creating more chaos with very little release for the characters, as well as the audience.

As in the previous section, Bermel examines several differences between comedy and farce, but cautions as, “The distinctions… [are] unreliable ways of separating comedy from farce. A third, no more reliable distinction has to do with the dramatic situations of the work. If these seem normal or life-like, the work is a comedy; if they seem abnormal or unreal, chances are the work is a farce. But what is normal or abnormal? And to whom? And in what circumstances” (1990, 55). In creating a story idea that is abnormal and/or unreal for farce, it became a process of literally pushing my ideas further from the paradigm of what is ‘acceptable’ in society because I wanted to see how far I could go in attempting ‘hard farce’ in one of the most sacred social rituals. Although with the background of Ellis’ theory of “A very good way in choosing your theme is to pick out two ideas that go together” (1948, 10), I chose to have juxtaposing ideas for my farce story to maintain the farce ideology of ‘absurdity, chaos and mayhem’. In order to come up with a story that had contrasting ideas, I felt that the story needed to be set in a ‘fish-out-of-water’ setting. The story centres on a protagonist, who has never been in love before, as she becomes a finalist for a design your wedding contest and must get married in a month.

I am adhering to the motion picture industry’s standard screenplay format and method, and the inciting incident occurs when Grace is announced as a wedding contest finalist (Act I, 10), which highlights Ellis’ advice, farceurs need that “‘germ’ you are looking for [idea] and start the whole farce moving” (1948, 12). This ‘germ’  

159 The Ping Pong Method charts are in the Distinctive Contributions in the Conclusion.
idea catapults Grace into a world she has never dreamed of, in essence, she would never dream of getting married. Her life revolves around one-night stands, drinking and designing. The story situates Grace to make her uncomfortable and unfamiliar, hence, she makes mistakes relating to love and marriage. Similar to *Bridesmaids*, at the same time, the audience is in on the ‘joke’ about Grace in this ‘absurd’ world of weddings, money and designing. This speaks of the parallel of the ‘artificial’ world of the shopping centre, in which Grace has no problems being immersed in. Grace and the other characters who work at the department store live in a commercial bubble, that is devoid of ethics, authenticity and realism.

In line with Levine’s theory of continuously adding complications (2006), another plotting device I used was Davis’ snowball farce (2003, 7). In *The Wedding Jackpot*, the main story is Grace competing in the Design Your Wedding contest, and the two sub-plots are Grace trying to find a fake fiancé for the contest and Grace trying to get a promotion at the department store. All the situations and events are interlaced, often overlapping, in which Grace herself starts losing track of what is going on as she starts to lose the contest. This highlights Davis’ assessment that “The atmosphere of a snowball-farce rapidly becomes a bad dream for its inhabitants” (2003, 132). In Act II (52–57), Grace competes at a design event, but must juggle both Ian and Mark who are both in attendance, solely designs the table setting, tries not to get caught cheating with her design, and at the end of this scene, attempts to deflect that Ian and Mark are both there when Hank, Sofia and Leo catch them. This juggling act of having Ian and Mark at the wedding design events highlights one of farce’s tropes of mistaken identities and deceptive disguises. It also pays tribute to one of the original farce tropes of the characters ‘going in and out of doors’.
In order to increase the complications, destruction and the absurdity, I chose to give Grace as many opponents as possible. In comedy and/or farce, the protagonist has more opponents than any other genres (Truby 2008, 284; Salzer 2005). For farce, Truby argues that it “works by having a lot of opponents attack the hero at a progressively faster rate of speed” (2008, 284). In each location, Grace has conflicts with usually more than one person. At the department store, the opponents are: Deb, the other junior visual display artist; Glen, her critical boss; Ian, who becomes the fake fiancé; the store greeter, who chases her; the store photographer, who relegates Grace to stand behind the others; Pandora, who does not give Grace any money; and, the senior visual display artists, who ignore her. For the Design Your Wedding contest, the opponents are: Hank, the contest organiser; Sofia and Bev, the other two finalists; and Ed, the photographer who films in her face. The other opponents are on the bus, at The Wedding Expo, and at the contest wedding. This was a helpful device in creating conflict and tension throughout the story as it made the story development process easier and faster. It was ‘easier’ in terms of knowing what more to put into my story design, as initially I only had one opponent for Grace, and that was Hank, the wedding contest organiser and wedding planner. For each location, I knew how to escalate the scene knowing who the opponents were for Grace. In each scene, I escalated the conflict by having the other characters go against Grace, instead of having the scene remain in the ‘vanilla’ category of story. For example, initially Pandora was apologetic that Grace could not access her bank account. In the

Hank looks at Ian and Mark. Sofia and Leo look at Ian and Mark. All look at each other. Grace stands in front of Mark.

**IAN**

--No, he’s a stalker. He’s scaring my, uh, lovely fiancée. He only wants her wedding contest priz-- Uh, call the cops.

Hank reaches for Mark’s hat. Mark keeps ducking. Hank grabs Mark’s hat off, hair looks like Ian’s wig of Mark’s hair. Mark squints, fakes something in his eyes.

Ian’s wig is on lop-sided, a few red hairs peeking out. Hank goes to grab it. Ian steps back. Sofia and Leo reach out.

Grace, Ian and Mark look at each other. Mark flees via the exit doors. Ian flees, fake-chases Mark. Grace follows.

Sofia hits Hank and Leo, points to the exit doors. Neither Leo nor Hank give chase. Leo and Hank step back from her.

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revisions, Pandora becomes involved in a quarrel farce with Grace, and wins the money battles. This heightened the tensions, and evolved into turning the story into a guiding principle of the snowball farce. Hence, this led to the general theory about the ‘ticking clock’ leading to the climax. Since Grace has no rent money, she panics and has to eventually ask Ian for money, which complicates matters with her and Mark.

In reflecting back on this experience, I am reminded of Aristotle’s idea in ‘stories’, that the most important of all is the ‘structure of the incidents’. I thought I knew about structures for stories as I have written other stories and screenplays, but have never attempted to write a farce comedy, which challenged me immensely. In making Grace’s day the “worst day of [her] life” everyday (cited in Billington 2013), it was a necessity to invent a new plotting method to keep track of these terrible things, especially as they happened more rapidly. In turning the ‘bad into worse’ (Bermel 1990, 20), it became a conscious effort to make Grace’s life miserable, in particular the lies, the deceptions, the reversals and the coincidences. In getting to the ‘why’ in storytelling, which can be considered one of the most important things, I attempted to implement the theory of farce with some philosophical insights to enrich the story.

The aesthetic issues of farce style and story bordered on the insane, as I wrote increasingly more silly, chaotic, devious and mischievous farce elements into The Wedding Jackpot. I must admit that not all of them worked, and in the revisions, I had to redesign the story in order for the farce principles to play a bigger role in the actual story itself. This might sound naïve or manipulating as a storyteller. Since I adhere to Cooney’s creative practice philosophy that creative practitioners do not expect to have a master piece on the first try, I kept wanting to improve the farce elements for each revision to prove to myself that not only could I write farce, but also ‘hard farce’, especially in plotting a farce story. Davis argues that the “Structural stylization and mechanical patterning also help to distinguish the festive license under which these attacks are carried out” (2003, 141). For myself, I had to be diligent, persistent, gracious and unnerving in order to plot this farce story that will still be truthful and believable.
Principle #5—Uncensored, Wild Characters

In the world of farce, the ‘farceur is a heretic’. Bentley argues that farceurs show ‘us’ portrayed in the image of an ape, which is the extreme opposite of the belief of “man was made in God’s image” ideology (1964, 248–250). The audience needs to know what kind of ‘heretic’ characters they will be watching, such as in the opening scenes in Bridesmaids, Annie having another ‘one-night stand’ with Ted, being out of sync sexually with Ted, pretending to be asleep as in Sleeping Beauty, and then embarrassingly getting kicked out. Bermel claims that “Farce has always challenged the mask of adulthood” (1990, 121), and as this example demonstrates, we have a certain perception of the protagonist and the other characters with their ‘masks of adulthood’. In The Wedding Jackpot, I also created my protagonist and the other characters in their failed attempts at challenging the masks of adulthood. I introduce Grace as a catastrophe waiting to happen as a representation of an archetype of the naïve fool starting from the first page.160

GRACE HICCUP, 21, poor, single, jr. visual display artist, a young Lucille Ball type, pins up a Valentine display design. She dismantles, stumbles and fumbles over the mannequins.

In creating my characters, I looked to the theory that farceurs present humans as the extreme opposite of sophistication as a “man in the mass, in the rough, in the raw, in anything but fine individual flower” (Bentley 1964, 250). This farce portrayal of Grace lets the audience know who she is, in terms of what she does, and her low station in life, as she continues her work without regard for her safety or embarrassment. This highlights Davis’ theory of characters who “lack self-consciousness” (2003, 122–123). Bermel asks and theorises, “Why do we accept—and enjoy—the sight of characters who stumble into one physical indignity after another? In part because these characters, being indestructible, are more than mortal, and also less” (1990, 24). My characters experience great mishaps, crashes, insults,

160 In the motion picture industry, screenplays and TV scripts sometimes use the character type device; the screenwriter(s) write an actor’s name beside the character’s name. For example, I will use character’s names and the types that are already famous; the character’s name is ELLEN RIPLEY, a Sigourney Weaver type (Alien); the character’s name is HAN SOLO, a Harrison Ford type (Star Wars), etc. Perhaps, it is a cheat on my part that I write a famous TV farceur (Lucille Ball) as a character type in Grace’s description, but the description still embodies the traits of farce’s essence and concepts.
and reversals, to show not only that the characters are indestructible, but also to increase the enjoyment of the audience.

Regarding characters and archetypes, I begin with Cardullo who suggests that a “theologically secure society” would comprise of “normative characters” (within the confines of a comedy), in which the reverse would be suggested to be true if a comedy makes an “aesthetic leap” (2015, 81). If the story world were not a theologically secure society, it would comprise of characters who were not ‘normative’. *The Wedding Jackpot* mostly comprises of not ‘normative’ characters who have the philosophical belief that this world is normal. I have written them as “the gallery of quirky figures whose brains are bombarded by thoughts that emerge incomplete from their mouths” (Bermel 1990, 106), consisting of the ‘lower type’ in which the “Ludicrous being merely a subdivision of the ugly” (Poetics V, 1; Halliwell cited in Corrigan 1981, 9).

In discussing *Fawlty Towers*, Graham McCann suggests farces would benefit “greatly from its cheerful willingness to create horrible human beings and let them act according to their nature at all times” (cited in McKay 2007). As per *Fawlty Towers* and *Bridesmaids*, my screenplay is full of ‘horrible human beings’ behaving badly. Throughout the screenplay, there are numerous scenes of groups of people causing mayhem. For example, at the first wedding design event (ACT I, 25–26), when Grace, Bev and Sofia make the engagement rings, Bev and Sofia cheat, assault others and bully Grace, as well as treat the contest organiser, Hank, in a contemptuous manner.

*Bev and Sofia run to the arts-crafts tables, shove Hank, make their rings. Chaos. The Judges watch them.*

*Bev and Sofia still struggle at the tables. Ken and Leo try to help. Sofia and Bev swat them away. The gong rings.*

In keeping the characters real in a believable situation, the theorists and practitioners advocate that farceurs are really writing a tragedy when they are writing a comedy. First, how to create farce characters when they have “no great depth or nuance”, for “their purpose is to allow spectators to see themselves in them, not to be lifelike personas themselves” (Constantin, cited in Hughes 2014, 138). In Fry’s (1951) theory of characters being true to the theme of the story, he warns, “The bridge… from
tragedy to comedy and back again is precarious and narrow… If the characters were not qualified for tragedy there would be no comedy, and to some extent I have to cross the one before I can light the other” (cited in Corrigan 1981, 18). In The Wedding Jackpot, since the characters believe they live in a ‘normal’ world, as an extension, they represent the audience in their everyday life. I implement the contrasts and juxtapositions of reality vs. unreality for my farce characters. For example, starting on the first page and injected throughout, I write what I see on the street, i.e., people walk and text; they behave ‘mechanically’ as per Bergsonian’s theory of presentation of character, in which “This inelasticity prevents the type-character from adapting properly to changes in his surrounding circumstances” (cited in Davis 2003, 122–123; see also Bermel 1990, 30).

The characters’ own personalities and characterisations are revealed through their actions. This supports Rozik’s view that “in presupposing permanence, characterization also triggers and shapes the spectators’ expectations regarding the possible actions/reactions of a character under foreseeable changing circumstance” (2011, 105). In The Wedding Jackpot, it will only be at the end of the screenplay that Grace’s character arc shows her potential to change and thus be true to herself. However, in writing farce, I must be mindful of letting the characters evolve and change for better or worse. Ellis suggests, “many a character has a ‘change of heart’ during the writing of a play or farce. This changeable tendency… gives an author more opportunities to work in unexpected humorous situations. This makes more laughs in farce” (1948, 42). Other dramatists have discovered what it is to play with their characters. The playwright, Anouilh, “discovered that a subject did not necessarily have to be treated in a rigid form, in the natural simplicity or even crudity it has at first. I realised that the dramatist could and should play with his characters with their passions and their actions... To ‘play’ with a subject is to create a new world of conventions and surround it with spells and a magic all your own” (Anouilh 1936, cited in Styan 1960, 226). Towards the last of the revisions for my screenplay, this felt like the essence of farce comedy screenwriting as I played with not only my characters, but also all the other farce principles. This ‘play’ ideology suited my sensibilities as a farce screenwriter since I have usually plotted my stories on a screenwriting template first without any room to ‘play’.
It was the hope that I depicted my characters as both archetypes and stereotypes, ranging from a naïve fool to a hostile scammer. There were many instances where the writing reverted back to ‘vanilla’ storytelling, which caused me to re-evaluate the process with each revision. It was easy to fall back into the drama genre principles that espoused ‘sophisticated’ characters. Again, like the first farce principle, I had to have an understanding of human nature in order to create deeply troubled, flawed characters. The character arcs were always a concern in the story, as farce is not known for the development and growth of its characters. With a fear of having ‘thin’ farce characters, I wanted to ‘flesh’ out the characters, to make them more rounded and whole within a farce. At the same time, the idea of caricature and pantomime helped further my visualisation of my characters, which presented the more distinctive farce characters for my screenplay.

I initially battled with the juxtaposition of farce characters being depicted as unreal, unauthentic, “especially impersonal”, with the final insult for characterisation as “not of whole human beings” (Bermel 1990, 24). It was the farce idea that the “lack of emotional engagement of the characters leads to a ruthless humour” (Wyllie 2009, 34) that propelled me to create the people as dialectically without feeling or awareness, such as Grace showing up at the first wedding design event, but unsure of the meaning of the engagement ring (while still wanting to win). Bermel suggests that farceurs enhance their characters’ unrealities by putting “them under a spell, rob them of some of their senses or faculties, and make them behave like zombies who walk into trouble with their eyes wide open in a glassy stare” (1990, 24). This became a game for me with my characters as I delved deeper into being a farceur as to what more flaws can I give my characters.

As a practicing farceur, Cleese remarks, “the strange thing about comedy is that if an awful character makes people laugh—think of W.C. Fields—people feel affectionate towards him. It’s insane… But because he makes them laugh, they think, deep down, he’s all right, and he isn’t” (2001). I am reminded of Constantin’s view of farceurs, namely that “They have the courage to dare what the individual ventures only when he is by himself, what the madman does in the presence of all, what the genius does with the authority of genius, certain of laughter” (cited in Kierkegaard and Mackey 1954, 4–5). During the many drafts, in my mixing and combining all of the
characteristic farce traits together, I was guided to creating characters that are not stock characters, but more like accessible human beings as they behave terribly. Perhaps, true to life, the farce characters could still be believable with audiences.

**Principle #6—Pacing, Tempo and Timing**

Farce theories about pacing, tempo and timing argue that it is fast without time to think (Davis 2003, 144; Ellis 1948, 28), yet Mumolo and Wiig wrote *Bridesmaids* as a moderately paced story with several moments where there was breathing room for the audience. During this investigation, I questioned as to whether this might be the difference between farce in theatre and film. After analysing *Bridesmaids* and noting that it was not written with a fast tempo, I made a deliberate decision to write most of the scenes in *The Wedding Jackpot* at a frenetic pace to create chaos and panic in a similar tone to Labiche’s *The Italian Straw Hat* (1851), which is noted as a ‘fast and furious nightmare’ (Davis 2003, 124). This was an experiment, in line with ‘hard farce’. My story was developed with the idea of the vice (or screw) getting tighter and tighter for the protagonist (Murray 2011, 125), whom the playwrights, Labiche and Feydeau, were also an influence (Bermel 1990, 114). This snowball farce gains momentum rolling downhill (Davis 2003, 129–130; Levine 2006), and as it accelerates (Styan 1962, 220; Bermel 1990, 21), Grace finds herself in this vice getting tighter at a faster rate as she dreams of a job promotion, struggles to balance her love life, and strives to win the wedding design contest. It is my intention to create a swift, whirlwind effect for the audience to ‘catch up’ as the screenplay story progresses.

An initial concern was that if the story is at ‘breakneck speed’ (Murray 2011, 85), how could I and/or the reader still hear Grace’s (or any other characters’) voice since farce is not known for its characters’ depth and development. As a screenwriter, I was taught that characters are the crucial starting point in your story, i.e., what does the character want, what will they do to achieve their goal, and how will they

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161 This concern about plot vs. character occurs not only in screenwriting, but I suggest that it weighs heavily for most creative writers, especially when they are at the beginning of their writing career (I will also categorise creative writers who are still at the hobby stage as well).
overcome the obstacles/conflicts/villains? In my previous screenwriting classes as a student, the common question asked by a screenwriting instructor was, what is the story about and who are the characters? I tried to be conscious of my characters’ lives, motivations, fears, etc., as I wrote this farce with the essence of the ‘enforced speed’, a recommendation for serious farceurs to not only implement, but a principle at the forefront of this genre (Murray 2011, 24). I looked to balance the speed of the plot “with the high level of energy” needed to create “the kind of mania involved” with the characters still being distinguished, authentic and relatable (Cleese 2001). I noticed that in Bridesmaids, there were moments when the characters had insight and reflection, which slowed down the pacing of the story (Davis 2003), i.e., Annie baking a cake for Officer Rhodes and hugging her mother, Judy.

Just like Mumolo and Wiig veered from the short farce timeline, I did not adhere to Cooney’s (2014a) farce of ‘Real Time’ theory that the story timeline occurs during the two hours on stage that the audience witnesses. Can we think of two hours of stage time as two hours of screen time? Or, is this too much of a push for the medium? There are examples of movies that have ‘Real Time’, such as Rope (1948), Dog Day Afternoon (1975), Nick of Time (1995), and Timecode (2000). Initially, I played with this idea in the script story treatment phase, but had to expand the actual timeline due to the wedding design events. Also, I knew that farce could be fast before the PhD, I did not think of it as a necessary farce principle since my initial story idea was still in the realm of romantic comedy (which is not considered a fast genre). For the first few treatments, I was still in the mind frame of a romantic comedy writer. I chose to use a story device that would still highlight and keep farce’s tempo, timing and pace, and with the Bridesmaids case study analysis, the idea of the ticking clock or endpoint device would suit my story.

Although there are numerous theories about writing a story with a contracted timeline or a deadline, I will refer to Truby’s ‘ticking clock’ technique, which indicates there is a “time endpoint” and the writer tells the audience up front that the action will be completed by a “specific time” (2008, 190). Similar to Bridesmaids, there is a long ‘ticking clock’ device in The Wedding Jackpot. In Bridesmaids, the general timeline is from Lillian asking Annie to be her maid of honour (the inciting incident) to Lillian’s wedding (climax). In The Wedding Jackpot, the general timeline is from
Grace being selected as one of the finalists for The Design Your Wedding Contest (the inciting incident) to the contest wedding on Valentine’s Day (climax). In my attempt to create a faster story, I adhered to Truby theory that a ‘time endpoint’ gives the benefit “of [an] intense narrative drive and great speed, although at the expense of texture and subtlety” (ibid). This is similar to a ‘funnel’ analogy in which the start is wide and the end point narrows. From researching the wedding, bridal and honeymoon websites, I noticed that most of the bridal expos are at the beginning or at the end of the year, with several wedding expo websites highlighting Valentine’s Day (although the expos were not held on that day). This was part of my decision to include Valentine’s Day as a ‘time endpoint’ to the story.

As in Bridesmaids, where Mumolo and Wiig show Annie’s ‘normal life’ before the inciting incident of being asked to be Lillian’s maid of honour, I felt that I needed to show Grace’s ‘normal life’ before The Wedding Expo. In both stories, we see the protagonists’ ‘normal lives’ in various scenes: having casual sex, past or present unsatisfactory job situations, about their dreams for their future, socialising with friend(s), past or present love life situations, and their sub-standard accommodations. Unlike Bridesmaids, where their inciting incident occurred on page 12, The Wedding Jackpot’s inciting incident is on page 10. I showed Grace’s ‘normal life’ within 10 pages, which resulted in condensing the story timeline, and had to have an increasingly tighter time constraint to create more panic for Grace. Starting from the first page, I wanted to create a sense of fast, chaotic tension, with a whirlwind effect. This resulted in opening the story in a busy shopping area, in three very short scenes, each one building from the last one: “SHOPPERS rush by” in front of the department store’s window display, passing by the STORE CLERKS and Grace. Thus, from the macrocosm to the microcosm, the reader is pushed right into the story, creating a no-escape and no-brakes feeling. This effect allows the reader to metaphorically dive into Grace’s catastrophic and out-of-control situation as she dismantles ‘SantaLand’ with the children bombarding her, and her boss, Glen Tempurah, demoting her to an undesirable department. These various catalysts, such as the shoppers, kids, and her boss, not only tighten the screws, but also heighten the plot/action at an artificial speed to stay true to this genre’s fast pace. In my attempt to front load the first 10 pages, I wanted the reader to feel the impact of both the story’s downward spiral
(Truby 2008, 11 and 21) and the acceleration of the story, in which Grace does not have a lot of time to correct her mistakes.

In the ‘rushing about’ device for the characters (Cardulla 2015, 90–91), Mumolo and Wiig interconnect Annie’s maid of honour duties with her regular life. In The Wedding Jackpot, I have used the crosscutting device for Grace’s multiple locations with her multiple opponents to heighten the timing of the story, which is also similar to The Keystone Cops in a Charlie Chaplin movie (Bentley 1964; Bermel 1990) and An Italian Straw Hat (Davis 2003). As per Aristotle and Bergson, Bentley claims the faster deliberate movements of the silent farce films had a psychological and moral effect due to the abstract and automatic actions (1964, 248). I also note Bergson’s theory of a pattern developed in farce, the “forced forward” action, which completes the story symmetry with the characters (cited in Davis 2003, 123). Bentley argues that a “good farcical pattern of action” equals “good pretext for rapid movement” (1964, 248). Mumolo and Wiig designed Annie to move at a speed faster than normal in some scenes, although the story’s pace was not at ‘breakneck’ speed.

I designed Grace to move in the ‘forced forward’ speed due to her being a more ‘mechanical’ and/or ‘unnatural’ character on becoming less human, such as at The Wedding Expo, being chased in the department store and at the wedding at The Design Your Wedding Contest finale. As an example in the latter (Act III, 108), I wrote one action per line, as the wedding contest begins and the bride finalists arrive.

Bev waves.
Sofia blows kisses.
Grace hesitates.
Sofia and Bev admire their new ‘Grace-revised’ wells.
Sofia and Bev almost run down the aisle.
The horses take a dump.
Polly runs up and drags Grace out of the carriage.
Her wedding veil gets ripped on the door.
Although this story, designed with “brisk action” (Bermel 1990, 75), has become a nightmare that Grace wishes to no longer participate in, Cardulla argues that “the faster the plot moves, the faster we move with it, pleased to follow its workings with our minds while the characters are made to seem like movable parts in an enormous machine” (2015, 90–91). Goodman argues that pace in storytelling in general has to cater to human psychological shortcomings, stating, “Coup de théâtre is theatre as action. If the old slow preparation makes us impatient, the fault may be ours” (cited in Bentley 1968, 79). For me, this brought up the concern of designing the plot to move at a speed that might feel uncomfortable at first, but must be reminded that Labiche and Feydeau wrote their stories to appeal to all audiences with pacing in mind as per Goodman, that being the end goal for any farceur.

Summary and Conclusion
As this chapter highlighted the farce principles in action, such as character and plot, in The Wedding Jackpot, I would like to begin this chapter’s conclusion by discussing the various revisions/drafts. To illustrate the iterative and recursive nature of creative practice, I share some of the creative process that occurred. Mainly, how these farce principles had changed my story over the years of my PhD candidature. At the treatment stage, I did not have a clear understanding of all of the farce principles and how to apply them. Albeit, I did not fully understand what I was writing. The very first treatment only told a love story (i.e., a romantic comedy), without any slapstick, mocking, mistaken identities, disguises, revolving doors, opponents, etc. The subsequent treatments delved more into the story and farce principles side by side. But, the story changed in the later treatments, in which the actual wedding jackpot became a contest instead of just being given to Grace Hiccup, the protagonist. This created a ‘ticking clock’ device in my story, which resulted in pushing the story to be told at a faster pace.

The first draft of the screenplay was written faithfully from the seventh treatment. For subsequent drafts of the screenplay, I incorporated each of the farce principles more deeply, revised dialogue to make it funnier, and added more farce tropes such as mistaken identities and disguises. It wasn’t until the middle drafts that I could see a clearer picture of how to apply the farce tropes. It didn’t occur to me that I could have
both Mark and Ian perceived as the same person with disguises. It was a ‘light bulb’ moment when I realised that, although Grace is poor, she works at a department store as a visual display artist and has access to everything in the store. Grace makes Ian wear a wig similar to Mark’s hair, and makes Ian wear glasses like the one that Mark wears. There were various other ‘light bulb’ moments, most notably in the wedding design contest events. At each event, I was able to push the exaggeration of the characters’ behaviour and how they designed their pieces. It is with hope that these farce principles are reflected in the final screenplay draft.

Although writing a farce comedy screenplay was a challenging task, it was a worthwhile endeavour. Firstly, I must admit that I learned a lot about myself, who I was as a person, what limits I could push within my own creative practice, and how this affected me. Or, perhaps, I should say how this changed me. Next, in writing the farce screenplay, the core of the farce theories opened up a new understanding to writing stories in general. Applying the farce theories to my screenplay expanded my thinking that could not have occurred simply by watching a farce. I do not want to sound naïve, but I am uncertain that I was able to create a screenplay that could do justice to the past farceurs. I believe I have attempted the best I could in theorising the farce principles and implementing them into The Wedding Jackpot. There are still many scenes, which could be improved upon, as I channel Cooney in my writing and my philosophy as a creative practitioner. If I had not embarked on investigating the farce theories, this screenplay would not have conceptualised into being a farce. This genre is unlike others that need a deep scholarship examination. This experience became something more than writing a farce comedy screenplay. The challenge of adapting these six farce principles to screenwriting was immense and daunting, but created a space to learn something new in my own screenwriting practice and also about myself.
Conclusion

Dramatic criticism is, or should be, concerned solely with
dramatic art even at the expense of bankrupting every theatre
in the country.
George Jean Nathan (cited in Bentley 1967, xvi)

The box office never lies.
Lee Shubert

This PhD has investigated principles for writing farce comedy, and has used the
screenplay as a research artefact to test out and perform these principles. I start this
conclusion with a comment about people, and how deep they can look into
themselves. I have come to realise that this particular genre is not for the faint hearted.
The farceur (i.e., screenwriting practitioner) wants to goes to the extreme, in their
desire to study, analyse and create farce artefacts. As examined previously, along with
farce’s dialectic nature, this genre may be cathartic for both the creative practitioner
and for the audience. The end result may have accomplished more than just a ‘goal’
for all involved in the production and experience of a farce artefact. Perhaps, I venture
to say that farce can help alleviate life’s problems—at least for a moment or two. This
PhD has investigated farce in the screenwriting context, and how it can be understood
critically and practiced creatively. Research-led practice was chosen as the most
appropriate methodology in this pursuit, ultimately seeking to answer the question:

**How can extant theories of farce be applied to the practice of
screenwriting, providing tools for both the analysis and writing
of a screenplay?**

Further, as a complement to my main methodology, this PhD has applied “classic
context analysis” (Schwandt 2007, 41), in which ‘formal analysis’ was employed to
give a wider perspective on the findings and outcomes, where I studied texts in
relation to the farce “form or literary genre” (Thomas 2014, xviii). In addition to, I
referred to creative practice theorists such as Craig Batty (2013), Lisa Dethridge
(2009), Fletcher and Mann (2004), Anne Fliotsos (2011), Grierson and Brearley

162 See also Flick et al. (2004).
and Smith and Dean (2009), as a way of framing my research—including the analysis of *Bridesmaids*—and its ultimate outcome, my screenplay *The Wedding Jackpot*, and reflection on its development. Secondary methodologies such as practice-led and action research were also used in this PhD. These types of methodology were used to initially gain knowledge through research, which provided and enhanced my creative practice. These examinations offered guidelines that informed both the farce theories and in the completion of writing my farce comedy script. This conclusion discusses the implications of these findings for other broader domains and fields, as well as the two new research discoveries in what I am calling my ‘Distinctive Contributions’.

**Outcome of Research**

The outcome of this PhD is to contribute significant knowledge to the body of literature both professionally (the motion picture industry) and academically, with the in-depth analyses of the two screenplays (i.e., *Bridesmaids* and *The Wedding Jackpot*) and the two new screenwriting approach features (i.e., The Farce Scatter Graph Line Chart and The Ping Pong Method). The relationship of farce theories and practice shows a direct and clear correlation that will hopefully inform and further enhance storytelling in the study of cinema, especially for screenwriting. It demonstrates and validates what shaped the story and the writing through a well-organised research and development method: the genre, the theories, the cultural context and the conceptualisation of the creative artefact.

This creative practice process also facilitated myself to become a more knowledgeable, skilled and insightful screenwriter, especially in the farce comedy genre. My aim for the creative project outcome was to write a screenplay as well as demonstrating research, to enable the project to be marketable and sellable. Several industry and media critics such as Thomas (Wendallthomas.com 2012) and Mernit (Billymernit.com 2012) state that romantic comedy has become stagnant and ‘needs a boost’. They claim that romantic comedy needs to be reworked and/or ‘brought up to a new level’. This project has relevance in the current cinema market. Blending a love story with farce, if done right, might help propel or elevate this genre. The combined genre may then appeal to the wider audience market. This PhD was written with both
the farce research and the creative work to advance knowledge, in which I sought to advance current storytelling techniques in the field of screenwriting according to motion picture industry standards. Although creative practice can be different from theory, this research aims to engage both the academic and professional discourse enquiry with the critical and creative components for screenwriting knowledge.

Chapter Summaries—Outcomes and Limitations

Since this dissertation firstly implements the research-led practice methodology, the research investigated the generic elements and conventions of farce in the study of farce, particularly for cinema. The literature review in Chapter One is comprised of two parts: the theorists and understanding farce (i.e., genre studies of comedy, farce and especially farce’s inner workings). The main farce theories of Eric Bentley, Albert Bermel and Jessica Milner Davis were the basis for understanding farce. The only farce writing manual, Walter W. Ellis’ How to Write a Farce (1943), which was written before Bentley’s farce theories, were used to investigate Bentley’s theories against actual theory in practice. It is important to note that Ellis’ book is theatrical based, not cinematically based.

This enabled me to gain a deep grasp of what it is to be a farceur, and what I could consider in constructing a farce screenplay. A limitation was not being able to document the history of farce with farce plays. There are several books detailing and analysing farce plays during different eras. Another limitation was that farce TV shows were not included extensively, due to this being a focus on the feature film screenplay (i.e., TV scripts have a different structure). The limitations did not necessarily hinder my understanding of the farce theories, since reading the texts that outlined historical farce plays and their analyses did reinforce and clarify my understanding of the mechanisms of farce. The literature review initially informed my dissertation and my screenplay project. Further in-depth analysis on these farce theories was investigated, which led to the conception and compilation of the six principles of farce.

Please see Bermel (1990), Davis (2003), Enders (2011), Hughes (1956) and Smith (1989).
In Chapter Two, I examined the work of theatre theorist, Eric Bentley, whose *The Life of the Drama* (1964) and essay ‘The Psychology of Farce’ (1958), are regarded as seminal works on farce theory. My aim was to explore, describe and examine the definitions of each of his ten elements and theories about farce. Next, I identified and grouped the ten elements into smaller, combined structures and conventions of farce theory. In compiling Bentley’s ten farce principles into six principles, specifically with attention to screenwriting, I outlined the following six farce principles: 1) Violence and Aggression, 2) Extreme Mocking, 3) Humour, 4) Plot, Story and Style, 5) Uncensored, Wild Characters, and finally, 6) Pacing, Tempo and Timing.

In order to achieve a deeper understanding, I also analysed and compared the other farce theorists: Albert Bermel in *Farce: A History from Aristophanes to Woody Allen* (1990) and Jessica Milner Davis in *Farce* (2003). These created a full picture of the farce principles, which highlighted the necessary farce principles needed in order to critically analyse farce stories, and to extend this farce knowledge through the practice of screenwriting. A limitation was the lack of documentation of each principle to include numerous sample examples, similar to the limitation of the previous chapter documenting farce plays.\(^\text{164}\) But, I do not feel this limitation was a barrier in regard to my own judicious understanding of the farce principles, and how they may be applied to screenwriting.

Chapter Three sought to apply and examine the six farce principles to a case study using a produced feature film screenplay in the farce genre. I start with *Toward a Dramaturgical Sensibility: Landscape and Journey*, in which Geoffrey S. Proehl argues that writers need both knowledge and an understanding of the script. He clarifies that “Understanding allows for a way of knowing that is deeper, slower, more holistic. It indicates an approach to analysis that uses as much of the self as possible, not only the left side of the brain” (2008, 89). The intention here was to have a chapter as a produced screenplay case study in the farce comedy genre to provide me

\(^{164}\) Although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to include a large sample size, I endeavoured to fully understand the farce theories in the various texts, without doing a scientific farce play analyses myself. For the purpose of this dissertation, I took it at face value that the farce plays were adequately analysed according to each texts’ farce theories. In scientific sample numbers, it is suggested to have a certain % of participants or samples.
with a greater understanding of how to write one, using a formalist method approach with the farce principle analysis. This approach of a “close reading of the text” (Hardy 1971, 1) was used to help me use my skills in analysis, not only in storytelling and screenwriting, but also my skill in deconstructing and unpacking farce theory scholarship on a deep level. I looked to the screenwriting expert, Linda Seger, who advocates reading and studying other screenplays as a useful tool for screenwriters, especially in the genre one would like to write. Seger believes that the main question for screenwriters, who use this method, is “What can I learn by studying these scripts that can help my own writing?” (2008, 282).

For the produced screenplay case study, since the motion picture industry is always updating the supply and demand of the market (i.e., what films cater best to the audience), it was more prudent to choose a more recent successful farce comedy. I wanted to situate my screenplay story around the idea of the wedding background theme, similar to *Bridesmaids*. Thus, this particular screenplay was taken into consideration when choosing a farce movie comparable to my own screenplay, *The Wedding Jackpot*. Since the time restriction of the PhD was taken into account, I considered the best analysis method for myself would be to concentrate on one case study in-depth. The farce theories were tested and applied in order to understand the elements, techniques and mechanics of farce comedy. ‘How did they do it (write the farce elements)?’ was a question tested, as was ‘Why did they do it?’ and ‘What are the farce element repetitions?’ The answers led to the ultimate question: How does one write a farce screenplay? The application and analysis of each farce element applied to this screenplay determined which of the farce genre conventions were useful for screenwriting. The conclusion to these questions guided the writing of *The Wedding Jackpot*.

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166 The motion picture industry also focuses on the box office receipts. The studio executives keep in the mind cost of the film vs. the potential market value of the film. Hence, it is another reason why *Bridesmaids* was selected.
The examination of *Bridesmaids* using the six farce principles offered new insight into how Mumolo and Wiig wrote a farce comedy screenplay. This offers the creative practitioner ‘a way into the script’, which highlights concrete examples for the study of genre, for both practitioners and theorists. I now have a deeper understanding than I previously did, in how farce comedy can explain human kind. This has helped me to answer Seger’s question, that screenwriters should ask themselves, “What is unique and special about my own script?” (2008, 282). A limitation could be the tension in the methods used, if a combination added more work to the complexities already abound in analysing farce. The limitation in this approach may have been that it slowed down the process of my attempt to analyse this screenplay, as I had to unpack methodologically in order to fully grasp the significance of the farce principle in *Bridesmaids*. In contrast, it might have led to a deeper analysis, which would later influence the writing of *The Wedding Jackpot*.

For Chapter Four, in supporting my writing of and the reflective analyses of *The Wedding Jackpot*, I alternated between analysing theory, analysing *Bridesmaids*, and revising my screenplay. In this reflective research, I highlight Schön’s (1983; 1987) argument that practitioners learn best through a combination of experience and reflection, with action research, and by passing on the information through educating other professionals. I implemented Dick’s action research theory and methodology, most specifically the spiral technique method (1993). This ‘process of iteration’ was useful in guiding the revisions of the screenplay, as I learned and interpreted the farce principles to the refining of my own screenwriting. These approaches all guide in the reflective methodology for creative practice. The discussion of reflective analyses led to a newer understanding of my screenwriting. It created a space and voice for my creative practice intricacies, interpretations, and construal examinations.

In noting my original contribution to knowledge with a reflective analysis, a limitation in the back of my mind was always the ‘applicability to writers’, and in the pursuit of understanding the accessible writing techniques for screenwriting. It became a balancing act for both myself and in the writing of this dissertation to achieve equilibrium between the theories with the structural technical issue, especially in addressing the gap in farce literature in screenwriting. Another limitation was that I had many challenges at trying to be a “master farceur” (Achard, cited in Arditti 1996,
In this work of fiction, the creative practice methodologies laid the groundwork, but actually applying them became difficult. The question ‘how did the past farceurs do it?’ had to be negotiated at all times; otherwise, it would have overwhelmed me. The reflective chapter offers limitations to this debate of one’s finding’s significance, one’s manner of farce production and artefact, and having a personal voice in the creation of storytelling.

**Distinctive Contributions**

*The Wedding Jackpot* was written for a contemporary screen audience and this PhD has documented the process. My process of writing a farce comedy screenplay included developing new methods or approaches to help guide my writing. It was not my intention to find a new method and/or algorithm when I first started this PhD, but it became part of the screenwriting process. This has opened up the conversation of ‘meta’ farce, in which I kept asking myself questions such as ‘Where do you get farce?’, ‘At what point can you call it a farce?’, ‘Am I close to farce?’, ‘What does farce mean to me?’, and ‘If I am not naturally a farceur, how can I become one?’ The ultimate question was ‘How hard can it be?’ In asking the question of what would best suit this creative practice PhD, I intended to find an approach that would examine the research question(s) both theoretically and practically, which I found could only happen if creating the actual artefact.

In attempting to write my first farce comedy, I needed to expand my creative practice, which led to a ‘meta’ awareness, within the contemporary landscape of scriptwriting. This became an extension of the rhetorical construction within a broader scholarship on comedy and farce, in regard to both a philosophical and theoretical contribution. I immediately noticed the difficulties when I was writing my treatments, and Styan’s question, ‘Does it work?’ (1975, 1–2, italics in original), just led to self-doubt as a screenwriter. This led to another question, ‘Is farce even

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167 Although this was asked in a somewhat sardonic manner, with folly and foolish thinking on my part, I already knew the answer ahead of time from having been an actor (and, performed in farce plays such as Molière’s *Tartuffe*).

168 Any historical or theoretical discussion of the screenplay (i.e., format, description, narratives, film vs. TV, etc.) since the late 1800s is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
possible in a screenplay today?’, when screenplays are supposed to have more ‘white’ on the page. This led to my next question, ‘What does it mean to write a farce today?’ My reflective process not only includes the challenges and difficulties in writing (under the farce genre tropes as a technique and/or science of classification), but also includes discovering new processes for farce screenwriters, and by extension, other creative writers who would like to write in the farce genre.

My intention was for The Wedding Jackpot to present the research-informed ideas in a format to show the six farce principles in action, which would be innovative and therefore appeal to a wider audience; and, to help future farceurs in understanding and constructing a farce story. This has hopefully resulted in a ‘meta-commentary’ on the deep structure of farce comedy. So, along with my analyses, in doing this I feel that I have also come up with some distinctive contributions to the field of farce comedy screenwriting, which I present below diagrammatically. These aspects—called The Farce Scatter Graph Line Chart and The Ping Pong Method—rose from the process of the creative artefact. These approaches provide tools, which could then be beneficial to the creative practitioner, and lend itself to the understanding of farce for non-practitioners.

The Farce Scatter Graph Line Chart
In order to survey where my screenplay sits compared to other farce films, I decided to devise a chart that could be easily and quickly understood. After several versions of the chart, I realised that the main ideology was to negotiate the films with their degree of the six farce principles. It is a farce scatter graph line chart placing films from ‘not farce’ on one side to ‘hard farce’ on the extreme far side. ‘Not farce’ is self-explanatory, in which there are no elements of farce in the movie. ‘Hard farce’ incorporates all the farce principles to the extreme. After several attempts of

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169 The motion picture industry phrase ‘more white on the page’ means that industry people would like to read screenplays that are less dense (almost no or minimal action/description/general information), and include more dialogue, one action per line, as short of a description as possible, etc. The opposite is a lot of block-like paragraph passages of description, which is known as ‘a lot of black’ on the page.

170 Further investigation into the study of the production of texts (i.e., textology) is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

171 Another term, ‘Extreme Farce’, was also considered, but decided to use ‘Hard Farce’ for this dissertation. At my Completion Seminar, a professor in the audience suggested another
naming the degrees for my chart, I decided that the names should reflect current usage. I initially started with ‘extreme’, but changed it to ‘hard’ in order to reflect what I had observed in the farce films and in my own work. The current vernacular phrase ‘going hard’ echoes today’s mainstream culture. I have kept some of the humour associated with farce in naming the various degrees of farce with ‘soft farce’ and ‘semi-hard farce’. This refers back to Davis’ discussion of degrees in farce, such as ‘en rose’ which depicts a “mild degree of empathy” in a farce, and ‘en noir’ which reflects “black humour, alarm and even terror” in a farce (2003, 148).

This model is in its early stages, and can only be considered an interpretation model by the film viewer. I have discussed concrete suggestions under ‘further research’ to make this chart more scientific and viable. The Wedding Jackpot is not a clean, Nora Ephron-style romantic comedy. I am suggesting my screenplay sits towards ‘hard farce’. Bridesmaids sits closer to ‘semi-hard farce’ in line with Davis’ theory of characters stopping to reflect and contemplate, which slows down the pacing, and takes the viewer out of the realm of farce (2003). I have placed the films on the chart from only viewing the movies. This initial attempt serves the purposes of knowing where my screenplay sits, and this may change at a later time.

I thanked this professor, but later looked at my notes, and am reminded by Bermel that farce can include other genres and still be considered farce (1990). See also Maurice Charney, Comedy High and Low (1987), for Tragic Farce. See Billy Mernit, Writing the Romantic Comedy (2000).

Due to the amount of time it would take to rate each movie with a farce trope chart as well as test the actual farce chart theory, I have deemed this as my future research in post doctorate studies. Currently, any further investigation is beyond the scope of this dissertation.
The Ping Pong Method

Without a background as a ‘chess master’, or a ‘watchmaker’, it became clear that I needed to rethink my knowledge about screenplay plotting. As a screenwriter, I have used the various screenwriting templates over the years such as The Hero’s Journey (Vogler 2007), The 3-Act Structure (Field 2005), The 5-Act Structure (Hauge 2011), The 22-Steps (Truby 2008) and the Save the Cat beat template (Snyder 2005). As fore-mentioned, the difficulties of plotting a farce story began at the treatment level. I plotted my initial stories on the above-mentioned story templates by hand, often evolving into mind maps. In taking on this challenge of writing a farce screenplay, I

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174 This plot device method has not been tested on any other screenplay, film or any other creative work. I suggest this will constitute as my further research along with The Farce Scatter Graph Line Chart for post doctorate studies.

175 I attribute the terms ‘chess master’ and ‘watchmaker’ to the numerous farce theorists who argue that farce is the most complicated genre (in terms of plot), and that farceurs must not only know their story inside and out, but also execute their stories with exact precision.

176 It must be noted that Kurt Vonnegut analysed stories in chart forms, “The Shape of Stories”, which was part of his Master thesis at The University of Chicago (1945–47), but it was rejected due to how easy and fun it looked (according to Vonnegut). There are thousands of websites about this fascinating story (See google.com).
am reminded of the difficulty of writing farce. As Ellis argues, “farce is the most difficult writing in dramatic form, and those who cannot write it, sneer at those who can” (1948, 28). Furthermore, “so many different things have to be thought out during the construction… Many incidents, or situations, in a farce need the most subtle [sic] handling to get just the right effect” (1948, 5). In the numerous elements of farce that I became aware of, Ellis notes, “You not only have to consider atmosphere, characterization, stagecraft, amusing dialogue and so on, but you are often supposed to introduce a love interest, thought sentiment is usually subordinated to fun in a farce” (1948, 6). The overlapping of the templates also helped guide my story, but I often had to adjust certain factors such as the inciting incident.

As the story progressed, through the extensive revisions, I started to become confused as to how many times the protagonist did something, where she was, what needed to happen next, etc. I could no longer just use one single line to insert all the locations and beats. As I adhere to Cooney’s statement, “The ability to re-write is essential” (2014a), as well as “the willingness to rewrite is essential” (2014b), I started to experiment and write out several lines in the story timeline, and put the scenes on different lines on paper. Next, I had to figure how to connect them. This sardonically reflects the plotting in farce as not only extreme, but also ‘hard’. The Wedding Jackpot’s plotting mechanism is part of the ‘hard farce’ ideology. As noted by Truby, popular storytellers, especially in novels and movies, were making the plot bigger through genre (2008, 265). He reports that, “In certain genres like farce… this mechanical quality is taken to such an extreme that plots have the complexity and

177 Other tools that are used by screenwriters are storyboards, and index cards (either hard physical ones or the virtual ones in screenwriting format software such as Final Draft). I did not use index cards, or the sequencing approach, due to having many short scenes and sequences. I did do an initial color-coded scene breakdown chart, with page numbers, scene numbers, characters in the scene, etc. with a box that suggested what farce principle I was using. But, I abandoned it once the plot became more complicated. The ‘Sequence Approach’ can be dated back to Epes Winthrop Sargent’s The Technique of the Photoplay (1913). For current investigation, see Paul Gulino’s Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach (2004). This approach divides the movie into 7 or 8 sequences (the length of a movie reel of 10–15 min.), with a minor plot point at the end of each sequence, which finally ends with a climax in the last one (cited in Bailey 2105, 220).

178 For example, I plotted The Hero’s Journey, Save the Cat, 22-Steps and The 3-Act Structure onto The 5-Act Structure, as a building block.

179 Truby remarks that, “Genres are types of stories, with predetermined characters, themes, worlds, symbols, and plots. Genre plots are usually big, emphasizing revelations that are so
timing of a Swiss watch” (Truby 2008, 265). In order to close the gaps of any plot holes, it became necessary to draw up a new approach to the ‘Swiss watch’ complexity and timing.

Thus, the discovery of The Ping Pong Method, which has its foundation in the history of charting stories, but especially to the well-made play (Bermel 1990, 61–61), quarrel farce (Davis 2003, 119), snowball farce (Davis 2003, 129–135; Levine 2006), and The Spiral Story (Truby 2008, 11)180. Bermel states Labiche raised “cross-plotting and multiple crises to a fine art,” in which Feydeau “organized them into a science. He used the old devices of misunderstanding and freakish coincidence, but he increased the speed by imposing time limits and so compelled his characters to race the clock” (1990, 114). The name came about since ping pong181 seems faster than tennis, and to create a controlled chaotic frenzy. The story bounces (i.e., ping pongs) between the various locations, and battles the various opponents at these locations.

I struggled to not only find the story, but also the plot. Farce is noted as a plot heavy genre, and “if you want a lot of plot, you have to have reveals peppered throughout the story” (Truby 2008, 262). The Ping Pong Method helped me see more clearly as to where I needed to put the story ‘reveals’. I am grateful for Ellis’ suggestion, “Don’t look for a ‘set’ plot, but one that is ‘mobile,’ which you can move according to the way you find it developing” (1948, 8). At the same time writers must be aware of their own voice and psyche, as Rozik states: “Basically, a fictional world reflects the psyche of its author. In this sense, it is self-referential” (2011, 63). The analyses helped and guided me towards learning from the experience/process even deeper as I adhere to Ellis’ suggestion that farce writers “will need plenty of pluck. They’ll need sensitivity for their writing” (1948, 5). Further research could investigate if opposing...
characters could also be written in another column and if another line is needed to add the farce principle as a reference. Please see below for the final Ping Pong charts of *The Wedding Jackpot.*
**Chart 2: The Ping Pong Method—first 30 pages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Grace &amp; Polly’s Apt.</th>
<th>S.L.</th>
<th>Dept. Store</th>
<th>S.L.</th>
<th>Wedding Contest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Downtown - Establishing</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Window Display</td>
<td>Toyland</td>
<td>1st Wedding Contest Clue</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Meet Grace</td>
<td>Main Foyer</td>
<td>Pub</td>
<td>2nd Wedding Contest Clue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meet Polly and Ian</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2nd Wedding Contest Clue</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Window Display</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Apt. - Establishing</td>
<td>Hotel Bar</td>
<td>Hotel-Various Areas</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Design School Rejection Letter</td>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>Stockroom</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Job Ad; Meet Deb</td>
<td>Stockroom</td>
<td>Window Display</td>
<td>Wedding Expo Stage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3rd Wedding Contest Clue</td>
<td>Hotel Bar</td>
<td>Hotel-Various Areas</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Meet Mark</td>
<td>Stockroom</td>
<td>Window Display</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Inciting Incident; Meet Hank, Sofia and Bev</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Wedding Expo Stage</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Grace’s Bedroom</td>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>Bus</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Dept. Store</td>
<td>Perfume Counter</td>
<td>Bakery</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jewelry Section</td>
<td>Formal Wear</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flower Shop</td>
<td>Administration Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>Glen’s Office</td>
<td>Window Displays</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>Window Displays</td>
<td>Vacuum Area</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>Main Foyer</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Newsstand</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Deb SEDuces Glen for Job</td>
<td>Local Community Newspaper</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Grace Applies for Job</td>
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<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Grace asks Mark to be Fake Fiancé</td>
<td>Wedding Office and Shop</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Act I Turning Point – No Fiancé at 1st Wedding Event</td>
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<td>26</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Grace Asks Ian to be Fake Fiancé</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Chart 3: The Ping Pong Method—next 60 pages
I have put various farce comedy beats onto a timeline grid, making note of the little funny beats as well as the big funny beats. Some key questions to consider would be:

Was it still funny? Were the farce elements noticeable? Did the pace of the actions increase steadily as the story went along as per one of the farce elements? In noting the difficulties of writing farce, I consider Cooney’s remark, “Most of the farceurs of my generation were also actors who learned to write farces by appearing in them. Who is prepared to serve that kind of apprenticeship any more?” (2014a), as being a farceur, acting in farce plays when I was younger.

**Directions for Future Research**

A farce, or slapstick humor, does well universally.
John Ratzenberger

There are many avenues for the layperson, the professional and the scholar to advance the study of farce. In my dissertation, I analysed the farce tropes, techniques, and elements to compile and assess six farce principles that would be of benefit to screenwriting. In no respect is my PhD dissertation the final word, or a complete study of farce for screenwriting. For the study of genre practitioners and analysts, further analyses of other farce comedy screenplays would be recommended. The
scope of my PhD was limited to farce comedy feature film screenplays. For farce tragedy enthusiasts, the six farce principles could be altered to apply to any number of tragi-farce plays, films, play scripts and screenplays. For farce TV, the six farce principles could be re-designed to write in the TV script format and structure, for either the half-hour or the full-hour show.

For The Farce Scatter Graph Line Chart, a gridline formation could be applied for easier and faster access to the films for the reader. A secondary axis could be implemented to enrich this chart, to add other elements that would value add knowledge for the practitioner and the reader. The grid could be conceptualised further to encompass dates (for historical information), for gender studies (female farceurs vs. male farceurs), comedy vs. tragedy, and a mixture of both film and TV. This may also be adapted to a bulls-eye circle graph chart, or an X-shape area graph chart. Farce writers and/or industry professionals could easily adapt this chart to whichever format they are writing in such as novels, TV episodes, short stories, plays, etc. The main limitation for this initial farce scatter graph line chart is that it is currently not scientific. I have placed the movies on the chart from only viewing the movies. Further research could include a detailed checklist for the various farce tropes, grading each farce trope from one (no farce tropes) to ten (the highest or extreme).

For The Ping Pong Method, there could be many other functions as the story lines accumulate. Further research could have one location, but different characters taking the lead in the story. Hence, the different lines could be characters instead of locations. If it is an ensemble cast, the characters could each have their own graph with this method. And then, after which the next step would be to overlap all the characters’ graphs onto the main graph. Another example could be having different timelines, if the farceur wanted to use flashbacks and flash-forwards. Different coloured lines could represent the different timelines of the past, present and the future. This method is a guide for the screenwriter to keep track of the many elements in play within a farce story, which could get confusing, especially with the ‘enforced pace’ of farce.
Despite these limitations, I suggest what my study has achieved is the discovery of the inner core and heart of the farce principles for screenwriting. This close examination of these six principles sheds light on what is beneficial for the screenwriter who attempts to write in the realm of farce. It is through the actual creative work that I truly understood the depth, complexity and significance of farce. The contributions I present in this PhD aim to advance knowledge for the scholars and practitioners of farce, and—perhaps a little grand—for all storytelling genres.
Appendix A: The Wedding Jackpot—Synopsis

It starts the day after New Year’s Day. The protagonist, GRACE HICCUP, 21, single, poor, a young Lucille Ball type, keeps getting rejected by design schools and men. She is stuck as a junior visual display artist at a large downtown city department store. Grace and her co-workers, POLLY KOUSKOUS, 21, best friend, roommate, candy store clerk, and IAN KARROT KROTCH, 21, warehouse clerk, are only interested in Tinder and drinking.

Although Grace is the store’s best designer, GLEN TEMPURAH, 50s, visual display boss, demotes her to the vacuum department because she is gross and chaotic. Grace notices a job ad for an assistant senior visual display artist, but DEB TACKOHS, 20s, junior visual display artist, sexy, takes the ad for herself. Grace organises her window display for Valentine’s Day. Her life changes when she bumps into MARK FILETSTAKE, late 20s, cute, reporter and photographer for the free local community newspaper covering the Valentine’s Day displays.

When a fight breaks out at the hotel bar, Grace, Polly and Ian get chased by the HOTEL SECURITY GUARDS into The Wedding Expo, which also holds The Design Your Wedding Contest with a million-dollar prize. Mark is covering the event. Grace enters the contest unaware it’s for future brides since she didn’t read the entry form. The contest organiser, HANK McTOFFEE, 50s, a John Cleese type, announces Grace as one of the three finalists. The other two finalists are SOFIA VEGAS and BEV BRAVEFEATHER, but they are not designers. In order to win the prizes, Grace must compete and win in future design events. She only realises it is for future brides only when Hank announces the winner must marry on Valentine’s Day. Grace fails to sign the wedding contest contract when she gets chased out of The Wedding Expo. Hence, she doesn’t say she is single. Everyone mistakenly thinks Grace and Mark are a couple when get tangled and knocked out together on stage. Three people as well as the blog voters, in which the votes are hidden, will judge the future wedding designs.

Having never been in love before, Grace is a fish-out-of-water as she goes to the various wedding design contest events. Hank pressures Grace to bring her fiancé in to
sign the wedding contest contract together. Grace panics and asks Mark to be in cahoots with her as her fake fiancé for the wedding contest, but he declines. Desperate, Grace finally asks Ian to be her fake fiancé for the wedding prizes, to which he agrees. Grace asks Glen about the promotion, but he is now having a sexual relationship with Deb who appears to be a shoo-in for the job. Things fall apart as Sofia keeps winning more of the design events due to her deviousness. During several design events, there is confusion about who is Grace’s fiancé; Ian dons a disguise as Mark. Eventually Grace starts to fall in love with Mark, who covers this popular story in another disguise, and the feeling is mutual. Grace must keep convincing Hank that it’s Ian who she loves, as Hank grows suspicious and threatens to eliminate her. During one disastrous design event, Grace freaks out and drives Mark away. Later, she asks for forgiveness and he comes back. By now, Grace has fallen in love with Mark.

When Grace accidentally gets a hold of the original wedding contest contract, she discovers Hank and Sofia’s scam. Mark covers the wedding contest on Valentine’s Day as Hank smugly announces the winner as Sofia. Grace explodes and exposes Hank and Sofia, who are actually married and her fake fiancé is really her brother. What’s more, Hank and Sofia don’t have a million dollars to give away as a prize, and put this sham contest together to get a wedding design reality TV show. Finally, but unfortunately, Grace gets fired from her job. So, Grace and Mark go on a ‘mock’ honeymoon. They launch a successful crowd funding website for their artistic expertise. At last, Grace now has the full confidence she needed all along and is savvy enough to start her own design business.
### Appendix B: Matrix—Bentley’s Farce Theories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Violence</th>
<th>Bentley’s Farce Theories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Both physical and verbal harm, attacks, brutality, cruelty, aggression (i.e., comic books, Grimm fairy tales, Charlie Chaplin movies) | • Fantastical/unreal physical situations  
• Release or cleansing with laughter  
• Separate reality from fantasy in violence, fact vs. fiction, art vs. life (Plato vs. Aristotle)  
• Increase pacing, sped up reality |
| Others say do not make jokes about the family or marriage; it is sacred, pure, loyalty is sought |  
• Others say it is the hotbed of vice, crime, evil, neurosis, incest, disease, family dysfunction (i.e., Oedipus complex, Othello, Bernard Shaw)  
• Bedroom farce, cheating, adultery, orgies |
| Others say do not make jokes about the family or marriage; it is sacred, pure, loyalty is sought |  
• Others say it is the hotbed of vice, crime, evil, neurosis, incest, disease, family dysfunction (i.e., Oedipus complex, Othello, Bernard Shaw)  
• Bedroom farce, cheating, adultery, orgies |
| To make jokes is to create theatre |  
• Three to make a joke—jokester, the butt of the joke and the listener (Freud)  
• Role and psychoanalysis of comedians/jokesters  
• Need for laughter, analysis of laughter more important than the joke, ‘high’ of laughter  
• Art of farce is jokes turning theatrical  
• Limit laughs for a play, better device |
| Freud—two types of jokes: innocent and harmless, and one which has a purpose (an end in view) |  
• Two kinds of purpose: to destroy and to expose (to smash and strip).  
• Satiric plus obscene equals aggression  
• Generally, public prefers non-aggression  
• Sarcey and Labiche—some people want their farces pleasant and harmless (adultery treated light heartedly)  
• Restoration comedy—more palatable as farce than satire (Charles Lamb)  
• Freud argues the opposite—jokes with a purpose make people laugh (we want the ‘attack and expose’)  
• Without aggression, farce cannot function  
• Farce is the only art form where unrealistic and fantastical physical violence can occur normally |
6. **The Dialectic of Farce**

- Farce appears to be simple (two ways)
- #1: for it goes ‘right’ at things, completely direct, unmediated vision, without duality of mask and face, and symbol and object (that characterises the rest of literature)
- #2: its acceptance of the everyday appearances and of everyday interpretations of those appearances, not elaborate or enlarged images of melodrama
- Farcical dialect: farce is not simple—combines the direct and wild fantasies, and the everyday and drab realities all together
- Double dialect: farce is grave (gravity) and gay (gaiety) simultaneously—(two ways)
- #1: on the surface, contrast between gaiety and grave, orderly and mildness; underneath the surface, it is disorderly and violent
- #2: contrast of on the surface and under the surface
- Comedy may unmask once (climax), whereby farce unmask all the time
- Dramatic art—an art of extremes, farce—the extreme case of the extreme (contrast of violence and gentleness)

7. **Mischief as Fate**

- All forms of drama touches on some degree of madness (sanity/sense goes out), farce is absurd (veritable structure of absurdities)
- Farce—(crazy) coincidences are accepted
- Elements of paranoia, delusions, mischief, fun, misrule, etc. equals fate, equals aggression without risk (i.e., Feydeau, Ibsen, Racine)
- Audience is surprised in farcical plots, but knew all along (i.e., lovers get caught by spouse in house)
- Paranoid fantasies—analysis of innocence surrounded by evil, pity and fear, sympathy and contempt, retaliation, degree of aggression.
- Elaborate plots, ‘all plot’, maniacal
- Faster tempo equals less than human (unnatural) equals funny, has a psychological and moral effect (Dryden, Bergson)

8. **In the Image of the Ape**

- The farceur does not believe man was made in God’s image (heretic)
- Common characters: young lovers, the knave, and the fool
- Knave in farce equals villain in melodrama
- Passion that spins the plot: melodrama equals sheer wickedness; farce equals spirit of mischief (mischief equals comic equivalent of fate)
- Knave equals not deep or purposeful, troublemaker by accident and nature, not intent to do serious damage, prankster, can be influential (Shakespeare’s Puck)
- Knave degrees equals from primitive to sophisticated disguises
- Fools are more numerous, i.e., three fools to one knave (Romans)
- Roman’s Atellan Farces: four character types—the Blockhead (fool, the moron, defeated before he starts), the Braggart (fool, defeating himself as he goes along), the Silly Old Man (recently became a fool, senility, remembers the good old days) and the Trickster (knave)
- Knave and fool equals most value (in farce and comedy), i.e., their interrelationship, the fun between the two
- One of the oldest relationships—the ironical man and the imposter, the comedian and the straight man, the knave and the fool (F.M. Cornford)
- The farceur shows man just slightly higher than apes, as opposed to just below the angels
- If art shows man as a unique conscious person (if Auden is right), then farce is not art? Yet, that is the whole purpose of farce, to show deliberate stupidity (Bentley).
- Analysis of intellect and weakness, wisdom and folly, use or dreaming of violence

9. The Quintessence of Theatre

- “The idea of the actor's art, based on the worship of the mask, gesture, and movement is inseparably linked with the idea of a farce.” (Meyerhold)
- Bentley reverses it, says the idea of farce is inseparable—linked with the idea of the actor’s art, the arte of *commedia dell’arte*
- If melodrama is the quintessence of drama, farce is the quintessence of theatre
- Melodrama is written; farce is acted
- Farce concentrates itself in the actor’s body; dialogue is the activity of the vocal cords and the cerebral cortex
- The theatre of the surrealist body, unnatural state
- Melodrama is not improvised; the improvised drama was pre-eminently farce
- *Commedia dell’arte*, they are the incarnation of farce, Atellan Farces (raised to a higher power)
- Expanded characters, complete human menagerie, beyond three fools and one knave
- The celebrated types of the *commedia* have deeper roots than social manners or even society itself, (Aristophanes’ birds), humans cut off from nature/part of nature/human life as part of all life
- Tragic—god merge with heroes, comic—knaves and fools merge with the lower orders spirits (Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest*)
- *Commedia dell’arte* petered out—18th century
- Charlie Chaplin, greatest comedian of the 20th century, his silent comedies are masterpieces of farce—art of film, others might not say masterpieces of farce
- Era of great farce in films—1912–1927, mechanical accident.
- Silent, farce suited to this
- Certain aspects of farce could be developed for the screen, beyond the stage
- Films, a new kind of farce developed
- Nietzsche (1870)—“in my day, only farce and ballet may be said to thrive”
- Georges Feydeau, greatest farce writer of all time
- The end of modern farce—at the same time, Feydeau’s death in 1921 and Chaplin began to give up farce, end of an era, no one followed in their footsteps
- Special noteworthy mention of the Marx Bros. and W.C. Fields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A generation ago, idea—art as escape (from social problems)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Melodrama and farce are both arts of escape, not only social problems, but all other forms of moral responsibility (escape the law-courts, the tyranny of society, public opinion)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melodrama as savage and infantile, yet, like farce, gives a healthy release, a modest catharsis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farce, not the impulse to flee (fear, but to attack (hostility)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Melodrama—fear enjoys itself, farce—hostility enjoys itself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admirable prescription for the pursuit of pleasure</td>
<td></td>
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(Source: Bentley 1964)
## Appendix C: Northrop Frye’s Five Basic Narrative Modes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types</th>
<th>Characters</th>
<th>Status to Spectators</th>
<th>Fictional Genres</th>
<th>Social Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Myth</td>
<td>Divine beings (i.e., gods)</td>
<td>Characters are more powerful than the typical spectator</td>
<td>Tragedy (lofty mode)</td>
<td>Nobility and higher (high social status)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>Heroes</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
<td>Tragedy (lofty mode)</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High mimetic</td>
<td>Kings</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
<td>Tragedy (lofty mode)</td>
<td>Same as above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low mimetic</td>
<td>Regular people</td>
<td>Same or similar to spectator’s standard</td>
<td>Naturalistic drama</td>
<td>Bourgeois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironic</td>
<td>Lesser people (i.e., low class people)</td>
<td>Less powerful</td>
<td>Farce and Comedy (lowly mode)</td>
<td>Commoners and below (low social status)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Frye 1957)
Appendix D: Matrix—*Commedia dell’arte*

*Commedia dell’arte* (Italian improvisational theatre):
A typical *commedia* troupe had between 10–15 actors, each in characteristic costumes—Davis: The characters were partly original, partly archetypal and fantastic creations (2003, 80).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of actors</th>
<th>Character title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Costumes, Masks, etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Vecchi (plural)</td>
<td>Old or aged men, also known as the masters or the elders—especially the greedy and lascivious (or decadent and wealthy) merchant Pantalone and the pedantic (decadent erudite/ learned fellow) Dottore (or Il Dottore) —Impotent old fathers —Sometimes Pantalone was the elderly father or paternal character, Pantalone the miser —Sometimes Dottore was an obstructing father —Learned il Signor Dottore —Sometimes Il Capitano (see below) —Pantalone and Dottore are said to be the alter ego of each other —They are usually the antagonists, who oppose the love of the youngsters (innamorati), they are the obstacle in the way of the young lovers or they create obstacles (these were the blocking characters) —To be laughed at</td>
<td>--Wore masks --“Masks” in Italian: mashere --Wore expensive clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–4</td>
<td>Zanni</td>
<td>Stock servant characters: astute clown servants, tricksters, valet buffoons, jesters, knavish jacks-of-all trades, i.e., the rascals, such as Harlequin and Pasquariello—but there were many others —Eccentric, witty, amoral —All possessed common sense, intelligence, pride, and a love of practical jokes and intrigue; they were, however, often quarrelsome, cowardly, envious, spiteful, vindictive, and treacherous —Notable for their tumbling and acrobatic feats —Two Zannis played contrasting roles, 1st one is clever and adept at confounding, while the 2nd is a dull-witted foil —Initiated the action of the play, used tricks of the trade, promoted dramatic irony and produced comic impact based on repeated comic actions (lazzi), topical jokes, and practical jokes (burle), often directed against the snug, the proud, the pretentious (promoted humorous mood)</td>
<td>--Originally wore a full mask, but due to dialogue, the bottom of the mask was cut off --A wood or leather half masks with hair and beard glued to it --A loose blouse, wide trousers, --A wide-brimmed or tall conical or peaked hat with long feathers --White baggy clothing; similar dress of peasants and farmworkers --Wears a wooden sword --The longer the nose, the stupider he is --Sometimes dressed in shred and patches such as Arlecchino, later dressed in a checkered costume, black half-mask, a belt purse and a hat with hare tail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
originated, and it refers to male servants

---Zannis produce the comic ending as they overcome the vecchio and unite the young lovers
---Sometimes used slapstick comedy
---To be laughed with

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 | **Capitano**  
(Other variations: Il Capitano, the Captain) | Caricature of a fierce Spanish braggart soldier, boasting of exploits abroad, running away from danger at home; really a coward at heart  
---Braggart captains  
---Would faint at the sight of blood  
---If frightened, would often scream in a high and womanly falsetto or faints  
---Poor, cannot afford an undershirt | Sometimes depicted without a mask. If used, masks are usually (Caucasian) flesh-toned, with a large nose and a moustache (either straight and bristly or turned up at the corners)  
---Some older versions show Capitano wearing glasses due to poor vision, but will insist that it is his fierce and/or brilliant flint in his handsome eyes, so as to not outshine the sun  
---In a military uniform: multi-colored, covered in shiny buttons, but with patches and looks worn  
---No undershirt under his uniform  
---Sometimes wears a helmet or a bicorn or tricorn hat with a huge feather  
---Wears a large exaggerated neck-ruff  
---Trademark sword, exclusively for show. Usually too long to draw easily, too heavy or wobbly to wield properly |

| 2 | **Inamorati**  
---Other variations: innamorati  
---“The lovers” in Italian  
---Also amorosi  
---Also means both female and male lovers (not only males) | The lovers, handsome young men  
---Function and sole purpose: madly in love, either with the other person, moreover with themselves  
---Smooth and potent lovers  
---Although acting helpless, the lovers always unite by the end despite all the obstacles  
---The lovers commonly bicker and/or fight  
---Naïve  
---Possess courteousness, gracefulness and gallantry  
---Posture: resembled strong pride, pointed their toes while standing, puffed out their chest  
---Did not seem to touch the ground, float across the stage  
---Hand gestures and movements, similar to their feet, buoyant movements  
---Speech: eloquent Tuscan (high social status) | Never wore masks  
---Wore a large amount of make-up and applied beauty marks to their faces  
---Very attractive and elegant in appearance  
---Wore soldier-like attire  
---Extravagant wigs  
---Changed clothes frequently during the length of the play |
Language: full of flamboyant and lofty rhetoric (not taken seriously due to this)

Well read in poetry, often recite it from memory, often sing it as well

The lovers are usually the children of the vecchi

| 2 | Inamorate | The beloved ones, pretty young women, the ingénues.  
Languishing ladies, wives and daughters  
See above | Never wore masks  
Wore a large amount of make-up and applied beauty marks to their faces  
Dresses were made of the finest silks  
Wore showy jewellery, characteristic of the Renaissance style  
Extravagant wigs  
Changed clothes frequently during the length of the play |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Serviette | Witty, flirtatious maids, the soubrettes.  
A serving maid  
Buxom servant girls | Usually not masked |

(Sources: Britiannica.com 2014; Davis 2003, 80; Lanson 1965; Lea 1962; Rozik 2011; Styan 1972, 197)
Appendix E: Lovefilm—Top 10 Funniest Movies Ever

Laugh a Minute Rating:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking</th>
<th>Movie</th>
<th>Laughs per Minute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Airplane!</em></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>The Hangover</em></td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Naked Gun: From the Files of Police Squad!</em></td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Superbad</em></td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Borat</em></td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy</em></td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>American Pie</em></td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>Bridesmaids</em></td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><em>Shaun of the Dead</em></td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>Life of Brian</em></td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Lovefilm 2012)

Note: There was no additional information on Lovefilm’s website. This raises some caveats on their methodology such as: What does their ‘laugh-per-minute’ really mean? Did they differentiate between a smile, a chuckle, a smirk, a giggle, a simple laugh and/or a roaring laugh? How did they differentiate when one laughs, stops (complete silence) and another laugh begins? Did they take into account if a laugh was short or long? Hence, if it was a long laugh, does that carry more weight than a short laugh (i.e., is a 2-minute continuous laugh is counted more than a 1-minute continuous laugh)?
**References and Bibliography**


Notes:

1) This section contains both primary and secondary sources. Additionally, as a screenwriter, I have read many books, articles and blogs on creative writing, especially screenwriting over the decades. I have listed some of them, as they are part of my bibliography, although some may not have been directly referenced.

2) For many of the online references and bibliography, I accessed them many times over the years due to trying to save paper.

3) For the screenplay references, I have read many screenplays over the decades. Sometimes in a class/workshop, but for most of them, I accessed them through one of the many free online screenplay websites, such as www.script-o-rama.com, www.simplyscripts.com, nofilmschool.com, and www.screenplays-online.de.
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Morgan, Anthony. 2015. ‘No Joke: In comedy’s off-season, we find out what the funny people have been up to’. Cover story: ‘How to keep the comedy bubbling all year: When the comedy festival lights go down, performers have


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Telegraph, The. 2012. ‘Airplane funniest film ever, research finds: Spoof disaster movie Airplane is the funniest film ever—generating three laughs a minute on average, according to a new research’. Telegraph.co.uk. Culture section. Film


Filmography and TV

30 ROCK (2006-13), Broadway Video, Little Stranger, NBC Studios, NBC Universal Television, Universal Media Studios (UMS), TV series, 7 seasons, 138 episodes. R/T: 22 min. per episode.
Created by: Tina Fey
Series Writers: see imdb.com
Directors: see imdb.com
Producers: Tina Fey, Marci Klein, David Miner, Robert Carlock, Jeff Richmond, Alec Baldwin, Jerry Kupfer and Don Scardino

ALIEN (1979), Brandywine Productions, Twentieth Century Fox Productions. R/T: 117 min.
Story: Dan O’Bannon and Ronald Shusett
Screenplay: Dan O’Bannon
Director: Ridley Scott
Producers: Gordon Carroll, David Giler, Walter Hill, Ivor Powell and Ronald Shusett

ALIENS (1986), Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, Brandywine Productions, SLM Production Group. R/T: 137 min.
Based on the characters created by: Dan O’Bannon and Ronald Shusett
Story: James Cameron, David Giler and Walter Hill
Screenplay: James Cameron
Director: James Cameron
Producers: Gordon Carroll, David Giler, Walter Hill and Gale Anne Hurd

Writers: Andrew Jay Cohen and Brendan O’Brien
Director: Nicholas Stoller
Producers: Brian Bell, Andrew Jay Cohen, Joseph Drake, Evan Goldberg, Nathan Kahane, Matthew F. Leonetti Jr., Brendan O’Brien, Seth Rogen and James Weaver

Based on the character of “Mr. Bean” by: Rowan Atkinson and Richard Curtis
Writers: Richard Curtis and Robin Driscoll
Director: Mel Smith
Producers: Rowan Atkinson, Peter Bennett-Jones, Tim Bevan, Richard Curtis, Eric Fellner and Rebecca O’Brien

Referencing: This section is formatted in the standard film information template. The chain of story process is indicated. R/T is running time. R/T can be in total minutes, or in hours and minutes. There may be some different information for each film or TV show.
BEING THERE (1979), BSB, CIP, Lorimar Film Entertainment, NatWest Ventures, Northstar Media. R/T: 130 min.
Original material: Based on the novel, Being There, by Jerzy Kosinski
Screenplay: Jerzy Kosinski and Robert C. Jones (uncredited)
Director: Hal Ashby
Producers: Andrew Braunsberg, Charles Mulvehill and Jack Schwartzman

Story: Andrew Bergman
Screenplay: Mel Brooks, Norman Steinberg, Andrew Bergman, Richard Pryor and Alan Uger
Director: Mel Brooks
Producer: Michael Hertzberg

Screenplay: Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumolo
Director: Paul Feig
Producers: Judd Apatow, Paul Feig, Lisa Goldberg, Barry Mendel, Annie Mumolo, Clayton Townsend and Kristen Wiig

Writer: Lou Holtz Jr.
Director: Ben Stiller
Producers: Judd Apatow, Bernie Brillstein, Brad Grey, Marc Gurvitz, Andrew Licht and Jeffrey A. Mueller

Series Writers: see imdb.com
Directors: Dave Powers (1968-78) and Clark Jones (1967-68)
Producers: Joe Hamilton, Robert Wright, Ed Simmons, Arnie Rosen, Bill Angelos, Buz Kohan, Chris Jenkyns and Bob Banner

Franchise: 4 Christmas specials, TV series, 13 episodes, 3 West End plays and other stage plays
Writers: Seven writers; noteworthy: Norman Hudis (1958-62) and Talbot Rothwell (1963-74)
Director: Gerald Thomas
Producer: Peter Rogers

Writer: William Broyles, Jr.
Director: Robert Zemeckis
Producers: Steven J. Boyd, Joan Bradshaw, Tom Hanks, Cherylanne Martin, Jack Rapke, Steve Starkey and Robert Zemeckis

CITY LIGHTS (1931), Charles Chaplin Productions (uncredited). R/T: 87 min.
Writers: Charles Chaplin, Harry Crocker (uncredited) and Harry Clive (uncredited)
Director: Charles Chaplin
Producer: Charles Chaplin

Original material: Based on the novel, The Color of Money, by Walter Tevis
Screenplay: Richard Price
Director: Martin Scorsese
Producers: Irving Axelrad and Barbara De Fina

Original material: Based on the magazine article, “The Boys in the Bank”, by P.F. Kluge and Thomas Moore
Book: Leslie Waller (uncredited)
Screenplay: Frank Pierson
Director: Sidney Lumet
Producers: Martin Bregman, Martin Elfand and Robert Greenhut

DUCK SOUP (1933), Paramount Pictures. R/T: 68 min.
Dialogue, Story and Screenplay: Bert Kalmar, Harry Ruby, Arthur Sheekman and Nat Perrin
Director: Leo McCarey
Producer: Herman J. Mankiewicz

EASY STREET (1917), Lone Star Corporation, short film. R/T: 19 min.
Story (uncredited): Charles Chaplin
Writers (uncredited): Charles Chaplin, Vincent Bryan and Maverick Terrell
Directors (uncredited): Charles Chaplin and Edward Brewer (technical director)
Producers (uncredited): Henry P. Caulfield and Charles Chaplin

Created by: John Cleese and Connie Booth
Series Writers: John Cleese and Connie Booth
Directors: John Howard Davies and Bob Spiers
Producers: John Howard Davies and Douglas Argent

Screenplay: Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis
Director: Ivan Reitman
Producers: Bernie Brillstein, Michael C. Gross, Joe Medjuck and Ivan Reitman
Screenplay: Jon Lucas and Scott Moore
Director: Todd Phillips
Producers: Chris Bender, Scott Budnick, William Fay, Daniel Goldberg, Jon Jashni, Todd Phillips, David Siegel, J.C. Spink, Thomas Tull and Jeffrey Wetzel

Screenplay: Craig Mazin, Scot Armstrong, Todd Phillips, Jon Lucas and Scott Moore
Director: Todd Phillips
Producers: Scott Budnick, Joseph Garner, Daniel Goldberg, Jon Jashni, Chris Lowenstein, Todd Phillips, David Siegel, J.C. Spink, Thomas Tull, Vineet [single name only] and Jeffrey Wetzel

Screenplay: Craig Mazin, Todd Phillips, Jon Lucas and Scott Moore
Director: Todd Phillips
Producers: Scott Budnick, Joseph Garner, Daniel Goldberg, Chris Lowenstein, Todd Phillips, David Siegel, J.C. Spink, Thomas Tull and Jeffrey Wetzel

HIS GIRL FRIDAY (1940), Columbia Pictures Corporation. R/T: 92 min.
Original material: Based on the play, The Front Page (1928), by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur
Writer: Charles Lederer, Ben Hecht (uncredited) and Morrie Ryskind (additional dialogue, uncredited)
Director: Howard Hawks
Producer: Howard Hawks (uncredited)

Based on the characters by: Michael Markowitz (Horrible Bosses 2011)
Story: Jonathan M. Goldstein, John Francis Daley, Sean Anders and John Morris
Screenplay: Sean Anders and John Morris
Director: Sean Anders
Producers: Chris Bender, Richard Brener, Samuel J. Brown, John Cheng, Michael Disco, Toby Emmerich, John Morris, Diana Pokorny, Brett Ratner, John Rickard and Jay Stern

HORSE FEATHERS (1932), Paramount Pictures. R/T: 68 min.
Director: Norman Z. McLeod
Producer: Herman J. Mankiewicz

I LOVE LUCY (1951-1957), Desilu Productions, on CBS, TV series, 6 seasons, 181 episodes. R/T: 23-26.5 min. per episode
Series Writers: Bob Carroll, Jr., Madelyn Davis, Jess Oppenheimer, Bob Schiller and Bob Weiskopf
Directors: William Asher, James V. Kern, Marc Daniels and Ralph Levy
Producers: Desi Arnaz, Jess Oppenheimer, Al Simon and Jack Aldworth

Screenplay: Louis Lumière
Director: Louis Lumière
Producer: Louis Lumière

LAST ACTION HERO (1993), Columbia Pictures, Oak Productions. R/T: 131 min. Story: Zak Penn and Adam Leff
Screenplay: Shane Black, David Arnott and William Goldman (uncredited)
Director: John McTiernan
Producers: Robert H. Lemer, John McTiernan, Neal Nordlinger, Robert E. Relyea, Stephen J. Roth and Arnold Schwarzenegger

Screenplay: Shane Black
Director: Tony Scott
Producers: Shane Black, Barry Josephson, Michael Levy, Steve Perry, Joel Silver and Carmine Zozzora

Created by: Dick Wolf
Series Writers: see imdb.com
Directors: see imdb.com
Producers: Dick Wolf; see imdb.com

Writer: Shane Black
Director: Richard Donner
Producers: Richard Donner, Joel Silver and Jennie Lew Tugend

Original material: Based on a 1992 screenplay by Greg Glienna and Mary Ruth Clarke
Story: Greg Glienna and Mary Ruth Clarke
Screenplay: Jim Herzfeld and John Hamburg
Director: Jay Roach
Producers: Robert De Niro, Jay Roach, Jane Rosenthal and Nancy Tenenbaum
MODERN TIMES (1936), Charles Chaplin Productions. R/T: 87 min.
Screenplay: Charles Chaplin
Director: Charles Chaplin
Producer: Charles Chaplin

MONSIEUR HULOT’S HOLIDAY (LES VACANCES de M. HOLUT) (1953),
Discina Film, Cady Films, Specta Films. R/T: 83 min.
Story: Jacques Tati and Henri Marquet
Collaboration with: Pierre Aubert and Jacques Lagrange
Screenplay: Jacques Tati and Henri Marquet
Director: Jacques Tati
Producers: Fred Orain and Jacques Tati (uncredited)

Artistic Collaboration with: Jacques Lagrange and Jean L’Hote
Writer: Jacques Tati
Director: Jacques Tati
Producers: Jacques Tati and Fred Orain (uncredited)

MR. BEAN (1990-95), Thames Television, Tiger Aspect Productions, Central Television, on ITV, TV series, 15 episodes. R/T: 25 min. per episode.
Created by: Rowan Atkinson and Richard Curtis
Series Writers: Ben Elton, Robin Driscoll, Richard Curtis, Rowan Atkinson, Andrew Clifford and Paul Weiland
Directors: John Howard Davies, John Birkin and Paul Weiland
Producers: Peter Bennett-Jones, John Howard Davies, Sue Vertue and Nick Mortimer

Based on the character of “Mr. Bean” by: Rowan Atkinson and Richard Curtis
Story: Simon McBurney
Screenplay: Hamish McColl and Robin Driscoll
Director: Steve Bendelack
Producers: Peter Bennett-Jones, Raphaël Benoliel, Tim Bevan, Liza Chasin, Richard Curtis, Eric Fellner, Debra Hayward, Caroline Hewitt and Simon McBurney

MRS. DOUBTFIRE (1993), Blue Wolf, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. R/T: 125 min.
Original material: Based on the novel, Alias Madame Doubtfire, by Anne Fine
Screenplay: Randi Mayem Singer and Leslie Dixon
Director: Chris Columbus
Producers: Joan Bradshaw, Linda Jones Clough, Paula DePré Pesmen, Stephen Fossatti, Mark Radcliffe, Matthew Rushton and Marsha Garces Williams

Writers: Harold Ramis, Douglas Kenney and Chris Miller
Director: John Landis
Producers: Ivan Reitman and Matty Simmons

Writer: Patrick Sheane Duncan
Director: John Badham
Producers: John Badham, D.J. Caruso and Cammie Crier

NIGHTCRAWLER (2014), Bold Films, Sierra /Affinity, Nightcrawler. R/T: 117 min.
Writer: Dan Gilroy
Director: Dan Gilroy
Producers: Betsy Danbury, Garrick Dion, Jennifer Fox, Tony Gilroy, Juliana Guedes, Jake Gyllenhaal, David Lancaster, Michel Litvak, Gary Michael Walters and Stephanie Wilcox

Story: Eddie Murphy and Charles Q. Murphy
Screenplay: Eddie Murphy, Charles Q. Murphy, Jay Scherick and David Ronn
Director: Brian Robbins
Producers: John Davis, David Householter, Eddie Murphy, Brian Robbins and Michael Tollin

Writer: Melissa K. Stack
Director: Nick Cassavetes
Producers: Maguy R. Cohen, Donald J. Lee Jr., Chuck Pacheco, Patrick Walmsley and Julie Yorn

PINK FLAMINGOS (1972), Dreamland. R/T: 93 min.
Writer: John Waters
Director: John Waters
Producer: John Waters

PRETTY WOMAN (1990), Touchstone Pictures, Silver Screen Partners IV. R/T: 119 min.
Screenplay: J.F. Lawton
Director: Garry Marshall
Producers: Gary w. Goldstein, Arnon Milchan, Steven Reuther, Walter von Huene and Laura Ziskin

Screenplay: Mel Brooks
Director: Mel Brooks
Producers: Sidney Glazer, Jack Grossberg and Joseph E. Levine

Original material: Based on the play, Rope, by Patrick Hamilton
Adapted by: Hume Cronyn
Screenplay: Arthur Laurents, and Ben Hecht (uncredited)
Director: Alfred Hitchcock
Producers: Alfred Hitchcock (uncredited) and Sidney Bernstein (uncredited)

Screenplay: Josann McGibbon and Sara Parriott
Director: Garry Marshall
Producers: Robert W. Cort, Ted Field, Mario Iscovich, Scott Kroopf, Gary Lucchesi, David Madden, Tom Rosenberg, Ellen H. Schwartz, Karen Stigwolt, Ted Tannebaum and Richard S. Wright

Created by: Sarah Silverman, Dan Harmon and Rob Schrab
Series Writers: see imdb.com
Directors: Rob Schrab, Wayne McIlammy, Dan Sterling, Steven K. Tsuchida and Liam Lynch
Producers: Sarah Silverman, Dan Sterling, Rob Schrab and Heidi Herzon

SLEEPING BEAUTY (1959), Walt Disney Productions, animation. R/T: 75 min.
Original material: Based on the story, Sleeping Beauty, by Charles Perrault
Adapted by: Erdman Penner
Additional story: Joe Rinaldi, Winston Hibler, Bill Peet, Ted Sears, Ralph Wright and Milt Banta
Supervising Director: Clyde Geronimi
Sequence Directors: Les Clark, Eric Larion and Wolfgang Reitherman
Producer: Walt Disney

Story: Robert Thoeren and Michael Logan
Screenplay: Billy Wilder and I.A.L. Diamond
Director: Billy Wilder
Producers: I.A.L. Diamond, Doane Harrison and Billy Wilder

STAR WARS (1977), Lucasfilm, Twentieth Century Fox Corporation. R/T: 121 min.
Writer: George Lucas
Director: George Lucas
Producers: Gary Kurtz and George Lucas

Story: Ed Decter and John J. Strauss
Screenplay: Ed Decter, John J. Strauss, Peter Farrelly and Bobby Farrelly
Directors: Bobby Farrelly and Peter Farrelly
Producers: Michael Steinberg, Bradley Thomas, Charles B. Wessler and Frank Beddor
Original material: Based on the short films by The Three Stooges
Screenplay: Mike Cerrone, Bobby Farrelly and Peter Farrelly
Directors: Bobby Farrelly and Peter Farrelly
Producers: Bobby Farrelly, Peter Farrelly, Bradley Thomas and Charles B. Wessler

THIN MAN, THE (1957-59), Clarington Productions, MGM Television, aired on NBC, TV series, 2 seasons, 72 episodes. R/T: 30 min. per episode.
Original material: Based on the mystery novel, The Thin Man, by Dashiell Hammett
Also, based on the motion picture, The Thin Man (1933).
Series Writers: Robert Riley Crutcher, Phil Davis, Michael Fessier, Devery Freeman, Bruce Geller, John L. Greene, Dashiell Hammett, Edmund L. Hartmann, Charles Hoffman, Joel Kane, George Oppenheimer, Dean Riesner, Harold Swanton and Dwight Taylor
Directors: Oscar Rudolph, Don Weis, Richard Kinon, William Asher, Andrew McCullough, John Newland, Bernard Girard, Robert B. Sinclair and Bretaigne Windust
Producers: Samuel Marx, Richard Maibaum, Robert L. Welch, Edmund Beloin, Milton Ebbins, Devery Freeman and David Heilweil

Story: Mike Figgis
Director: Mike Figgis
Producers: Mike Figgis, Annie Stewart, Dustin Bernard and Gary Marcus

Story: Don McGuire, and Larry Gelbart
Screenplay: Larry Gelbart, Murray Schisgal, Elaine May (uncredited), Barry Levinson (uncredited) and Robert Garland (uncredited)
Director: Sydney Pollack
Producers: Charles Evans, Sydney Pollack, Dick Richards and Ronald L. Schwary (uncredited)

TOPPER (1953-55), CBS, TV series, 2 seasons, 78 episodes. R/T: 24 min per episode.
Original material: Based on the Topper novels by Thorne Smith
Also, based on the motion picture, Topper (1937).
Series Writers: Robert Riley Crutcher, Stanley Davis, Donn Mullally, George Oppenheimer, Elon Packard, Norman Paul, Joel Rapp, Philip Rapp, Thorne Smith, Stephen Sondheim and Robert Thomsen
Directors: Richard L. Bare, Leslie Goodwins, James V. Kern, Lew Landers, Paul Landres, Leslie H. Martinson and Phillip Rapp
Producers: John W. Loveton and Bernard Schubert

TWENTIETH CENTURY (1934), Columbia Pictures Corporation. R/T: 91 min.
Original material: Based on an unproduced play by Charles Bruce Millholland
Play and Screenplay: Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur
Other writers (uncredited): Gene Fowler and Preston Sturges
Director: Howard Hawks
Producers: Howard Hawks and Harry Cohn (uncredited)

Writers: Steve Faber and Bob Fisher
Director: David Dobkin
Producers: Peter Abrams, Cale Boyter, Richard Brener, Toby Emmerich, Robert L Levy, Andrew Panay and Guy Riedel

Writers: Jeremy Garelick and Jay Lavender
Director: Jeremy Garelick
Producers: Zanne Devine, Adam Fields, Glenn S. Gainor, Jeremy Garelick, Jay Lavender, William Packer, Valerie Bleth Sharp and Ben Waisbren
The Wedding Jackpot screenplay
The Wedding Jackpot

This project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of a Doctor of Philosophy

By

Sung-Ju Suya Lee

BFA (Honours), MBA (Merit)

School of Media and Communication
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University
Melbourne, Australia

November 2016
EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Busy shopping area. SHOPPERS walk and text, all collide.

EXT. HOTEL - DAY

Two upright street banners: ‘Wedding Expo’ and ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’. SHOPPERS trip over the banners, kick them.

EXT. WINDOW DISPLAY. DEPARTMENT STORE - DAY

SHOPPERS rush by. STORE CLERKS replace the 'Boxing Week' and 'New Year's Day Sale' signs with 'January Bonanza Sale'.

GRACE HICCUP, 21, poor, single, jr. visual display artist, a young Lucille Ball type, pins up a Valentine display design. She dismantles, stumbles and fumbles over the mannequins.

INT. TOYLAND. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Packed. Grace dismantles 'SantaLand'. KIDS sit and scream on the half-demolished North Pole kiddie's train. No parents.

SCOTTISH STORE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Merry Christ-Blimey! Happy New Year, good ol' shoppers. (Burps.) Bloody hung over--

Kids run amok - climb on Grace, spin her, etc. A trinket hits a CRYING BOY eating M&M's. She picks him up with her boxes.

The Crying Boy chokes Grace with her lanyard ID. He blows snot on her face and in her mouth. She spits out the snot.

Grace, snot on her face, balances boxes, holds a megaphone.

GRACE

Listen up, kiddos! St. Nick has left the building, he won't be coming back...ever!

Kids run away. Grace pumps her arm in the air. GLEN TEMPURAH, 50s, visual display boss, in a suit, stands behind her.

Grace laughs, turns around, slams face-first into Glen. Some M&M's slide off her face on some snot. She drops a box.

GRACE (CONT'D)

Ugh, Bauhaus! Ding-Dong-boss-Glen. Just--

GLEN

Vacuums really does suit you better.

Glen points to her face. She stretches her tongue, licks snot off, chews M&M's with snot, picks her teeth. He gags, hacks, and exits. She struggles to not ‘flip the bird’ at Glen.

GRACE

Vacuums, again! Just fixing the displays--

Ugh. How low can I go? Blow me.
INT. MAIN FOYER. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Packed. Grace, in high heels on a high ladder, dismantles a huge Christmas tree.

SCOTTISH STORE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Don't be blue-(Burps.)-Oops-Give it back--

BOSTONIAN STORE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
--Attention, shoppers. Ouch! It’s January Bonanza Sale. Ouch! 99% off all Christ--

SHOPPERS slam into Grace’s ladder. She grabs the Christmas tree, swings about, kicks the trinkets, laughs. No one looks.

IAN KARROT KROTCH, 21, warehouse clerk, redhead, stands under Grace hanging on the Christmas tree, fumbles with his boxes, kicks his trolley. He ogles at some FEMALE SHOPPERS, sexy.

IAN
Need help, Chickadees? At your service.

The trinkets hit Ian. The Female Shoppers giggle, exit.

Grace points to a LOST GIRL, 3, being trampled. No one looks. Grace jumps off the ladder, makes a beeline to save her.

GRACE
Stop! Outta the way. Child alert. Watch--

Grace weaves through the Crowd, saves Lost Girl as she falls.

LOST GIRL
Santa, Santa--

LOST GIRL’S MOTHER
Thank you, miss. You’re a lifesaver.
(to Lost Girl)
Santa isn’t real after Christmas.

Lost Girl and Lost Girl’s Mother exit.

GRACE
No probs. Santa is real till you’re dead.

POLLY KOUSKOUS, 21, Grace’s roommate, candy clerk, removes candy off the Christmas tree, gives one candy with pine tree needles and tinsel to Grace carrying boxes, with Kids on her.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Suckers?! Budweiser tonight!

Grace shoves the entire big sucker candy into her mouth.

INT. PUB - NIGHT

Grace, Polly and Ian, at a table, wave off a WAITRESS. Ian pinches the Waitress’s bum.
All kick Grace’s artist folio, held together with duct tape, under the table. All check their Tinder app and the time on their phones repeatedly. It’s 5PM. All high-five each other.

IAN
It’s bloody time.

POLLY
What a crazy week!

Grace checks her wallet. Only change.

GRACE
Thank god for happy hour.

A HEN PARTY, 30s, enters, phones in the air. The BRIDE-TO-BE laughs, waves her hand like the Queen, it snags on her veil.

Grace and Polly mimic her. Ian returns with three beers.

POLLY
Found my prince charming.
GRACE
My rock is bigger than yours.

IAN
Don't brides stop getting married?!

Polly makes a slicing action across her throat.

IAN
Talk about being trapped. Better dead and buried.

POLLY
Beezus-jee. Sounds like hell.

They take selfies with the Hen Party in the b.g. The Bride-To-Be leads a bunny conga line with her Hen Party. All drunk.
Grace points to a sign - ‘Happy New Year: closing next week!’

GRACE (CONT’D)
Gotta get my first lottery ticket!

POLLY IAN
That’s stupid! Nobody wins? Yeah, right, good luck!

Ian slams down an empty bottle. Table covered with empties.

IAN
Whose turn is it next?...Waiting.

Ian and Polly eye Grace. Grace checks her wallet, coins only.

POLLY
You’re such a big flirt...

Polly fake-winks at Grace. Grace fake-smiles back.

Grace swaggers in her high heels, tipsy, unbuttons her top, reveals her old bra, with stains, rips and safety pins.

Grace smiles at a HOT GUY. Mumbles but chokes, points to his beer. He hands her his empty and signals for two more beers. The Hen Party slams into Grace and the Hot Guy as they exit.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

HOTEL SECURITY GUARDS stare at Grace, Polly and Ian. They plow into the two ‘wedding events’ upright street banners.

All read a sign in the Hotel Bar window - ‘Happy Hour - 50% off.’ Grace winks at Ian. All trip over Grace’s artist folio.

EXT. GRACE AND POLLY’S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Run down with graffiti. Grunting o.c.

INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM. GRACE AND POLLY'S APT. - CONTINUOUS

Drawings on the walls. Grace and Ian make out. They crush her scale replica models with red ‘Rejection’ stamped on them.

They struggle with the condom box. The condom packages fly out. As they catch them, his hands get caught in her undergarments’ holes. He rips the holes bigger.

He swings his opened condom around over his head. She tosses all her opened condoms up into the air. One opened condom lands and sticks to her head. One lands on his bare feet.

They topple things over, bump into her fan, it turns on high. Opened condoms fly around the room (like balloons). Opened condoms stick to them. His feet slides as he bonks.

LATER.
Grace lays spread-eagle, asleep, condoms all over her. A used condom on her head flops across her face, not over her eyes.

Ian dresses, a condom on the bottom of his shoe, slides across the room. A condom is stuck to his pants. Exits.

MAIN AREA

Ian enters. Open layout. Sparse. Furniture held together with duct tape. Polly licks a chocolate covered strawberry with fungus, offers it to Ian. He growls. They wink at each other.

INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM. GRACE AND POLLY'S APT. - MORNING

Grace flicks the condoms off. The used condom on her face still remains. She fixes her crushed scale replica models.

MAIN AREA

Grace exits the kitchen with a coffee, tosses the instant coffee wrapper. She still has the used condom on her face, slams into Ian and Polly. Grace spills her coffee on herself.

GRACE
WTF?! You broke the sex rule. What--

The condom transfers onto Ian's face, not on his eyes. No one looks. Ian bump-grinds, smirks, puts in his earbuds, dances.

IAN
I'm the best party in my pants.

Grace strips off. Grace and Polly wave their arms around.

POLLY
No, Ian and I were fuck buddies way before you two were. You can't claim no--

IAN
I am a lady killer, yes I am.

Grace spills more coffee. Polly takes Grace's coffee cup.

GRACE
Ok, but no more sharing fuck buddies--

Ian gyrates-dances, air kisses both ladies.

IAN
I'm a love machine. Totally!

Grace swats him away. She has on last night’s undergarments with bigger holes. He checks his texts from other LADIES.

IAN (CONT’D)
2-in-1 night. Tick off bucket list.

He exits with the used condom still on his face. Oblivious.
POLLY
--at least not on the same night.

Polly hands Grace the yearly renewal rental lease form.

POLLY (CONT’D)
Landlord's bleeding us dry. They want our bank statements, pay stubs. Everything.

GRACE
Again?! It's highway cheating.

POLLY
Uh, highway robbery? Next week. Ok?

GRACE
We gotta rent out the couch?!

Polly hands her a design school envelope.

POLLY
Hope it’s good news this time.

INT. BUS. MOVING - DAY


IRATE BUS PASSENGER
Can you watch your stuff?!

GRACE
Oops. Sorry, excuse me. Oops. Sorry...

MALE BUS PASSENGER
(on the phone)
I told my boss I used to be a lesbian so she would stop hitting on me. No, it didn't work. She knew I was still a guy--

Grace opens the design school envelope, reads the letter inches from her nose: red ‘Rejection’ across the letter.

The bus passes a design school. She sees the ‘Snosrap Elite Design School’ and ‘Open House’ banners. SNOSRAP STUDENTS carry their paintings, scale replica models, artist folios.

GRACE
Snosrap...snot-rag, more like. Just because I didn’t get A’s in school.

Grace’s POV improves on the Snosrap Students' designs, like 3-D images coming to life. No one else sees it. She holds back tears, folds the letter. Grace’s POV: the designs evaporate.

Grace notices some wetness on her artist folio. A DIRTY MAN watches porn on his phone, drooling/gurgling. She wipes the drool off, tries not to touch it.
DIRTY MAN
I’m coming home in T-minus two minutes...

Some Bus Passengers talk animatedly with their hands. Grace ducks, here and there. They hit her artist folio.

It hits the Dirty Man’s hard-on through his pants (not exposed). He doesn’t touch himself. It swings back, hits her.

GRACE
Someone hit me in the face. Stop, please!

No one looks. Grace laughs, hides her face with the drool.

INT. STOCKROOM. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Grace carries Valentine’s Day decor. She sees a job posting.

DEB TACKOHS, 20s, jr. visual display artist, sexy, enters.

GRACE
(points to ad)
Reckon it’s real? We better apply--


DEB
--Uh, everyone’s going for it. It’s gonna be tough. Don’t try. No. I think--heard that someone’s got it already. Yeah. No.

GRACE
Don’t give up. We gotta toss our caps...

DEB
Uh, our hats in the ring? Sure. Why not?

Deb drops a Cupid. Grace picks it up for her. Grace exits.

DEB (CONT’D)
No one has ever gotten promoted.

Deb looks around, smirks, shoves the ad down her pants.

INT. WINDOW DISPLAY. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Grace pins a Valentine display design with a store approved stamp. Her POV: the design images come alive – 3D images.

Ian dumps a broken box, oblivious. It hits Grace.

The images vanish. She turns around, no Ian, kicks the box.

Grace puts a sign on an easel, doesn’t read it. Text – ’Sponsored by the Wedding Expo!’ She steps back, bumps into someone, her face and hands touch MARK FILESTAKE’s groin.

MARK
I’m sorry. I didn't see you.

GRACE
No, no...it’s my fault.
Mark, late-20s, cute, in second-hand clothes, reporter and photographer for the free local community newspaper, shows his camera, takes photos of the Valentine’s Day decorations.

Grace blushes as she retracts her hands. They lock eyes.

MARK
I’m here about the new displays. Some readers thought they were nice. Hence...

Grace eyes his store guest badge: ‘Newspaper’; flips her hair, flashes a smile.

He shoots. She puts on a mannequin’s bridal tiara, twirls. Veil catches. Knocks his glasses off.

GRACE
I'm so sorry. My fault.

MARK
It's okay. It's not broken.

Grace and Mark fumble to adjust his glasses.

She puts his glasses on his face. They look away. Both blush.

He points to Grace's phone. She grabs him to pose together.

Grace checks Mark's camera for her photos. Scans fast.

GRACE
These are ab fab. Send them.

MARK
These are just random shots. Not much--

Grace tosses back his camera, turns to shoot on her phone.

MARK (CONT’D)
Thanks for letting me shoot the...I have to go shoot...Maybe later, we could...

She posts the selfies on social media with lightning speed.

Mark's smile disappears, steps back. Exits.

GRACE
Thanks for taking my photo...Hello??

Grace looks around for him, checks behind the window display. No Mark. She kicks a Cupid, hits her head with her phone.

GRACE (CONT’D)

INT. HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

Packed. Grace, Polly and Ian drink. Empties on the table.

GRACE
This is so amazing!

IAN
Congrats, bud! Title?
POLLY
Main candy store department's weekend's
sub-fill-in third assistant head cashier.

Grace and Ian mouth WTF? Polly gives old Christmas candy out
with pine tree needles and tinsel (from the Christmas tree).

POLLY (CONT'D)
Five years. My first promotion ever.

Grace grabs the free local community newspaper, points to a
photo: Grace smiles in front of her Valentine's Day display.

GRACE
I'm famous now. Could be bigger though.

All stare at the photo. Story heading: 'The Commercialism of Holidays: Shoppers Sucked into Buying!' By Mark Filetstake.'

POLLY IAN
That's great! Lovely photo. Why did you get a big photo?

Polly mimics a blow job. Ian mimics grinding. All laugh.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Thanks, guys. I hope I win.

Ian shrugs -- WTF?

POLLY
She's an artist! All those art stuffs--

GRACE
For the bestest Valentine's Day display.

BAR PATRONS sing. Grace, Polly and Ian join in, get jostled.
Grace is pushed, turns around, it is the Hot Guy, she flirts.


INT. HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The Guards chase Grace, Polly and Ian. All run amok thru the lobby, piano lounge, bar, pool, stores, kitchen and cafe.

WEDDING EXPO. CONVENTION HALL. HOTEL

Packed. A banner - 'Wedding Expo'. Grace, Polly, Ian and the Guards enter. All run in different directions.

Grace eyes a sign on an easel - 'Win a Million!' Doesn't see the wedding rings on the bottom of the sign.

GRACE
Whoa! Yes! Moooolah.

Mark takes photos, bumps into the CONSUMERS and BRIDE MODELS.
Grace drools over the wedding booth displays. She appears to 'float'; her feet don't 'touch' the floor. She takes photos.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oooh...that's boootiful!...Oh, I can copy that and that and that, oh, this, oh...

Grace's POV: the displays come alive. She improves them — more colorful, unique, higher/smaller, different materials.

Grace and Mark bump against each other several times (back-to-back). When one turns around, the other is gone.

Grace runs by the EXPO HOSTESS, holding contest forms, who stands under a banner — 'Design Your Wedding Contest.'

EXPO HOSTESS
Win a million dollars, and--

GRACE
A million bucks?!

Grace stops, backtracks, grabs a contest form, scribbles on it, doesn't see the overhead banner. She kisses her form.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Who needs to buy a lotto ticket?

She approaches the contest box, but spots a Guard and flees.

HANK (O.S.)
Brides and Grooms, your last chance for the million dollar draw for the Design Your Wedding Contest right now. Hurry!

Grace races back, bumps into the Guards and people.

GRACE
Make way! Please! It’s my million!

WEDDING EXPO STAGE

Grace leaps onto the stage, slides across, slips her form into the contest drum bin as the lid slams onto her hand.

HANK McTOFFEE, 50s, contest organizer, a John Cleese type, pins Grace's hand harder. Her knees buckle. The contest drum bin falls. Hank holds onto the lid. Both fall on Grace.

HANK
Welcome, again. Drum roll, please!?

Drum roll. Grace steps back. Hank spins the contest drum bin, digs deep and picks a contest form. He struggles to read it.

HANK (CONT'D)
The last lucky contestant of the Design Your Wedding Contest is Gr-ace High-cup!
ED MATZOBALLS, 18, videographer intern, films Hank adjusting his toupee, waving the contest form (with scribbled writing.)

Mark, on stage, takes photos. His face is behind his camera.

Grace screams, makes a beeline for Hank across the stage.

Hank weaves/ducks. She jumps on him, wraps her legs around him. He screams, pulls her legs off, spins. They hit Mark.

HANK (CONT’D)
Ugh!--Welcome twelve future bride contestants to the Design Your Wedding Contest. Ugh!--I’m Hank McToffee, your host. Your first wedding event design-off will be to make--Ugh!--a bouquet for your bride model’s wedding dress.

The TWELVE BRIDE MODELS enter, give their number signs (from one to twelve) and their veils to their respective ELEVEN BRIDE CONTESTANTS except Grace (still on Hank).

The Eleven Bride Contestants, in high heels, all ages/races/types/walks of life, are not professional designers.

HANK (CONT’D)
You have five minutes to create a bouquet for--Ugh!--your bride model. Ugh! Ready.--

Hank spins/tosses Grace off. She lands nearby.

A clock ‘ticks’ faster.

The Eleven Bride Contestants race to the tables full of flowers, ribbons, tinsel, etc. They all fight. Chaos.

Grace looks up at her Bride Model who smiles. Grace’s POV: great 3D designs of a bouquet, the images rotate ‘faster’, improving each time.

HANK (CONT’D)
There is only ten seconds left now.

A gong rings. Grace WAKES-UP. She dives into the melee.

AUDIENCE
Ten-Nine-Eight-Seven-Six-Five-Four-Three-Two-One!

The gong rings. All race back, stomp on Grace. Grace crawls back, throws her bouquet to her Bride Model. Grace collapses.

HANK
For the first event, the audience gets to pick the three finalists. Audience claps--

AUDIENCE
Twelve-Twelve-Twelve-Twelve-Twelve--
The Eleven Bride Contestants look at their own numbers.

HANK
--for their favorite bouquet. You must judge each bouquet for its originality, color, arrangement, style, size--

AUDIENCE
Twelve-Twelve-Twelve-Twelve-Twelve--

The Number Twelve Bride Model picks Grace up from the floor. She holds Grace’s hand up in victory with Grace’s bouquet and the number ‘12’ sign. Grace wobbles in her high heels, dazed.

Grace looks at the other bouquets. All shitty.

HANK
There can only be three finalists. We have our first finalist for the Design Your Wedding Contest! Number Twelve!

All clap. Hank turns around, almost faints, gags at Grace.

AUDIENCE
(all at once)
Seven-Three-Nine-Ten-Eleven-Five-One--

HANK
(without looking)
I...hear...the second finalist...is...
Number...Six.

SOFIA VEGAS, sexy, jumps up/down, tosses her number sign up.

Hank winks at Sofia. Sofia winks back. No one notices.

Hank scans for the worst designed bouquet by the Brides.

HANK (CONT’D)
Finally, the audience picks Number Two.

The Audience gasps. BEV BRAVEFEATHER, earthy, hair in a braid, prays skywards, runs up.

The Nine loser Bride Contestants stare at Sofia’s and Bev’s shittier bouquets.

HANK (CONT’D)
Congratulations, brides. Come forward.

Bev grabs the mic. Sofia fights to get the mic.

BEV
I’m Beverley Bravefeather. Thank you, all you lovely people for voting for me. This comes from the heart, our spirits celebrate my--

SOFIA
Hi, yeah all, Sofia Vegas here. A big kiss to all my fans. I’m so happy, all of you appreciate my great talent and skill. I crea--
Hank grabs the mic. Bev and Sofia resist giving it back.

The Nine loser Bride Contestants toss their bouquets at Hank. One lands in his toupee. Oblivious.

HANK (CONT’D)
Ugh!—Number Twelve step forward. Now!

Grace wobbles forward. She trips in her high heels.

Hank adjusts his toupee, with the bouquet. He lowers the mic to the floor. Grace grabs the bouquet with the toupee.

GRACE
Grace Hiccup.

HANK
Congratulations, Gross Hitchcock-Cough?

Confetti and fake money drop from above. A CHOIR sings.

HANK (CONT’D)
The three finalists will get three points each for this event. You will design various wedding events. There will be three Judges to decide the winner for each event. The winner of each event will get three points. The second person will get two points. The third person will get one point. The audience can vote on the blog in a hidden voting system.

The Audience claps. Polly and Ian clap.

The Guards stare/scan stage. Grace is still on the floor.

HANK (CONT’D)
The big prize is a million dollars!

Grace WAKES-UP, dances, gathers the fake money.

The Expo Hostess, with a champagne bottle, enters in a PONY drawn carriage. The pony has a name on his bridle, PATCHES.

Grace pets Patches. He licks her face.

The Eleven Bride Contestants storm the stage, grab the fake money. Sofia exchanges looks with Hank. Then, she dives in.

HANK (CONT’D)
Also, two luxury cars!

Two cars arrive. Beep at Grace. She dives under the cars.

Hank points to the prizes. He is drowned out by the Bride Contestants’ screams and the Choir.

A CUPID MASCOT dances/gyrates.
Grace crawls out from under the cars with the bouquet, with Hank’s toupee attached.

Prizes appear: A big wedding cake; a MODEL in a wedding gown; photos of a mansion; designer luggage; a big globe drops down - has photos of the Trevi Fountain, the Eiffel Tower, etc.

Mark takes photos of the prizes.

Grace runs to each prize, grabs them, drools, eyes crazed.

HANK (CONT’D)
The first honeymoon destination is Rome!

Grace’s face is covered with the fake money. The big globe swings, Grace ducks. It swings back, hits her.


Patches chases the other Bride Contestants.

Grace rolls on top of the fake money, stuffs them down her top, in her pants (front and back), gyrates on the floor.

HANK (CONT’D)
The grand final winner will be crowned on Valentine’s Day by the three Judges and by the audience with a secret vote on the wedding blog. The wedding is on Valentine’s Day! Uh...Don’t miss it.

Grace stops rolling, coughs, chokes on the fake money.

GRACE
(sotto)
What?!...I haven’t won a million bucks?

She spits out the fake money.

HANK
I will of course be your host for the telecast on the wedding blog.

The Audience cheers. Polly and Ian cheer and videotape Grace.

HANK (CONT’D)
The brides must keep a wedding blog for this wondrous once-in-a-lifetime journey.

GRACE
I have to get married?! WTF?!

Grace SNAP stands up, looks at the prizes and the Audience. The Cupid Mascot dances over. The Choir points to Grace.

HANK
Let’s get all the happy couples together.
Bev and Sofia, with their fiancés, KEN and LEO, rush over.
Grace hides behind the Nine loser Bride Contestants.
Hank sees Patches with his toupee (with the bouquet), runs across the stage and grabs his half-chewed toupee.
All the Bride Contestants notice the money is fake. They notice wet, sticky spots (sperm) on their face, in their hair/veil. Some smell it, some taste it. Patches exits.
The Expo Hostess drags Grace over. Grace digs her heels in.
The Number Twelve Bride Model struggles to put the wedding veil on Grace who keeps ducking. The Cupid Mascot holds her.
Graces struggles to escape.
Hank holds the mock million-dollar cheque, blocks Grace.
Sofia steps aside. Grace escapes and crashes into Mark, a full-face smash-up, kissing each other accidentally.
Mark's camera swings around. Mark and Grace are knocked out.
All run over to Grace and Mark, still unconscious. All slap Grace and Mark to wake up. All think they are a couple.

HANK (CONT'D)
Bring the happy couple over here.
The Expo Hostess and the Cupid Mascot drag Grace and Mark.

HANK (CONT'D)
You must be excited about winning?
Grace and Mark recognize each other. He adjusts his glasses. She wobbles in her heels. She helps Mark with his glasses.

HANK (CONT'D)
What is your name, young man?
MARK
Uh...Mark...I'm the news...reporter--
The Number Twelve Bride Model pins the wedding veil on Grace. It is on backwards and partly covers her face.

GRACE
No...no...there's...been a big mistake.
Grace and Mark are drowned out by the Choir.

HANK
Let's hear it for the three couples.
The Audience claps.
Grace spots the Guards. They give chase on the stage, knocking over all. The Cupid Mascot chases the Guards.

The Guards grab Grace. Polly and Ian jump on the stage, they tackle the Guards as they take selfies.

POLLY
Creeps! Let go of the bride!

IAN
Hey, blow it out the backside! Dumbasses!

Grace slips out of the Guards' grasp.

The Audience cheers Grace on. Grace blows kisses.

HANK
Brides, please sign the ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’ contract so that we can air your journey on the Internet...

Grace pulls down the banners - ‘Wedding Expo’ and ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’. Hank screams. They fall on Hank.

Grace keeps going off the stage, and returns to hug/grab the prizes. The prizes do not budge. She escapes the Guards.

Polly and Ian run around the stage. The Guards chase them.

Grace takes a swig from the champagne bottle, holds it up high, gives it to Polly and Ian who takes swigs. They exit.

Mark holds the mock cheque. The Cupid Mascot gyrates against him. Bev and Sofia in a tug-of-war over the mock cheque.

Hank holds his banners. The champagne bottle hits Hank.

EXT. HOTEL - CONTINUOUS

The Guards escort Grace, Polly and Ian out. All are dirty. Grace has confetti and fake money stuck to her.

They pass by some HEN PARTIES and WEDDING COUPLES entering.

GRACE
Hey, girlie, good luck...you'll need it.

Grace tosses her wedding veil at a BRIDE-TO-BE.

The Bride-To-Be catches the veil, squeals, puts it on top of her fake wedding veil. She notices the sperm. Freaks out.

INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM. GRACE AND POLLY'S APT. - MORNING

Grace wakes up, pulls her blanket over her face.

GRACE
What a nightmare. What the...?!
She pulls off the blanket. Spits out the crumpled fake money.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Hmm! That’s what pony sperm tastes like.

Takes one out of her hair, unfolds it. She jumps for joy.
Kisses the fake money. Stops, hears cooking. Sees clock.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Good-bye promotion.

Grace SNAP dresses, shoves her window display drawings and the fake money into her artist folio, not zipped up. Exits.

INT. BUS. MOVING - DAY

The same Bus Passengers as before. Grace checks social media.

GRACE
No, no, no...shit, no...

Grace hits her head with her phone. Others do not look.

Grace eyes many Bus Passengers with wedding rings on, including the Dirty Man. He watches porn on his phone.

GRACE (CONT’D)
(rubs her ring finger)
Ok, ok...it’s easy, no problemo.

Grace's phone chimes. Scans phone, inches from her nose. Many congratulations, including her PARENTS; as a finalist for the ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’; wedding on Valentine's Day.

Grace adjusts/swings her artist folio, hits others. The Dirty Man does not touch himself. His pants are still on.

DIRTY MAN
Ooh...Spank me harder...That’s the way...

Grace juggles her phone, earbuds, opened artist folio, purse.

Photo on social media: Grace, the wedding veil lopsided. Mark, half-shown, veil partially hides his face.

The Snosrap Students enter the bus, laughing, push Grace with their artist folios, scale replica models, paintings, etc.

INT. DEPT. STORE - DAY


GRACE
What a way to start the day. Not lucky.

Grace refuses a flyer. The Store Greeter follows her.
STORE GREETER
Welcome. Today is your lucky day, young lady. We have many sales on for our January Bonanza. Have fun shopping...

Grace runs. The Store Greeter gives chase. They weave/jostle the CROWD, over/under display tables, maze of clothing racks.

PERFUME COUNTER
CO-WORKERS greet Grace. Grace waves back.

COSMETICS LADY
Hey, lucky lady, congratulations.

BAKERY
The Store Greeter waves a flyer. A flyer hits a CUSTOMER.

BAKERY CLERK
Good luck with your wedding designs.

JEWELRY SECTION
The fake money flies out of Grace’s artist folio.

JEWELRY CLERK
Hope you win. Remember, diamonds are a girl's best friend.

FORMAL WEAR
All scramble for the fake money. The Store Greeter closes in.

TUXEDO CLERK
Valentine's Day is perfect for weddings.

FLOWER SHOP
The Store Greeter trips. Some flyers flying behind.

FLORIST
Who's the lucky guy?

GRACE
Uh, yeah...Kev-Stev-Mich-...

The Store Greeter tackles Grace. They slide on her artist folio. The Store Greeter shoves a flyer in Grace's face.

STORE GREETER
Getting married, eh? Lucky, aren't you?

GRACE
Luck is so coincidental.

ADMINISTRATION AREA
Grace sees Deb exit Glen's office. Deb fixes her blouse, skirt, flips hair, wipes her lips, puts lipstick on.

Grace storms into Glen's office, with her sketchbook.

GLEN'S OFFICE

Grace shoves her sketchbook in Glen's face.

He adjusts his tie, belt and puts on his shoes. Doesn't look.

GRACE
I would like to apply for that promotion, all my displays have been approved, look--

She turns the pages. He combs his hair. He gags.

GLEN
Competition is very stiff. Many talented artists. Adaptable, able, flexible.

The sketchbook pages flutter. Messes his hair.

GRACE
Look. Brilliant, fantastic, genius--

GLEN
Bottom line, we didn't win the citywide Christmas window display contest.

Glen waves off Grace's drawings. She keeps turning the pages.

GLEN (CONT'D)
You've been working here for a decade?

GRACE
No, only since I was sixteen.

Grace checks herself in the mirror. No wrinkles.

GLEN
Hmmm. We won before you came on board.

Grace slams her sketchbook shut. It catches on his hair.

She flips her hair, pulls her top off one shoulder, cocks her hip. He doesn't turn around, checks his watch.

GLEN (CONT'D)
Hmmm. Are you supposed to be in today?

She checks her phone, shakes her head, grunts 'no'.

GLEN (CONT'D)
Never mind, since you're here, finish your window, hmmm, take tomorrow off.

Glen points to her old bra strap. She covers up. Exits.
Glen checks his diary daybook, smirks.

WINDOW DISPLAYS

Grace puts up some Valentine's Day decorations. Glen passes her, looks for other Visual Display Artists. Sees no one.

**GLEN**
I'm off for a day--two to a, uh, conference...make sure everything--

**GRACE**
But, you said I could have tomorrow off--

**GLEN**
Think smarter, Grace, promotion?! No overtime pay--no time off for anyone!

Glen points to the displays, turns to leave.

**GRACE**
But, I might be getting marri--

Glen stops and stares at Grace.

**GLEN**
Hmmm...Finished the vacuum department?

Glen exits. Deb exits her window area, follows Glen out.

**GRACE**
Conference on a Sunday--WTF?!

Ian dumps off some boxes. They break. Oblivious.

**IAN**
Don't ask me for more boxes. I'm doing a double tonight and double the moolah.

Ian makes the 'money' hand gesture. Exits.

Grace smashes her Cupid decoration on the ground.

VACUUM AREA

Grace enters, gasps. The vacuum display area is a shithole.

**GRACE**
Just like old times...

The Christmas decor is tangled up with the vacuums.

**GRACE (CONT'D)**
What does he take me for?

She sees the vacuum podium at the far end of the area. It 'expands' further away. The Christmas lights 'blink' faster.
GRACE (CONT'D)
A loser?!

A cloud of dust rises over the area. Cough, cough.

GRACE (CONT'D)
To be used, abused, pushed aside...

She tip toes through the minefield.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Not sexy? I can outdo Deb.

Her high heel catches on a vacuum cord. She trips.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I am sexier than these vacuums!

A vacuum starts up. She jumps, lands on an opened vacuum. It snaps on her foot. Screams. Hops around, drags the vacuum.

She picks up a vacuum to move it. It sucks her hand/arm in.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'll show him I can design this dump.

Finally frees her arm, she catapults backwards.

A chain reaction— all the vacuums turn on. All suck on Grace.

She removes one from her breast.

She struggles to remove one from her mouth. It goes in/out.

She removes the last one from her crotch. Catapults back onto a big Dyson vacuum. She straddles it, body vibrates. Moans.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Oh, Dieter. Oh, Donatella. Oh, Dyson.

LOST GIRL
Mommy, can Santa get that toy for me?

LOST GIRL’S MOTHER
You can’t get it till you’re eighteen.

They dodge the flying vacuum hoses as they exit.


GRACE
Oh...Crumps.

MAIN FOYER

Packed. Store Clerks dismantle the Christmas tree.
SR. VISUAL DISPLAY ARTISTS, with name tags, discuss the foyer Valentine installation. They hold up several store approved stamped Valentine foyer designs all ‘By Grace Hiccup’.

Grace, dirty, enters, waves to them. No one looks.

GRACE (CONT’D)
(sotto)
That’s my Christmas tree design idea up there. Every year, my tree. My best.

EXT. NEWSSTAND. DEPT. STORE - CONTINUOUS

Grace picks up a city newspaper, spots the ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’ photo of her and ‘Mark Filetstake’.

She checks for ‘Mark Filetstake’ on social media. No Mark.

GRACE
He doesn't exist?

She checks social media, again.

Doesn’t check on the free local community newspaper website.

EXT. LOCAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER BUILDING - DAY

Grace enters, leaves, repeats, with her city newspaper.

INT. LOCAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Grace spots Mark typing at his desk. She exits, returns.

She sees his instant coffee jar, chipped mug, old laptop, old tie, on his desk; his faded t-shirt, stained blazer.

She glances at her city newspaper. Smirks. Wipes her face.

GRACE
Nice tie...hello.

MARK
From my niece. I don't need it much, not many high profile interviews anymore.

Mark indicates something on her face. He wipes it off.

She notices he doesn’t have a wedding ring.

GRACE
So, I originally came by to apologize--

MARK
That's alright. It was an accident--

Photos on his desk: Mark with handicapped kids, Mark volunteering in a homeless kitchen.
GRACE
Free meals? You can't go wrong with that.

Mark offers his hand.

MARK
I'm Mark.

GRACE
I'm...Shit! I need a fiancé for the contest...to get the prize...married. Ok?

MARK
Ok? Good luck...and congratulations?

GRACE
No, I mean--marry me this Valentine's Day to get the prize if I win, please?

Grace shows Mark the city newspaper photo. He shows his copy.

MARK
What? Aren't you engaged, the expo, the--

GRACE
No fiancé, no groom, not anybody, not even in love. Sounds pathetic?! Great!?

Mark takes off his glasses, grabs a dull pencil to chew.

MARK
...I can't do it...Sorry...

Grace leans in, pulls top down one shoulder, cocks her hips. He turns to fake-adjust his desk, but knocks over his things.

GRACE
Why not? I'm not good enough for you? You think you're better than me? Not slutty enough? Look where you work? Not here!

Grace points to her city newspaper. Mark puts his glasses on.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You work here! You drink instant coffee. Cappuccinos not good enough for you? You--

MARK
My fiancée cheated...on our wedding night with...our editor of...that newspaper.

He points to Grace's newspaper.

GRACE
Oh, taxing. What a shitty way to lose your job...love...your life--
MARK
I'm just not into love, weddings, marriage...commercialism...bullshit.

He eyes his article on his old laptop.

Photo: Grace, with her Number Twelve Bride Model, holds their arms up, the number ‘12’ sign, Grace’s bouquet.

MARK (CONT'D)
This wedding story is hot. My rating is climbing. We can be friends? When’s the first wedding design event? Need a lift?

Grace backs away. Exits.

GRACE
(sotto)
Friends? My sham. Good to know you stopped pretending to care, be real...

EXT. LOCAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Grace tosses her city newspaper into a trash can.

She goes back, takes it out, rips it apart, stamps on it, breaks her heel strap, falls down. Grace is dirtier.

An OLD COUPLE, with walkers, help her get up, dust her off.

OLD WOMAN
Young lady, it’s always terrible when a shoe doesn't behave. Nasty?!

OLD MAN
Perhaps you would like to sit down?

GRACE
I'm ok. I'm great. Thank you.

Grace watches them exit. The Old Woman walks in high heels.

Grace puts her ripped newspaper in her purse. It pokes out, digs into her armpit. Her arm jerks about.

Mark takes a photo of Grace from the upstairs window. She looks up. Mark is gone. She hobbles off.

EXT. WEDDING OFFICE AND SHOP - DAY

Extravagant building with wedding displays. Grace runs in.

GRACE
So kitsch.

INT. WEDDING OFFICE AND SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Ed films Hank, in his face. Hank keeps stepping back.
HANK
Welcome to the very first ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’. There are many great prizes including a million dollars.

At several arts-crafts tables: Bev, Sofia, Ken, Leo and the three Judges: AVA CHOWMANE, TOM BOLLYKURY and RAY PUROGEE.

HANK (CONT’D)
Our designing wedding event is, what else, but the all important wedding ring--

Grace runs in, dusty/dirty, newspaper bits in her hair. Trips at Hank’s feet. All stare at her. Ed films Grace up close.

HANK (CONT’D)
Miss Grease Hijack. This is unacceptable--

GRACE
No, oops, wrong person. Grace Hiccup.

HANK
My, my, must be your perfect hand writing. Sorry to bother you about your correct name. How about filling in the contest contract? Where is your fiancé?

GRACE
Uh? What? Yeech. I don’t have any fiancé--Oh, he’ll be here soon...He’s running la--

HANK
Don’t explain, please. Our TRIO is here.

Hank steps over Grace, walks to the tables, checks a clock.

GRACE
I’m here to win--design! Uh, my wedding?

Grace goes to stand beside Sofia who blocks her.

Grace gets a duct tape on the table, tapes shoe to her foot.

HANK
You have ten minutes for the ring design. First, you must draw your wedding rings, then make the rings from the...

Bev and Sofia race to their respective drawing board easels, push Hank, struggle to draw. Grace stares at the tables.

HANK (CONT’D)
...Ugh, arts and crafts table. The three expert Judges, Miss Ava Chowmane from the Fabric Sweatshop-uh-Factory; Mr. Tom Bollykury from the Pan-Asia Cultural Crisis Center;

(MORE)
And, Mr. Ray Purogee from the Anti-Eco Trash-uh-Scavenger Events, will decide, not only the best design, but, the best attempt to replicate...

Bev and Sofia run to the arts-crafts tables, shove Hank, make their rings. Chaos. The Judges watch them.

Grace’s POV: her 3D images float above the tables, rings made from stuff on the table. The images rotate ‘faster’.

...Ugh, their drawings. Brides, just so you know, these are crystals, not real diamonds. Ready. Set. Go.
(to Brides)
Fake, as in not real, get it, you dum--?!

A gong rings. The clock ‘speeds up’.


Bev and Sofia still struggle at the tables. Ken and Leo try to help. Sofia and Bev swat them away. The gong rings.

Thank you, Brides. What an amazing first wedding design event. Welcome our Judges.

All inspect the rings and the drawings. Only Grace’s match.

Nice, but there is only one true winner.

Sofia steps forward. Bev pulls her back. A shoving match.

I agree. Unique in only a bride’s mind.

Interesting. But, cold, icy, glacier--

--Frozen--

The Judges hold the three Brides’ hands up together.

--Chilly--

--Frigid--

--Impotent--
TOM
--Limp--

Ed hits the Judges’ heads with his camera.

HANK
Time’s up to decide our winner.


The Judges point to Grace’s hand. She jumps for joy. Sofia hits everyone’s hands.

The Judges point to Bev’s hand as the second winner.

Sofia’s hand as the third winner.

HANK (CONT’D)
Very well, Miss Juice HeeHaw’s our first winner. You will get three points. Uh...
Our blog viewers will also vote for Sofia’s--your favorite ring. The blog votes will be hidden until the end of the contest. Thank you.

Ed films: Sofia hits Leo; Ken hugs Bev; the Judges rub their heads and hands as they clear the tables out, the tables collapse. People slip on the arts-crafts items.

HANK’S OPEN OFFICE

Hank drags Grace away. Grace sits across from Hank. The city newspaper in her purse digs into her armpit, adjusts her arm.

GRACE
Uh, maybe he forgot? Oh. He’s given me power, uh, to design everything, sign th--

HANK
Zip it. It has to be signed together--

GRACE
Cough. I remember he had to do something.

He flips through the massive wedding design contest contract.

HANK
It's too bad that your fiancé is too busy to come sign such an important document to spend with the love of his life forever. I’m sure he is not a moron, Miss Hilite.

Grace, sweats, grabs a wedding magazine, fans herself.

Hank pulls out the wedding design preparation checklist, it falls accordion-like on his desk. Flutters.
Before I go over the life-changing contest rules, first, the wedding design contest contract must be signed by all.

He pushes the contract towards her.

HANK (CONT'D)
Here. His name?

Grace points to her throat. Cough. She fakes laryngitis.

GRACE
I have to go...see a doctor...now.

HANK
Hmm. Are you ok? Should I take you to--

She shakes/nods head, holds up the magazine, turns to exit.

HANK (CONT'D)
Twenty-hour hours. Return with the groom.
Or--

Hank snaps his fingers. He waves the original contest form, with Grace’s scribbled writing, and several blank sections.

HANK (CONT'D)
No signatures, no groom, no happy life, no wedding jackpot, Miss Heeccupp. Clear?

Hank slams the contract shut, the desk shakes. She jumps as she exits.

GRACE
My soulma----will be here...don’t let anybody else...my million-my-cars--Oops--

INT. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Packed. Grace side-steps the Store Greeter with flyers.

Grace spots Polly struggling with some boxes. She helps Polly with the boxes. Polly keeps giving Grace more boxes.

GRACE
I gotta find a crime in partner--in crime--whatever--like right now. That dude from that moronic wedding expo says I have to have a fiancé for that design contest.

POLLY
You serious about this?

Grace nods. The newspaper in her purse digs into her armpit.

POLLY (CONT'D)
So unnecessary.
PERFUME AREA
Polly spots the COLOGNE CLERK, sleazy, spritzing a CUSTOMER.

    POLLY
    He's only screwed the Shoe Ladies.

    GRACE
    Eeeew. Yuck. They're so nasty to me.

GARBAGE/RECYCLING
BERNARDO, 70s, janitor, dumps garbage into a recycling bin.

    POLLY
    Bernardo? His wife just died.

    GRACE
    Hmmm...Geriatrics are good.

    POLLY
    Six months tops.

HARDWARE
Polly eyes STAN, a bodybuilder in overalls, lifts a tractor.

    POLLY
    How about Stan? God sculpted him.

    GRACE
    Double dipping. He made a play for Ian.

    POLLY
    Zero dipping! Yeesh. He turned me down.

CAFE
Polly presents STELLA, sexy, serves hot buns to a CUSTOMER.

    POLLY
    How about Stella? She bakes a darling--

    GRACE
    Saw her new girlie girl. My late.

Grace drops off the boxes, takes a candy, arm jerking, exits.

WINDOW DISPLAY
Grace works on her Valentine's Day display.

She keeps her eye out as lots of CUSTOMERS and Co-Workers go by, checks their wedding ring finger. She shakes her head.

    GRACE
    Yeah, right...so easy. PFFT.
Grace uses a double-sided tape for her mannequins/displays.
She steps back, bumps into Ian, carrying boxes.

IAN
Hey, dude, sorry. Oh. Didn't see you.

Grace eyes Ian and laughs.

IAN (CONT'D)
Dolly's broke. Just my luck on my second shift. Gotta think of the money first.

Ian drops his boxes, rubs his eyes, stretches, yawns.

GRACE
That's cool. I totally understand. I get where you're coming from. I'm with it. I--

IAN
Stop.

GRACE
How about no more double shifts? Or, working here? Or, even work at all? Dude?

Grace beams.

Ian picks up the boxes, eyes her, turns to exit.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I'll make you a deal. Wanna be a gold digger? How about marrying me for money?

IAN
You work here. Duh. Like me. You’re stuck as a window cleaner, remember? You can’t even buy me a drink. Selfish as anything--

GRACE
I need a ring on this finger to get that stupid wedding prize.

Ian slams down the boxes. Crash. Sports balls bounce out.

IAN
I do! Yes, yes! I'm a gold digger. Oh, baby, I'm thinking of the money first.

Ian dances, slips on a sports ball.

IAN (CONT'D)
Wait. Do I have to be monogamous? Will I--

Ian gyrates towards Grace, twerks, tongue flicking.

GRACE
Oh, brother. Beyond belief.
IAN
Check this out. I've improved. You'll be in heaven every time with me, baby.

GRACE
Everything is on that wedding blog. Read it. Shit. What have I done? Just kill me.

Ian gyrates. She grabs a mannequin in fake pointy diamonds. He slams into the mannequin, drops to the floor. Groans. The fake pointy diamonds get transferred to his crotch area (due to the double-sided tape).

BOSTONIAN STORE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
If Mr. or Mrs. Blind Person is walking around without their Blind Guide Dog, come to the lost and found. You must prove that this is your dog...

Grace steps over Ian and disappears into her window display.

GRACE
Doomed.

The BLIND PERSON trips over the Old Couple, with walkers, thru the window. The Old Couple guide the Blind Person.

EXT. GRACE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - NIGHT
A small working-class suburban house.

GRACE (O.C.)
Thanks, Mom, I love your chicken tofu.

MRS. HICCUP (O.C.)
We’re so glad you could come for dinner on such short notice. You never visit us.

INT. GRACE'S PARENTS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS
Hoarders. Also, packed with mail order business boxes.

MR. HICCUP (O.C.)
Your Mom cooked this especially for you.

MRS. HICCUP (O.C.)
We cleaned all day for your visit.

DINING ROOM
Grace squeezes in between the boxes, balances plates/cups. She moves items aside on the dining room table with her foot, in high heels. Catches a falling lamp with her high heel.

GRACE
Yes, I can see. I appreciate all this.
MR. and MRS. HICCUP, blue-collar folks, breeze in with food.

MR. HICCUP
Smells like home-cooked goodness, honey.

Grace serves the chicken tofu dish to her Parents first.

GRACE
I see business is good.

Grace eyes the unopened boxes. She just nods and smiles.

MRS. HICCUP
We can't keep up.

MR. HICCUP
It's taken over the house.

MRS. HICCUP
Oh, well. But, enough about us. Honey, congratulations on your upcoming wedding.

MR. HICCUP
You never told us about your boyfriend.

MRS. HICCUP
What's his name?

GRACE
Whose?

Mr. and Mrs. Hiccup trade looks.

MRS. HICCUP
Your...new...fiancé?

Grace chokes on the chicken tofu, spews out several pieces.

GRACE
Oh...OK...Don't be mad at me, please.

Mr. and Mrs. Hiccup glare at each other.

MRS. HICCUP
You're knocked up?!

MR. HICCUP
He's forced you to marry?!

MRS. HICCUP
You just met him?

MR. HICCUP
He's a bum, no job?

MRS. HICCUP
He's a she?
MR. HICCUP
He needs a visa?

GRACE
Fluked out. I got blindsided into that wedding design contest. Now, if I win, I'm stuck and gotta get married to get the prize. So, I'm marrying my co-worker ...Ooh. Good? No?

All stop eating. Mr. Hiccup drops his fork.

GRACE (CONT'D)
See, you're mad at me...Right or wrong?

MRS. HICCUP
It's not right or wrong...honey?

Mrs. Hiccup clears her throat, nods to Mr. Hiccup. He nods.

MR. HICCUP
We think...what you're doing is fine.

Grace looks down. Mrs. Hiccup reaches out.

MRS. HICCUP
We do understand why you're going through this fake wedding...uh, fake marriage.

MR. HICCUP
It's like...those arranged marriages over there, in fact, all around the world.

MRS. HICCUP
That's right. It's like she'll be assigned a partner.

MR. HICCUP
We don't have to pay a dowdry...dowry?

Mr. and Mrs. Hiccup nod in agreement.

MRS. HICCUP
It's like the medieval times, marriages--

Grace watches her Parents ping-pong talk. Grace drinks.

MR. HICCUP
--were strategic alliances. They didn't--

MRS. HICCUP
--marry for love. She doesn't have--

MR. HICCUP
--to have sex. She doesn't need to have--

MRS. HICCUP
--babies. She can get a divorce after--
MR. HICCUP
--since it's not a real marriage. It's a--

MRS. HICCUP
--marriage on paper only. It's like--

MR. HICCUP
--marriages from the old country. Family--

MRS. HICCUP
--to family. Marry in the village. But,--

MR. HICCUP
--you have to win first. You are so--

MRS. HICCUP
--talented. We know you can do it!

Mr. Hiccup waves his arms, knocks Grace's glass. Oblivious.

MR. HICCUP
Always wondered if she was 'normal'. We--

MRS. HICCUP
--thought she was a lesbian. Nothing--

MR. HICCUP
--wrong there, right. We went to your--

MRS. HICCUP
--cousin's wedding to his boyfriend. It--

MR. HICCUP
--was a great wedding. Too bad they're--

MRS. HICCUP
--divorced. Grace never brought home a--

MR. HICCUP
--boy. Not even on prom night.

Mrs. Hiccup waves her arms, hits Grace's water, splashes her.

MRS. HICCUP
Never got knocked up. Never been on the--

MR. HICCUP
--pill. Maybe still a virgin. Never been--

MRS. HICCUP
--stalked or stalked a boy. Never got a--

MR. HICCUP
--sexual disease. Never saw a cold sore--

MRS. HICCUP
--on her. Never asked for condoms. Never--
MR. HICCUP
--went on spring break. Never whooped it--

MRS. HICCUP
--up ever. Never been to rehab. She--

They both hit Grace's glass and splash water into her face.

MR. HICCUP
--doesn't even wear red lipstick.

They eye Grace's lipstick color. Grace points to her lips.

GRACE
Red!

It is light pink. Mr. and Mrs. Hiccup trade looks.

MR. HICCUP
It would be great if you got that prize.
Your mom and me need that space in your--

GRACE
Stop! I haven’t won, yet.

BATHROOM

Grace wipes her face dry. Sees in the mirror her old bedroom.

GRACE'S OLD BEDROOM

Artistic. Grace squeezes in between the boxes, removes some boxes from her old bed revealing several crushed scale replica models. Fixes one. It flops over.

GRACE
What a daffy idea.

DINING ROOM

GRACE
This whole thing, this charade, this scheme, is so ‘fake’ like the fake...

Grace knocks her own glass of water. No one notices.

GRACE (CONT'D)
...chicken tofu from a can. So fake like--

Grace knocks Mr. Hiccup's glass of water.

GRACE (CONT'D)
--like your fake tans. So fake like old--

Grace knocks over the water canister.

GRACE (CONT'D)
--people on Facebook. So fake like your--
Grace knocks over the wine bottle on the table.

GRACE (CONT’D)
--fake Rolexes. So fake like your fake--

Grace slams the table. Everything shakes.

GRACE (CONT’D)
--marriage. I know you two aren’t really--

Her Parents stop eating, look at each other, look at Grace.

GRACE (CONT’D)
I’m sorry. I mean you two are still together. Why do marriages still exist today since love doesn’t last?

MRS. HICCUP
Well, honey, it's biology...right?

MR. HICCUP
Right...it's passed down history.

Mr. and Mrs. Hiccup explain in ‘gibberish’, lightning speed.

Grace’s face smacks down into her chicken tofu.

Her Parents pause, continue talking. Grace doesn't move.

EXT. BEACH/PARK – DAY


All the ladies in high heels, struggle or sink into the sand.

Grace runs in, in work clothes. Dirty.

Hank grabs Grace off to the side. His toupee flutters.

HANK
Miss Grace Hee--cup...

Bev hijacks Sofia and Leo’s photoshoot. Ken helps Bev.

HANK (CONT’D)
You were supposed to bring your--Argh.

Grace looks around for Ian. No Ian.

GRACE
--Uh,guys, they’re terrible with directi--

HANK
Weld it shut. You two are not serious ab--

Mark runs in with his ‘newspaper’ ID, his camera and bumps into Hank and Grace. Mark is dressed down.
MARK
Sorry, I’m late. You wouldn’t believe--

HANK
--Not another word. I’m paying overtime for this photoshoot. First, your ring.

Hank opens a box with one wedding ring (one Grace designed).

HANK (CONT’D)
You must give these back as per contract.

Sofia and Bev already wear theirs. Grace is fake-happy. As she gets her ring out, Hank slams the box shut on her hand.

HANK (CONT’D)
Capisce? Or, you forfeit the jackpot.

He pushes Grace and Mark together towards Otto.

Grace and Mark whisper.

GRACE
Who invited you?

MARK
My readers told me. Plus, the wedding blog has it all listed now. Story’s hot--

GRACE
You’re my first bonafide stalker. Hmm.

Bev and Sofia compete in a pose-off, turns into sexual poses with Leo and Ken. Grace fixes/styles their hair and clothing in the middle of Otto shooting. Merges into an orgy pose-off.

Mark shoots the orgy. Grace grabs him to pose; awkward poses.

Bev and Sofia kiss in the sexual pose-off. Ken and Leo watch.

Some sand blows towards Mark and Grace. Sofia kicks more sand towards them. No one sees this. It gets in everyone’s eyes.


HANK
Time is fleeting when in love. These beautiful engagement photos will last a lifetime. Welcome, Judges. Time to vote.

The Judges look at the photos on Otto’s laptop, the photos rotate faster. The ‘sexy’ photos appear. All lean in.

Hank’s toupee flies off, he runs after it. He gets sand in his eyes, can’t see, runs in all directions.

TOM
Wonderful, but intimidating--
RAY
--Electrifying, but terrifying--

AVA
--Brides must be lovely, yet attack--

TOM
--their love with gusto and puncture--

RAY
--their love through the lens with--


Hank slams the laptop shut.

Sofia kisses Leo. She winks at Ed, Mark, Hank and Otto. They wink back, but it’s sand in their eyes. Ken consoles Bev.

HANK
Judges, thank you for voting for the perfect couple, Sofia and...and...and...

SOFIA
Leo, my future husband. Thank you, all--

HANK
Viewers, please, remember to keep the Judges’ winners in mind when you vote.

Hank pushes Grace and Mark over to a portable table, pulls the massive wedding design contest contract out of his coat.

It ‘floats’ down.

HANK (CONT’D)
Sign here, Mr. ...?

MARK
No, this is a mis--

Grace fakes a foot cramp under the table. Mark bends down to help her. They whisper.

GRACE
Please play along.

MARK
But, I’m not your fian--

GRACE
I’ll explain later.

HANK
Do you need a doctor? Cramp? Laryngitis?
Grace’s foot is better.

MARK
Just call me Mark. No probs with my name.

HANK
Yes, why on earth would I need your last name, young man? Hmmm...Can you spell?

MARK
I’m here to cover the wedding prize--

Grace elbows him. He groans. He fake-smiles at Hank.

Hank pushes the contract across the table to Grace.

HANK
You two are a cut above all the couples I have dealt with in the past decades.

Grace’s eyes roll back. A drop of sweat hits the contract.

Her hand hovers over the pen, picks it up, it ‘floats’ as she signs it. Her signature appears, beautiful like calligraphy.

Mark starts signing his name, scratches it out, deliberately scribbles his signature to be ineligible.

She pushes the contract back. The desk ‘expands’. She puffs.

HANK (CONT’D)
It's final. You two are officially in the ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’...Killjoy.

GRACE
We look forward to designing our wedding and being happily married together--

HANK
--forever?

MARK
You mean like no backing out?

HANK
You’re lucid. Don’t be mortified, son.

Hank pulls out the wedding design preparation checklist.

HANK (CONT’D)
Don’t forget this.

It flops over the desk onto the ground, fluttering.

HANK (CONT’D)
I wish you well in designing this wedding contest and everlasting marital bliss.
GRACE
Do we have to stay married, uh, forever?

HANK
You think you’ll win?...Hmmm, delusional
...It's not till death do you two part.
The contract stipulates only eight years.

Grace stuffs the checklist into her purse.
It digs into her armpit. Her arm moves spastic-like.

Grace bites Mark’s tongue as they kiss. She takes selfies.
Both fake-smile. Hank gags.

GRACE
This is the best day of my life. No, my
wedding day will be the best day, right?

Grace and Mark turn to exit. They whisper.

GRACE (CONT’D)
I’ll explain everything later. I only get
a ten minute break.

Grace exits. Mark checks his phone, then looks up. No Grace.

MARK
...Should I give you my number?...

Hank pulls Ed aside.

HANK
Make sure that the ‘sexy’ scenes are
edited out. This is a family wedding
website, not “Caligula”.

ED
What’s a “Cawleegoulah”?

INT. WINDOW DISPLAY. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Grace helps Deb with her window display. Deb watches and
videotapes Grace working hard. Grace improves Deb’s window.

Grace hears some footsteps approaching, hears Glen’s hacking.

Grace runs back to her window area right next to Deb’s.

Grace slams into Glen in her Valentine’s Day window display.

GLEN
Tsk, tsk. This doesn't match--

GRACE
Red hot stamped. All approved by you.

Grace shows all her drawings with the store approval stamp.
GLEN
I did?...OK...Correct...Continue.

Glen taps his watch as he exits Grace's window area.

GLEN (CONT'D)
Behind. Tsk, tsk.

Glen goes to Deb's window area. Grace strains to see them.
The Blind Guide Dog, with harness, runs past the window.

GLEN (CONT'D)
Fantastic! You’re a shoo-in. Finito.

Deb stands on her awful display design drawings on the floor.
Her window display is unfinished. Glen cuddles Deb.

DEB
I've been working hard to please you.

GRACE
I should have trap-doored him first.

Grace looks at her drawings still in her hands.

GRACE (CONT'D)
What doesn't match?!

Grace mimics Deb, pulls down her pants to her crotch.
Glen passes Grace, sees her old underwear, the mannequin with a lopsided wig, the double-sided tape still hanging on.
He increases his pace, avoids eye contact.

INT. GRACE'S BEDROOM. GRACE AND POLLY'S APT. - NIGHT

Grace piles up all the crushed scale replica models together.
She takes the rejection letter out of her bag. She reads it.

GRACE
Thank you for applying for the fifth time, Miss Grace Hiccup. We appreciate...

She rips it into strips. Takes one, dips it into a bowl.
Glues two sections together. Red 'Rejection' faces up.

GRACE (CONT'D)
...your application and your artistic talent. We asked you to stop applying after the third time. That was your final and last chance. You have exceeded the legal limit to apply to our prestigious number one design school. Due to the...

She takes more rejection letters and rips them into strips.
...overwhelming number of extremely talented design students, we regret to inform you that we cannot offer you a place this year...semester...month...

She glues all the scale replica models together to create one fantastic scale model replica in the middle of her bedroom.

...week...this day...hour...minute...second or any...other time in your life. We encourage you to NOT apply again with more drawings, paintings, designs. More blood, sweat and tears. Your soul. Your first born, actually all your babies. Nothing less will do. Not as in no.

She paints it with her sable paint brushes.

We regret to inform you that other candidates scored higher in their SAT tests...Their high school marks were 100%...Their grade point average is perfect...a 4.0 or even 4.4. Not zero.

She finishes her masterpiece. Snaps a shot on her phone.

Until you can get 100% in retaking your high school classes. Or, a perfect SAT score. Just tear your heart and soul out and send it to us in a gold box. My sad.

INT. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Grace spots Ian.

Where were you? You had more important things to do? A million dollars isn't good enough? A mansion isn't big enough?

Doing a double. Can't lift anymore boxes. Damn, the truck’s lift broke down across town. What are you talking about, dude?

Where’re your memory pills? Brain-dead?

I'm late. The managers need these 'designer clothes'. Who wears dumb logos these days?! I'm gonna be my own 'brand'--
GRACE
I was the only one who showed up at that wedding design event. Hank’s pissed we--

IAN
Not going to those events. I...feel...uncomfortable. Itchy. Rash knuckled.

GRACE

IAN
I have feelings.

GRACE
Look at you! Can't hack double shifts. You need this more than me! There ain’t gonna be a wedding if we keep losing.

Grace turns to exit. Turns back.

GRACE (CONT’D)
You’ve been replaced. Don’t worry about getting hives--warts--pox on my account.

EXT. CITY BANK - DAY
Crowded streets. Grace looks up at the building, then enters.

GRACE
So Gothic.

INT. CITY BANK - DAY
Packed. Grace, in a long queue, keeps looking up front.

GRACE
Polly better be happy I'm doing this.

PANDORA, bank teller, waves Grace over.

Grace puts her artist folio and her purse on the counter.

PANDORA
How may I help you today?

GRACE
I'm moving out and I have to get a--

PANDORA
Here's the change of address form--

GRACE
--bank statement for my roommate since--

PANDORA
--and you can fill out the form with the--
Grace bends the artist folio as she leans in closer.

GRACE
--she still wants to live in the same--

PANDORA
--old address first and then the new--

GRACE
--place but, I don't have to live there--

PANDORA
--address, and I need a proof of the new--

GRACE
--anymore because I don't need one for--

PANDORA
--address, plus I need proof of photo ID--

GRACE
--my new home since the rent is being--

PANDORA
--to verify the real you in connection--

GRACE
--jacked up, like ripped--STOP, please.

Grace empties her purse, passes her bank card.
The wedding design preparation checklist is on the counter.
Pandora checks on the computer.

PANDORA
May I have your name and date of birth?

GRACE
Grace Hiccup. I was born on March 25th--

Grace's purse items fall from the bended artist folio.

PANDORA
--I'm sorry. Your bank account is frozen.

GRACE
What? I just got paid. I work at the--

Grace catches the falling purse items (not the checklist).

PANDORA
It's overdrawn. We have a three-strike policy. It’s under investigation.

Pandora closes her teller’s window, inch by inch.

Grace leans in, her face blocks the window from closing.
GRACE
I have to get that bank statement for my roommate. She needs it this week. ASAP.

PANDORA
Nothing I can do for you.

Grace stuffs everything back into her purse without looking. The checklist falls into a trash can. She doesn’t see it. Pandora locks her teller’s window, puts a sign up – ‘Closed’. The bended artist folio straightens out, hits Grace’s face.

GRACE
I’m going to get a million dollars--

Grace pushes the teller’s window with her hands, puts her high heel on the counter. Grunts. The window doesn’t budge. Her dress rides up. Exposes her bum and underwear with the holes. Does the splits. Now both feet up.

The security cameras zone in on her. The red lights blinking. Grace sees them, puts her legs down, covers herself with her coat, waves to the cameras. Puts on her sunglasses and hat.

BANK SECURITY GUARD wipes drool off his face. Grace exits.

EXT. FLOWER SHOP – DAY

Many exotic flowers in front of the shop.

INT. FLOWER SHOP – DAY

A gong rings. The Judges watch the three couples make their respective table center pieces on three separate tables. They scramble back/forth, pick flowers, vases, ribbons. Ed films. Sofia and Leo make a towering monstrosity. Bev and Ken make a rainbow disaster. Grace makes a masterpiece. Mark, with his media badge, snaps her table center piece. She finishes first, pretends to work.

MARK
We should tell Hank about us.

GRACE
Later, I have to concentrate.

Ed films Sofia climbing her table in a mini-skirt.

Grace gives her extra flowers to Bev. A bee buzzes about.
Sofia spots this, storms over to Hank, squabbles to him. Grace holds some roses. Mark takes photos on his camera.

   GRACE (CONT’D)
   Can you take some on my phone of us?

In front of Hank, Grace kisses Mark with her tongue.

   MARK
   Wait. The flash wasn't ready.


   HANK
   I’ve seen you before, besides being a groom...Let me look at your ID, again.

   MARK
   Here. My editor has assured me that this story will headline this week’s edition.

Hank smiles, then sneezes. He exits to the restroom.

Mark holds Grace’s phone and his camera. She puts a rose in her mouth, motions to him to take her rose in his mouth. A stem gets hooked in his glasses. It cuts her face/hands. He tries to remove the stem. It scratches his face. His camera strap gets entwined. She removes the stem from his glasses, gets caught with the camera strap.

Ian enters. He ogles Sofia. Then, he sees Grace with Mark.

   IAN
   Get off of Grace! Dumbass.

Grace sees Ian. She holds her hands up, waves ‘no’. Ian helps Grace. He gets entangled. His face gets scratched.

   GRACE
   You can’t be here. You’re history, dude.

Ed gets caught up. The gong rings.

   IAN
   You begged me. I’m here for my share of--

Hank returns, gets in the melee as he sneezes everywhere, snot flying on people, flowers and cameras. A rose cuts Hank.

   HANK
   Time’s up. Ugh. Don’t those table center pieces look lovely. The Judges will have a hard time. Ugh. Judges, your comments.
Sofia glares at Hank mangled up, she untangles him, then kicks him. He sneezes, whips out a handkerchief, elbows Ian.

Ian slams into Grace’s table. The table cloth gets ripped off. Grace’s masterpiece is gone. The Judges gather around Grace’s crushed table center piece. They mourn the loss.

AVA
Infuriating--

TOM
--MaddenING--

RAY
--ExasperatING--

AVA
--Galling--

TOM
--VexatIOUS--

Ava and Ray stare at Tom. Hank, blood on his face, walks on Grace’s table center piece, ushers the Judges to Sofia and Leo’s table. Hank unaware, Bev grabs the Judges to her table.

RAY
Colorful--

AVA
--Flamboyant--

TOM
--Vibrant--

HANK
That’s enough! No more adjectives, damn-it. Judges, time to vote for this one, see the beauty in this perfect piece.

Hank ushers the Judges back to Sofia and Leo’s table.

Grace cries and fixes her table center piece. Her face is covered in blood, the thorns form a crown shape on her head.

Ian, Mark and Ed wipe blood off their faces.

Ed wipes the video camera with his bloody hands.

Mark shoots, blinks his eyes behind his bloody glasses.

The Judges ping-pong between Sofia and Leo’s piece, and Bev and Ken’s piece. The Judges trade looks, then whisper.

Hank spots Ian.

HANK (CONT’D)
Pardon. It’s a private--You look familia--
IAN
I'm with her.

Ian points to Grace on the floor. Hank eyes Ian, again.

HANK
We've met before? At the wedding expo?

IAN
No way! Damn--Uh, I work downtown at the--

Hank waves him off, he rubs his temple, smears blood around.

The Judges whisper to Hank. Ray’s face gets close to Hank’s face (i.e., kissing). Tom’s face gets closer.

Hank slaps Ray. Hank slaps Tom.

Hank is about to slap Ava’s face, stops, leans in for a kiss. She slaps his face.

HANK
Ladies and gentlemen, this is the first time in our history of the ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’, we have a tie. Two top winners, Sofia and...and...and...

BEV
Bev Bravefeather. Thank you for your--

Grace pushes in, with her table center piece, both soaked in blood (ala “Carrie”).

Mark pushes in, with his camera, covered in blood.

Ed runs in, with his video camera, covered in blood.

Ian, covered in blood, pushes Grace in further.

GRACE
With my own BLOOD, SWEAT and TEARS, I want you, Judges, to know how much heart and soul I’ve put into my dream wedding--


INT. GRACE’S BEDROOM. GRACE AND POLLY’S APT. – DAY

Grace works on the ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’ blog; her segment - ‘My Fairy Tale Wedding Adventure. TRUE LOVE’ on her laptop in her bed.

Her blog view numbers are in the thousands for the 'likes'.

GRACE
Sixty-nine trollies! Buggers!...Only?!

She posts the photos that Mark took of her. No Mark or Ian.
Grace is in all of the wedding design photos alone.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Where are all my haters?

Next, posts her Valentine's Day window display on the blog. The blog ‘blinks’ to keep voting. The votes are hidden. She checks the contest designs and the Judges’ scores. Sofia has the highest score. Grace and Bev are tied.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Titanic or what!? How did Sofia get ahead? I won the first two contests. I should have trap-doored Hank, too.

She clicks on the videos. The ‘sexy’ videos from the engagement photoshoot pop up.

She pulls the blanket over her. A vibrator is clicked on. The laptop falls to the floor. The videos play. Groans.

INT. WINDOW DISPLAY. DEPT. STORE - DAY
Grace spots Mark taking photos of her window display thru her window. Her Valentine’s Day display is done.

Deb struggles with her mannequin. She stands on her drawings.

DEB (O.S.)
This is so much harder than it looks.

GRACE (sotto)
I feel your pain. But, won’t again.

Grace taps on the window, she gestures ‘instant’ coffee.

EXT. DEPT. STORE - DAY

SHOPPERS walk and text. Grace grabs Mark out of the way. They weave/dodge the Shoppers.

GRACE
Can’t let those phone zombies get you.

MARK
Thanks. Oh, I’m one of those text idiots.

GRACE
Not me. Uh, I’m not a slave to my phone.

Grace and Mark get coffee from a nearby STREET VENDOR.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Hilary Clinton with hazelnut, please.
Mark laughs.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Latte, medium, extra strong, full milk,
extra hot, no sugar, a shot of hazelnut.

MARK
Prez Barack Obama, please.

The Street Vendor looks at Mark. Marks mouths – 'Oops'.

MARK (CONT’D)
A tall coffee, half milk, one sugar...

The dept. store window covers have fallen half-off.

GRACE
I get worried that I'm not good enough.

MARK
Your window's finished. That’s something.

They pass by Deb’s window. She struggles with her mannequins.

MARK (CONT’D)
I think you’re a good window dresser.

GRACE
Uh, thanks. It’s visual display artist.

Mark nods.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Odd, isn’t it? Being a window dresser and
being an artist?

Mark shrugs.

MARK
I guess it’s your job?

GRACE
I design to show my true authentic self,
my true inner being. It just comes out of
me, like I am in the design itself. It’s
who I am, my nature, my soul...

MARK
Soul-baring...hmmm.

They stand in front of Grace’s finished Valentine’s Day
window display. Mark shows the photos of her windows.

MARK (CONT’D)
I need those for my stories, that contest
and the commercialization of holidays.

They walk by the other window displays.
GRACE
Right, that was you. You ripped me apart.

MARK
It’s about folks being conned into buying everything. Like chocolate on V-Day.

GRACE
I love chocolate and flowers.

MARK
How about love? Cherishing without gifts?

GRACE
What? Grim V-Day reaper.

MARK
How about those social media websites?

GRACE
I love them. I’m on all of them.

MARK
Do you think you actually have five thousand 'friends'? Are they even real?

GRACE
What? I can do the sniff test.

MARK
It's an achievement to be 'friends' with five thousand people you've never met?

GRACE
Well...I keep it real...

MARK
Have you ever been in love, Grace?

Grace chokes. He pats her back. She spills coffee on herself. He wipes it off with his scarf, spills his coffee on himself. The camera strap catches his glasses. His scarf entangles around both as they are pulled together.

The Old Couple walk by, with walkers, smile at this melee.

Grace and Mark stop at the entrance to the department store.

IAN (O.C.)
Bombs away!

Grace pushes Mark away. Mark’s glasses fall off. A Christmas tree crashes to the sidewalk. Ian waves from above the store.

MARK
Text zombies, now evil Christmas tree pile drivers.
GRACE
Excuse my future husband. He’s not safety trained, yet. Those phone zombies, text zombies, phone slaves. Oh. Evil elves.

INT. WEDDING RECEPTION BANQUET HALL. HOTEL - DAY

Behind the DJ booth, Grace texts Mark: No come 2day.

Grace gives Ian a bag (with their dept. store logo). Ian looks inside. He refuses, shakes his head. They struggle with the bag. Grace tackles Ian.

LATER.

A DJ, female, hot, plays music. Grace and Ian emerge from behind the DJ booth. Ian has a wig the same as Mark’s hair, glasses the same as Mark’s and Mark’s same clothes.

LATER.

A gong rings. The Judges watch the couples rush around (except Ian), each decorate their own head table, with their table center piece from the flower shop.

Ed and Ian jostle to film/shoot Sofia climbing on her table.

The decoration supply tables are in ruins.

LATER.


HANK
Time’s up. This is the first ever ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’. For this event, the couples must design their table to match their table center piece. Judges--

Bev tosses decorations to Ken. He tosses them to their table. A candy store disaster with their rainbow table center piece.

Sofia runs with decorations. Leo decorates. A medieval disaster with their lopsided towering table center piece.

Grace wipes blood off the (amended) table center piece with the middle of the table cloth. It turns red. She slides the table center piece over the red spot. The red spot expands.

Ian sits at their table, takes snaps of Sofia and the DJ.

Hank rings the gong louder. No one listens, nor stops.

Mark enters amidst the chaos, with a hat that covers his ears, without his glasses.

Grace sees him, runs over, pushes him behind the DJ booth.
GRACE
Sorry, Mark. I couldn’t stop Ian coming today. He’s you today. I sent you a text--

MARK
What? He doesn’t look like me at all.

Grace and Mark peek around the DJ booth, see Ian behind his phone taking snaps. Mark kind of nods.

GRACE
Your glasses?

Mark shows his cracked glasses in an eyeglass case.

Grace returns. Mark takes snaps from behind the DJ booth.

HANK
Brides and grooms, this event is now over. You must stop what you are doing. This is a violation of the wedding contract. You will all be disqualified.

Hank blocks the couples to the decoration supply tables.

IAN
(thru phone)
Oh, no. It’s your four-eyed boyfriend.

Grace turns to see Mark (no glasses) peeking too much around the DJ booth. No one else sees him.

Ian glares at him. Grace waves to Mark to hide.

Grace takes snaps of her masterpiece head table setting.

Ian eyes the DJ.

Hank struggles to stop the couples.

Grace catches Ian flirting with the DJ.

GRACE
You’re supposed to be with me.

IAN
We’re not married, yet. Hell, we haven’t--

GRACE
Act like you’re going to get married. Hank will think something is wrong with this painting. 'Think of the money.'

IAN
Uh, picture. Something is wrong with this picture. This is all a big joke. No big deal. We got the scam in the bag.
Grace looks around. Drags Ian away. Ian swats her away.

GRACE
Uh, cat. Cat’s in the bag.

IAN
We’re fighting like an old couple like my old man and his new wife. Second ain’t better than the first. Or, is it third?

GRACE
That’s rich.

IAN
Breaking news. It’s not like we love each other. We’re only fuck buddies. That’s it. No more. Got it? FWB means no strings attached, no wasting time dating, I lick your vagaga, you get to cum. Same as me.

Ian points to his dick, gyrates closer to the DJ.

IAN (CONT'D)
You’re squeezing my air here.

GRACE
I got us into this contest, I can end--

The music is louder. Grace keeps talking, no one hears her.

HANK
Miss Hicky! We are ready when you are.

The DJ cuts the music.

Grace drags Ian over to their head table.

Each couple stands by their head table. The Judges whisper.

SOFIA
Wait a second. Look...Grace and...and...her guy have been cheating.

IAN
Karrotkrotch, Ian Karrotkrotch, baby.

Ian winks at Sofia who gags. Grace kicks Ian. No music.

GRACE
Loud music. He said Mark, uh, just Mark.

SOFIA
She’s cleaned up her flowers.

All eye Grace’s table center piece and the red spot.

BEV
They don’t have blood on them.
All touch the red spot. All recoil their hands. Shrieks.

Grace laughs as she hides the red spot with more decoration.

**SOFIA**

Hank—I mean Mr. McToffee, you have to do something about this...You’re the host.

Bev reads her wedding design preparation checklist.

**BEV**

It says here that any persons who do not--

**SOFIA**

--Kick out the low-life cheaters!

**HANK**

Miss Heckler, this is a sad day when one finalist has scooped so low to win. This is a clear violation. We have Sofia to thank for catching the cheater, YOU.

**GRACE**

Me?! I haven’t cheated. The blood is still on the table. I haven’t removed any blood. It’s all accounted for. Every drop. You all touched it. Touch it again.

All recoil. Ian stands behind Sofia. She swats him away.

**SOFIA**

Mr. McToffee says you are a cheater, burn born loser. No million dollars for you.

**BEV**

There are only two finalists now?! Heaven sent an angel to catch this cheater.

The Judges whisper. Ed films them. They turn their backs.

**AVA**

We have decided that this participant has not broken any of the contest rules.

**HANK**

Finally, full complete sentences.

**TOM**

The rules stipulate that the head table must be decorated to complement the table center piece. It does not restrict the use of the table center piece being added or altered into the head table per se.

**HANK**

This is very illogical. Please make sense. Speak like—No, speak like me.
Designers have creative license and freedom without restrictions, within its liberty to develop a head table with the parallel concept of the table center piece. Nothing has changed, but all has.

You three are barely understandable.

So, that means I’m still in.

The Judges give a thumbs-up. Others groan.

We, the Judges, have declared Grace’s head table as the most suited to showcase the table center piece.

The abstract design with the pop culture heritage feeling best suits the overall balance in which designers never achieve.

The flowers bloom beyond its contained neo-classical structure. It seeks inspiration through its tight boldness.

All glare at the Judges. The Judges indicate that Sofia’s and Bev’s tables tie for last. Ed films.

Thank you, Judges. Your confidence in the winner’s design is underwhelming—I mean over-whelming. To our viewers, please vote for any of the finalists...

Ken comforts Bev, they exit.

Thank you. Excellent, expert critique. I could not have said it better. Never.

Grace shakes the Judges’ hands. Ian winks at Sofia.

Sofia kicks Leo and Hank as she exits. Leo follows.

This is bullshit, and you know it, bro.

Sofia catches Mark taking snaps from behind the DJ booth.

Hank, there is a spy here!

Grace runs over, with her bags. Ian follows, adjusts his wig.
GRACE
Uh, he’s here to document my wedding blog journey. You know, my true love--

Hank looks at Ian and Mark. Sofia and Leo look at Ian and Mark. All look at each other. Grace stands in front of Mark.

IAN
--No, he’s a stalker. He’s scaring my, uh, lovely fiancée. He only wants her wedding contest prize-- Uh, call the cops.

Hank reaches for Mark’s hat. Mark keeps ducking. Hank grabs Mark’s hat off, hair looks like Ian’s wig of Mark’s hair. Mark squints, fakes something in his eyes.

Ian’s wig is on lop-sided, a few red hairs peeking out. Hank goes to grab it. Ian steps back. Sofia and Leo reach out.

Grace, Ian and Mark look at each other. Mark flees via the exit doors. Ian flees, fake-chases Mark. Grace follows.

Sofia hits Hank and Leo, points to the exit doors. Neither Leo nor Hank give chase. Leo and Hank step back from her.

SOFIA
They know?! Eliminate them.

INT. LINGERIE AREA. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Grace puts lingerie in a shopping cart. SEXY LINGERIE CUSTOMER, African-American, holds up two beige bras.

SEXY LINGERIE CUSTOMER
This is wrongly labelled. Someone is blind. This says nude. This says flesh.

Grace sees the mannequins in mixed-matched lingerie.

GRACE
Not my department. Not PC? Both bras are beige, that blind person was maybe white?

SEXY LINGERIE CUSTOMER
Seriously? This is a ticking time bomb. Nude isn’t a color. Nor is naked. Flesh? Sounds like everyone is butchering at the abattoir instead of the slaughterhouse. Why not call it just skin, how about DNA or genes or atoms?

Grace picks up a red bra in her cart.

GRACE
It'll turn your hook-up, uh, husband on--

SEXY LINGERIE CUSTOMER
What makes you think I actually fuck?
She exits. Grace holds up the red bra.

GRACE

Grace picks up a dark bra.

GRACE (CONT’D)

Grace picks up a yellow bra.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Pee-pee? Pus? Jaundice?

She goes to pick up a bra, feels something wet. Lifts up a
sexy corset with wet stains. Smells it, tastes it, throws it.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Who did this?!

Grace wipes her hands. Deb enters with her shopping cart.

DEB
(sotto)
Glen will now be happy with my displays.

GRACE
We have psycho shoppers.

DEB
I could have told you that.

Deb picks up the corset. She shrieks, throws it away.

DEB (CONT’D)

Grace gives Deb a g-string to wipe her hands.

DEB (CONT’D)
I hope I don’t catch anything...

She waves her hands in Grace's face.

DEB (CONT’D)
Pubes on my hands. Red ones. Help me!

Grace wipes Deb's hands without trying to touch her hands.

DEB (CONT’D)
Get’em off. Burning, my hands--on fire. I
can feel them crawling. Fire ants! You’re out to sabotage me.

GRACE
Oh, really?! Stand still. It's only cum.
DEB
Only cum?! Cum-on-tap more like it. Some jerk did this to me. Who wears this shit anyway?! Get the stink off me. Wait till I tell Glen on you.

Deb wears a similar corset.

Grace tackles Deb to help. Grace accidentally wipes Deb’s face.

Ian enters from some clothing racks, see cum on Deb’s face.

GRACE
All clean now. No need to tell Glen.

IAN
Some idiot threw this at me.

He holds up the wet corset, cum dribbles down his face with red pubes, matches his hair. Sees Grace and Deb entangled.

IAN (CONT'D)
Can I join in?

Ian dances-gyrates closer, in their faces.

INT. ACCOUNTS OFFICE. DEPT. STORE – DAY

Grace at the counter. Her artist folio is on the counter.

Pandora, the bank teller/accounts clerk, scans the computer.

PANDORA
Yes, I see that your department didn’t--

GRACE
--You look familiar. Do I know you from--

PANDORA
--submit the time sheets last week. I’ve--

GRACE
--the bank? I need that money. Rent's--

PANDORA
--never seen you before. It will be--

GRACE
--due. That's no good. We'll be into--

PANDORA
--deposited next payday. I'm sorry, but--

Pandora checks her watch, pushes Grace’s artist folio off the counter. Grace pushes her artist folio back on the counter.

GRACE
--February. You can't leave. I'm--
PANDORA
--I can’t help you. It’s all automated--

GRACE
--broke. No, my roommate will be kicked--

PANDORA
--for every two weeks. Time’s up.

Pandora’s window slams shut. The artist folio hits Grace.

GRACE
--out. She'll be on the street, homeless.

Grace hits her head on the counter. Puts her foot on the counter. Looks around for the security cameras. See several red lights blinking. She stops.

EXT. BRIDAL GOWN STORE - DAY

Sunny. Extravagant building. Other BRIDAL PARTIES enter/exit.

INT. BRIDAL GOWN STORE - DAY

Huge, open space layout, with a designing workspace.

The Wedding Contest Group shares the store with other REAL BRIDES and BRIDAL PARTIES.


SOFIA
(to Grace)
Weren’t you terminated--Uh, disqualified?

GRACE
What?! I’m the best designer here.

Sofia squabbles to Hank.

Ken, Leo and Ian asleep on the nearby couches. Ian in Mark’s disguise, his face is in the couch, squashing his glasses.

Ken and Leo wear bizarre, incomplete tuxedos. Grace sees Ian asleep in her perfect designed tuxedo.

GRACE (CONT’D)
(sotto)
Mark would look yummy in that.

Grace grabs a double-sided tape from the same bag as the previous event, puts it on her design workspace table.

Hank tugs at Ian’s wig. It doesn’t move. Hank smirks.

HANK
Who is this man?

He motions towards Ian. Grace looks.

GRACE
Him...Oh...My fiancé.

HANK
Hmm...I don't think it's him.

GRACE
Yes, he was at the wedding expo.

HANK
No, I would remember.

GRACE
Yes, he was on the same stage.

Hank eyes Ian, points to Ian’s hair, drags Grace further.

HANK
He's not the original fiancé.

GRACE
I promise...assure you, he's the ONE.

HANK
Who can forget his hair?

GRACE
It was a disaster that night. I remember you got knocked down. A concussion? Yes.

They both turn to go. Hank grabs her, again.

HANK
It has come to my attention...Uh, that there can be no outsiders helping you...here or on the blog. Otherwise, you will be kicked-out pronto-- Uh, eliminated.

Hank grabs her phone, shakes it in her face.

GRACE
What?! Nada. Zilch don’t help me. I posted all those photos of me by myself. Oh, that man before? We scared him off.

The Brides pin their wedding gown drawings next to their assigned tables. Sofia’s and Bev’s drawings look like a kid’s drawing. Grace’s drawing is of a beautiful wedding gown.

HANK
Brides, you have only one hour left to make your dream wedding gown.

(MORE)
HANK (CONT'D)
It must resemble your wedding gown
drawing and must complement your
engagement rings.

Grace designs methodically. Bedlam for Sofia and Bev.

Each has a cloth mannequin on a podium next to their tables.

In the b.g., REAL BRIDES try on awful gowns, all on podiums.

INTERCUT BETWEEN REAL BRIDAL PARTIES AND THE CONTEST GROUP.

TALL BRIDESMAID
Dinky, you look absolutely like a tall champagne flute ready to be smashed against a chiselled Greek adonis.

SHORT BRIDE
Are you sure? I think this is too long.

Bev pins her fingers into her cloth mannequin, blood squirts into her eyes. Blood on her wedding gown now.

Sofia pins a veil to her dress on the cloth mannequin, takes the veil off, rips it, she falls back.

Grace pins perfect fabric draping on her dress.

SKINNY BRIDESMAID
No worry. You’re a hot butterscotch with a red cherry with its stem to be twisted.

CHUBBY BRIDE
I look skinny, don’t I? My twisted cherry stem is ready to be untwisted.

Grace struggles with a big roll of fabric (from the wall of fabric rolls). It rolls out across the store.

Sofia carries lots of baubles. She trips on the fabric that’s rolled from Grace. She slides across the floor.

Bev slips on Sofia’s baubles carrying many pins and scissors.

Bev is on the floor, the scissors fly in the air, it comes down, chops her braid off. She screams.

TALL BRIDESMAID
No, you didn't fall in love at first sight. That’s so overrated, and unproven scientifically. Not in the stars at all.

SHORT BRIDE
Not when you buy a lottery ticket in love. My winning numbers finally came up.

Sofia is on the floor, the scissors fly in the air, it lands between her legs, at her crotch, splits her dress.
SKINNY BRIDESMAID

CHUBBY BRIDE
Thousands. I was on the road with the band. All those hot lonely sweaty nights.

SKINNY BRIDESMAID
Way to go. I gotta get into a band, too.

Grace pulls the fabric roll as Sofia and Bev stand up. Sofia hides her crotch. Bev holds her chopped off braid. Both fall.

Bev’s pins are in the air. Grace dives/protects Sofia and Bev. Sofia and Bev see the pins, they hide under Grace.

The pins land on Grace’s back. Ouch, ouch.

GRACE
Cancel my acupuncture appointment.

Hank steps over the Brides. He doesn’t see the other baubles roll across the store.

HANK
Only ten minutes left to create the wedding gown of your dreams. Chop. Chop.

They rush to finish their gowns. The clock goes ‘faster’.

Hank steps on a bauble, slides across into the wall of fabric rolls. All fall on him. Ed films in Hank’s face.

A gong rings. The Judges inspect Grace’s finished wedding gown on her cloth mannequin. The Judges nod, compare Grace’s wedding gown to her drawing and her engagement ring.

Hank runs up, yanks them away to Sofia’s area.

The Judges inspect Sofia’s wedding gown, compare it to her drawing and her engagement ring.

Her dress is only half-done with a Raquel Welch’s “A Million Years B.C.” vibe.

AVA
She has a knack...a unique perspective on bridal fantasies on their special day.

TOM
She caters to a wide market and taste for minimal aesthetics for the delusional.

RAY
This once in a lifetime moment is best remembered if your statement is shocking.

Bev’s dress is unkept, earthy, with a Native-American feel.
TOM
Truly one with the spiritual, with
nature's full gale force striking it.

RAY
Bev has captured the essence of the air,
sun and rain in this creator's design.

AVA
I sense the earth move under my feet--

HANK
Judges, the wedding gowns would best be
seen if they model their designs. You can
see how they move walking down the aisle.

The Judges nod. The Brides take their gowns away.

DRESSING ROOM

Grace removes the pins from her back, inspects her tiny gown.
Her undergarments have holes. She can't get it over her hips.

Rips her gown open with her teeth. She tries over the top.
The zipper won't do up. She sucks in her belly.

Inspects it in the mirror, sees undie lines. Takes them off.

BRIDAL GOWN STORE

Sofia and Bev walk on the runway like models. The Judges nod.

SHORT BRIDE
We just signed the prenup. What a
disaster. His mom is a lawyer.

TALL BRIDESMAID
So, she understands about you getting
half his loot, right? Even-steven.

SHORT BRIDE
No, I had to agree to split the dogs. PC
sex six times a week. Boring.

Sofia takes selfies, poses like a stripper. Red hooker shoes.

Grace wobbles in her gown.

Sofia kicks a bauble across the runway. No one notices.

CHUBBY BRIDE
5% lube, 30% grind, 20% kisses, 10% coke.

SKINNY BRIDESMAID
That's the recipe for a midnight snack?

Mark runs in, with sunglasses and a different hat. Grace, on
the runway, turns around to see Mark. She waves 'no'.
MARK
I hope I didn't miss anything exciting--

Grace steps on the bauble, slides across to a wall of wedding gowns. They fall on her. She picks one up.

GRACE
Oh, this feels nice. It’s a Vera Wang.

Grace smiles, has white thread hanging from her teeth.

She crawls back to the runway, her ripped gown exposes her bare bum, her back has tiny blood spots (from the pins).

GRACE (CONT’D)
Hi...Mar-- Uh, stranger?...

A WEDDING GOWN CLERK holds up a wedding diaper.

WEDDING GOWN CLERK
This is the newest wedding diaper for brides. Look at the pretty crystals. Brides won’t have to worry about going to the bathroom on their special day.

Ken, Leo and Ian race to the runway. All laugh.

All take snaps at Grace's eagle-spread legs. Mark pats Grace’s head. He covers Grace up.

MARK
It's ok, Grace. Don’t cry.

Hank spots Mark. He is about to take Mark’s sunglasses and hat off. All trip on the baubles, all slide across the store.

INT. WEDDING OFFICE AND SHOP - DAY

Grace sits and checks her phone. Hank stands by the window.

HANK
You fail to notice the dire situation. Wake-up, Miss Wanna-be-Cheater.

The massive wedding design contest contract slams on the desk. Hank’s toupee shakes. Grace jumps.

He leans over his desk into Grace’s face.

HANK (CONT’D)
I’m running a family wedding service. This is not a dirty, filthy, free for all. Not only was yesterday a disaster for the ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’, you haven’t fulfilled your obligations, duties, deadlines, etc., etc., etc.

He flips through the pages without looking, stops and points.
HANK (CONT’D)
Let me light that lightbulb in your vacuous head. It says the photos must contain the bride and groom, not just you. Dirty messy hair homeless man isn’t on the wedding blog. All the photos must have that man in it. Only him. (Yikes).

Hank puts an Alka-Seltzer into his glass of water. Fizz.

HANK (CONT’D)
Do you love your fiancé? Do you want to spend the rest of your life with him?

Grace chokes, grabs Hank’s glass of water to clear her throat, but chokes more due to the antacid.

GRACE
The eight-year-get-of-jail card?

HANK
I can cancel your participation in the contest prize. Stop playing around, this is not a joke. There is a contract. You signed it. I don’t know about your fiancé’s scribble, whichever fiancé.

Grace’s eyes flutter to the back of her head.

DAYDREAM SEQUENCE.
Hank rips up the massive wedding design contest contract.
The pieces of the contract float in the air.
The million dollars evaporate into thin air – poof, poof.

HANK (CONT’D)
Ha, ha. In your dreams?! Ha, ha.

Grace grabs the evaporating dollar bills. Screams and cries.

DAYDREAM ENDS.
Grace’s mascara and snot run down her face. She is on Hank’s head like a sack of potatoes.
She falls off Hank’s head. His toupee slides over his face.

GRACE
I promise to follow the rules. I will marry my soul mate and love him forever.

HANK
Finally, I’m glad you understand what’s at stake. Not necessary to be futile.

Hank hops over her and exits with the contract in tact.
It 'floats' just above in his hand.

Grace does a double take at the 'floating' contract.

INT. DINING ROOM. GRACE AND POLLY'S APT. - NIGHT

Grace and her Parents eat dinner. Grace holds the guest list.

GRACE
I don't recognize any names.

Grace flips through the pages, lots of scribbled names.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I don't want people to know.

MRS. HICCUP
Honey, this isn't for you.

MR. HICCUP
It's for all the family members, friends, colleagues, co-workers, strangers, clients, landlords, neighbors, customers.

MRS. HICCUP
It's for showing 'face', forming business relationships, keeping friends close--

MR. HICCUP
--keeping enemies closer.

GRACE
What?!

MRS. HICCUP
Plus, no one has to know you're only doing this for the--

MR. HICCUP
Have you ever been to a wedding, Grace?

GRACE
Your cousin's wedding to his boyfriend.

MR. HICCUP
Rightio.

GRACE
Lots on TV and in the movies.

MRS. HICCUP
Let me explain about weddings.

MR. HICCUP
It's all about strategic alliances.

Parents speak 'gibberish'. Grace throws her hands in the air.
GRACE
OK, you win, you can invite everybody.

Parents smile.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Mom, I gotta ask for a favor. Work forgot our time sheets, again. So, no money. Can I borrow some money, please?

MRS. HICCUP
Of course, honey. I would never want my only child out on the streets. Not safe.

Her Mother hands her a $20 bill.

GRACE
Mom, I need the entire February's rent. Living in the city is not cheap.

MRS. HICCUP
Oh, honey, we're on a tight budget--

MR. HICCUP
--especially since we quit our jobs--

MRS. HICCUP
--for this home-based start-up company--

Grace drinks her wine.

MR. HICCUP
--it's slow going. We've racked up our--

MRS. HICCUP
--credit card bills. We're behind on our--

Polly and Ian enter with takeaway and a bottle of wine.

MR. HICCUP
--bills. We were really counting on your--

Polly and Ian go at it on the sofa, knocking over items.

MRS. HICCUP
--mansion to store all our incoming--

They each tear open condom packages.

MR. HICCUP
--boxes. Ours is stuffed, the attic--

Polly throws her opened condom. It hits Grace in the face.

MRS. HICCUP
--basement. We never thought it would--

Polly and Ian grunt. Polly's bra lands on Mr. Hiccup's head.
MR. HICCUP
--balloon. We were expecting you to get--

Grace clears her throat several times, each time louder.

MRS. HICCUP
--a real job. Perhaps, join our business--

Polly and Ian cover themselves. Grace's Parents stop talking.

MR. HICCUP
Isn't that your fiancé?

Grace's head drops into her plate, the condom peaks out.

INT. CANDY SHOP. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Grace decorates for Valentine's. Polly stacks the shelves.

POLLY
Then, he said he wanted me to pay him for his time. Go suck on my wallet, little pickle. Whoever heard of a girl paying for no strings sex? It's not like I broke his chastity belt. Not man enough. Jeez.

GRACE
I think I've fallen in love--

POLLY
No way. With who?

GRACE
That reporter...Mark.

A CANDY CUSTOMER enters with a box of chocolate.

CANDY CUSTOMER
How much is this $9.99 box of chocolate?

All search for a price tag.

POLLY
Let me see...it says $9.99.

CANDY CUSTOMER
Are you sure?

Polly shows her the price tag. The Candy Customer exits.

POLLY
Fabbo! He's a twinkie and a half.

GRACE
It's not like that. I mean...feelings.

POLLY
You said this all throughout high school.
GRACE
No, I feel it in my tum-tum.

POLLY
Butterflies?

Grace points to her crotch. Polly points to her eyes.

POLLY (CONT’D)
You should keep your eye on the prize.

GRACE
It was like Moses parting the Pink Sea, he stood there, my heart popped out of my head. I was out of my mind.

Polly pulls down/pokes her eye with the mafia gesture.

POLLY
Look, let me be frank, you fell for a dozen boys. That was just in grade nine. Prove it that you know about love.

GRACE
It's like...Hello Seattle, I'm calling from Chicago. Here's looking at you, kid. I'm just a girl standing in front of a b--

Polly shakes her head.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Pretty woman walking down the street. The first time I ever saw your face. What about love? I know you know me.

CUSTOMERS laugh. Grace stares at Polly.

GRACE (CONT’D)
I...can't make rent.

POLLY
Oh, shit.

GRACE
Can you cover for me for just a week?

POLLY
Still paying off Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, Halloween. Interest rates are a killer. Didn’t you get some money?

GRACE
I won't get the money until Feb. 14th, until after I win...and get married.

POLLY
That sucks. Ian? He's been making some extra cash. More than us. He'll help.
The Candy Customer returns with several boxes of chocolates.

**CANDY CUSTOMER**
Will you take $9.95? That's all I got.

Polly shakes first box of chocolate, rips it open. Opens all.

**POLLY**
Sorry. None are on sale. There's nothing wrong with any. All the candies there.

The Candy Customer exits. Polly offers some candy to Grace.

**POLLY (CONT'D)**
I love that apartment. You gotta ask Ian.

Polly drops the candy. The Blind Guide Dog eats it. Grace steps back into a wall of Valentine candy, holds the wall up.

**INT. KITCHEN. HOTEL - DAY**

Ed rings the gong. The couples scurry with their wedding dinner tasting dishes. Bev has a new short hairdo. The ladies are in high heels, slip in the kitchen. The Judges watch.

**SOFIA**
(to Grace)
Still here?

**ED**
Again, uh, I’m sorry that, uh, Mr. Hank McToffee had a real wedding to attend to. ...He’ll come right after...Act like...

**GRACE**
(sotto)
McToffee, McBeefJerky, McSwine, no rush, we ain’t missing you. I’m sure you’re doing a fine job at the real one.

Ian in Mark’s disguise. Mark takes snaps behind a (tall, food rack tower) trolley. Grace pats down Ian’s wig. They whisper.

**IAN**
This is too tight. My brain can’t think.

**GRACE**
Never stopped you before, pea brain.

Ed films. All re-check their respective menus.

All are covered in food splashes. Spam cans in the b.g.

**ED**
Uh, I think it’s time for the Judges to taste the wedding food preparation thing. Look here, uh, I’ve rung the gong. You’re supposed to stop. Should I ring it twice?

**ED (CONT’D)**

Just in case, uh, if you are wondering, Hank will do pick-ups when he gets back.

The Judges sit at Grace and Ian’s table first. They look at the ‘tasting’ menu. The other couples rush to finish cooking.

Behind the trolley, Grace offers a strawberry to Mark in her mouth. He hesitates, then bites her lips. Ian catches them.

**IAN**

Excuse me. Dinner is served. Act like you are about to get married, will ya?

Mark gives Grace and Ian radio earpieces (from a bag with the free local community newspaper logo). Ian refuses to put it on. Grace shoves it in Ian’s ear. Mark adjusts his tiny mic.

The Judges eat, make notes. Grace and Ian don’t eat the food.

**MARK**  
(on tiny mic)  
Let’s feed each other like happy couples.  
Big smiles. This will sell big time.

Grace and Ian feed each other. Ian winks at Ava, puts a half-eaten wing in his mouth to give to Ava (flicking his tongue).

Ava gags, spits out food. It hits Tom’s and Ray’s faces.

Grace shoves food into Ian’s mouth. He chokes.

**IAN**

What did I do?

**GRACE**

Don’t like the food? Not good enough? Not sexy enough? Not Nigella enough?

They feed each other, the food lands on each other’s faces.

**GRACE (CONT’D)**

Who said, "Act like you are about to get married, will ya?"

**IAN**

That’s no way to treat your future hubby.  
I’m your future cash cattle--

**GRACE**

--Cash cow.

**IAN**

You’re marrying me, not him. He’s only after you for your dough, Stevie Wonder.
GRACE
What do you know about love anyway?!

Ian chokes, takes off his glasses.

Sofia wipes the food off Grace's face as she passes by, smears it. Grace throws the food off her face.

SOFIA
Honey, let me help you. Much better.

GRACE
I can have as many good times as I want. You said it, we’re not married. Upset?!

The food hits Mark’s camera peeking out behind the trolley.

IAN
I’m gonna tell Hank this marriage is fake like you, all your kind. Artists?! Like your fake blog, fake friends. Take snaps of your fake genius-ness. I make more than you. Ha, I can play-doh a window, too. Stupid clothes on a mannequin?! All a big charade, unless you stop--

Grace grabs the food off Mark's camera, throws it at Ian. It hits the other couples. They throw food at each other.

GRACE
Sure, I'm selling out. Selling my soul. I'm only doing this for the money. I can't stand weddings. I'm so sick and tired of Valentine's Day, just nauseated! Red, red. I only want to win for my window display creations. I'm an artiste.

Ian smirks, does the ‘money’ sign, points to Grace and Mark. All look at the trolley. No one sees Mark behind the trolley.

Grace looks at Mark behind his camera, behind the trolley.

She destroys the place.

The Judges get hit with the food. They move to Sofia and Leo’s table. Sofia picks up her food on her table to throw.

Ian pulls his wig off, but can’t. With food in his eyes, he stumbles into the others and the furniture. He grabs people’s private parts. His face is distorted from pulling the wig.

Bev ushers the Judges to her table.

BEV
Please judges, come taste the delicious--

All watch Grace talk to the trolley. No one sees Mark.
GRACE
You, you, I hate all your photos. They
make my window displays suck big time.
Ha, I take better snaps than you. I can't
believe that thousands have 'liked' those
photos. Not artistic enough.

Mark hides his camera behind his back, behind the trolley.

The Judges eat Bev's food. Sofia grabs the Judges.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Hypocrite. You thought I was the phoney
one. You only like 50% caffeine. You're
just like the rest of us. Keeping up this
scam. Selling up--out. You need to sell
your soul to keep this story hot. Hanging
around like a bad smell. Bullshit.

Mark turns to leave, behind the trolley.

Sofia and Bev pulls Judges back/forth.

SOFIA
I made this especially for you three.

Leo and Ken are eating their respective dishes.

BEV
These recipes come from my ancestors.

GRACE
(to Mark)
Do you really like me, or you're just
sticking around for the story?
(to Ian)
You’re only here for the moolah, not me.

SOFIA
If you don’t let go, I will tell Hank you
cheated. This is supposed to be all
original wedding recipes for the--

BEV
You are the corrupted one, cheating by
forcing the Judges to only eat your food--

Ian rips off the wig, the double-sided tape is stuck to his
face and hair. Some of his red hair is ripped off.

Grace throws food at Ian (covered with food), he ducks.

The food hits Hank entering. Hank doesn’t notice Ian.

Ian puts the wig and glasses back on. He flees.

Grace stops and turns around. No Mark. Ed films Hank’s face.
GRACE
(sotto)
Fuck, this hurts. Fool...

INT. CANDY SHOP. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Store Clerks, with red ribbon name tags, replace old signs with 'Red Hot February Sale'.

Grace rushes in. Polly displays Valentine's Day candy as she hides from the Candy Customer.

GRACE
Psst, do you know where Ian is?

POLLY
Rent?!

GERMAN STORE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
You wanna keep your lover happy, buy in Red Hot February Sales. Moogie, boogie, woo-woo. Looks like a slow day. Let's have a 50% off sale in...pharmaceuticals.

Shoppers run by. The Candy Customer follows Polly and Grace.

POLLY
Double trouble. Overdraft charges! I got way too many fees hit me. You've been late three times. Can't lose my home!

Polly slams candy into her mouth, chokes back tears.

GRACE
No worries. Promise. Some more candy? It will help you forget all your troubles.

Grace puts more candy in Polly's mouth. Polly can't talk.

CAFÉ

Grace spots Ian, with the double-sided tape still stuck to his face and hair, some bald spots.

Polly runs from the Candy Customer in the b.g.

IAN
When do we get the cash? And, the cars--

GRACE
Losing! What is up with you, crotchhead? You are sinking this Titanic, not me.

IAN
We knocked it out of the park. Kissing, sexy cooking, feeding each other--
GRACE
We’re supposed to be in love, not dry
humping other people’s brains out for the
creeps on the Internet to jack off to.
PC, get it?!

IAN
Chill. You’ll do better next time. I like
what I see. You never told me about Sofi--

GRACE
Better up your game. Remember, a million
reasons. No hoochie mama, no Sofia, no
Ava. Any peas left up there? Not!

IAN
I’m finished. This wedding is hurting my
image. If that dumbass shows up again, I
might not...be at ‘our’ wedding.

GRACE
Good riddance. Keep the wig.

Grace turns to exit. Turns back.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Hey, can you spot me rent money, please?
I need extra to cover the overdraft, too.

IAN
How about a deal? Money and no Mark.

Grace sees Polly working hard at the candy dept.

IAN (CONT’D)
Shake on it, like they did way back.

Ian extends his hand. She hesitates—shake hands. She exits.

IAN (CONT’D)
Ha. ‘Good riddance.’ No one gets my share--

Ian smirks, turns around to leave, slams into Polly being
chased by the Candy Customer. Candy and boxes fly in the air.

INT. STATIONERY STORE - DAY

Ed films. The Judges watch. Hank eyes Grace pinning up her
wedding guest list in the workshop area.

Graces writes beautifully. No Ian or Mark. The other couples
scribble on their wedding stationery at their tables.

HANK
Where is the love of your life?

GRACE
Uh, he’s at his newspaper--stuck in--
HANK
Here comes the motherload. More excuses.

Grace walks over to the window. Hank follows.

HANK (CONT’D)
You’re making me--this contest--look unprofessional--You keep underestimating my threats--my power--my control. Ugh!

Hank storms off. Returns. He checks Grace’s guest list.

HANK (CONT’D)
Where is the groom's guest list? You need his parents' names. Don’t you understand?

Grace continues writing beautifully, but *gibberish*.

HELGA and BORIS, 50s, a reporter and photographer for the free local community newspaper, enter. Show their newsie badges, overloaded with old camera equipment.

HELGA
We be late. We be so sorry.

They set up clumsily.

BORIS
We be from the local newspaper.

HELGA
Is be lady of wedding contest be here?

GRACE
That's me. Or, us, really. Where's Mark?

BORIS
No Mark. We be camera set now.

HELGA
We be replace Mark now. Mark be quit wedding story. He no like bride he say.

Grace exits with her artist folio. Hank grabs her. They spin/collide into Boris and Helga. Grace breaks her high heel.

Grace dusts off Hank, Helga and Boris. Grace dusts off Hank's toupee, retracts her hands.

Ed films in their faces. Hank's toupee stands up straight. Hank eyes the Judges watching him. Hank blocks the door.

HANK
This begs to wonder if you really want to win and get married. You show no regard.

Helga and Boris pick up their equipment. Their equipment hits Hank and Grace. Ouch. Hank and Grace duck.
HANK (CONT'D)
You will get zero points for your involv--

Sofia hands Hank Grace’s guest list. The camera stand nicks his toupee, it swings around with Hank's toupee. All duck.

HANK (CONT'D)
This is not for your convenience. The sponsors who so kindly donated money and the Judges have already donated their time for this media wedding contest.

Grace, Helga and Boris try to catch Hank's toupee. All duck.

HANK (CONT'D)
You are already last in this contest. You must abide by the wedding contract or the prize is forfeited. Comprendo?!

Hank's toupee hits Grace's face, she swats it back.

Boris and Helga laugh.

GRACE
Shush. The clock hasn’t chimed midnight.

The Judges watch. Boris and Helga put Hank’s toupee on. Grace flees. Hank slips trying to grab her. They knock over the cameras, hit the desks. The ink splashes over everyone.

EXT. LOCAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER BUILDING - DAY

Grace runs in with a broken high heel, with her artist folio.

INT. LOCAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Grace runs to Mark's desk. No Mark.

A RECEPTIONIST on the phone.

GRACE
Excuse me. I'm looking for Mark.

The Receptionist points out to the doors, then points left.

INT. CAFETERIA. COMMUNITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Packed. DISADVANTAGED and HOMELESS PEOPLE. Grace spots Mark behind the kitchen counter. Other VOLUNTEERS work.

GRACE
I didn’t see you today at the wedding--

A food line queue. Grace gets bumped in the line. Mark serves food, doesn't look at her. She wobbles in her broken heel.

GRACE (CONT’D)
I came here to apologize. I was...wrong.
MARK
No, you're right. You saw the real me.

Grace’s artist folio misses hitting the food trays.

MARK (CONT’D)
I asked to be taken off that story.

GRACE
But, I want you to do the wedding story!

A Volunteer gives Grace a tray of food. Grace takes it.

Grace keeps moving back in the line to where Mark is.

HOMELESS LADY
Don't you dare butt in front of me!

HOMELESS MAN
Look out lady, no getting extra food.

A Volunteer puts more food on Grace's tray.

A VOLUNTEER
Organic.

Grace looks at the slop/mush. Her tray gets higher with food.

GRACE
Let's do a do-under?!

HOMELESS LADY
--do-over. No do-overs here.

GRACE
A fresh slate--clean slate, please?

Grace looks at the people and their clothes. All stare back.

HOMELESS MAN
I believe ya, Miss. Ya can do me.

Homeless Man licks his lips. People bump into Grace.

GRACE
I even skipped one event to find you...I was an imbecile, a fool, a douche bag--

MARK
You should go on without me. Go win the big prize. No shame in that.

GRACE
This isn't the shame game. No shame anywhere. Me shamed? Tank full of shame. Shame of thrones. Ok. My shame.

All trade looks. Grace’s artist folio misses the food trays.
MARK
Don't worry, I won't blow your cover.

GRACE
I'm only doing it for the money. I make minimum. Less if you count the overtime. This wedding jackpot is my way out.

HOMELESS MAN
I don't get nothing no more, Missy.

Homeless Man gyrates, bumps into Grace’s artist folio. Ouch!

GRACE
...Uh, I'm a cinch for the promotion.

Grace steadies her heavy food tray.

GRACE (CONT'D)
...I won't need the prize. I'll be making more than peanuts. Even better, I won't have to marry Ian. I got to pay my rent.

Grace drops her food tray. All the Homeless People swarm her, all on top of her. Grace crawls away, no food tray.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Look, Mark, I can't do it on my own. My parents need my help, too. Like here.

Mark throws his apron onto the counter.

Grace tries the door handle into the kitchen. Locked.

She climbs over the counter. The Homeless People stop her.

HOMELESS MAN
Thief! Fuck off. No stealing da food.

HOMELESS LADY
Get her! No breaking in, crim.

The Homeless People tackle/climb over her into the kitchen. The Volunteers push everyone back.

Grace scans the kitchen, no Mark, sees the back door close.

GRACE
Dudes, what a royal pain.

INT. DINING ROOM. GRACE AND POLLY'S APT. - NIGHT

Grace works on her wedding contest blog, grabs an empty beer.

KITCHEN

Grace checks the fridge. Empty. Spots the bottle of wine on the counter with Polly and Ian’s old takeaway leftover boxes.
GRACE
I'll just pour a wee bit.

DINING ROOM

Grace arranges the photos. ‘Sexy’ videos - tons of ‘likes’.

GRACE
This is so evil...

She skips the wine glass, takes a swig from the wine bottle.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Everyday must be bliss--married folks must be cut into two and joined together.

She replaces the photos of her alone with her and Ian, in Mark’s disguise.

GRACE (CONT'D)
I really have to try to not be so less interested...Next...

She finishes the wine. Tosses the bottle.

Her head hits the table. The ‘sexy’ videos play.

INT. STAFF ROOM. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Visual display department STAFF meeting. Hipster Staff.

GLEN
My apologies about the late time sheets.

Everyone groans. Grace stands in front. Glen winks at Deb.

GRACE
(sotto)
Cuz you were at a conference...

GLEN
It’s really too bad that we lost the city's Christmas window display contest.

Everyone looks away.

GLEN (CONT'D (CONT'D)
Lack of any recognition means there will be no bonuses for our department.

Mumbling.

GLEN (CONT'D)
I’ll be here everyday up to the city’s Valentine’s Day window display contest.

Gasps.
GLEN (CONT'D)
Surely we all want to win this contest?

All trade looks. Glen smiles at Deb. Grace sees this, laughs.

GLEN (CONT'D)
I've decided to appoint a team leader who is capable of overseeing the displays.

All look at each other.

GLEN (CONT'D)
Ms. Deb Tackohs.

Grace laughs. Glen and Deb glare at Grace.

DEB
Thank you, Glen. I'm so proud you have chosen me to be the team leader.

Everyone stares at Deb -- WTF?

DEB (CONT'D)
I would like all of your input. First, we need to take down the decorations.

GRACE
I had approval to put those up.

Deb fake-smiles at Grace.

DEB
As a team, we must not be so precious about who had approval or what is good.

Muttering.

DEB (CONT'D)
Take down these decorations so the team can redo the Valentine's Day decorations.

Deb laughs. She exits with Glen.

GLEN
You're the front runner for the job. I think I should revise the dress code...

LATER.

Grace checks her phone - past midnight. She is on a high ladder, reaches for the last Cupid. Bare walls. The ladder falls down. She grabs onto the Cupid. Her heels fall off.

GRACE
Hello, help, anyone, please...

Drops her phone. No one is around. The dept. store lights go out. The only light is from her phone on the floor.
EXT. SCHOOL FUN FAIR - DAY


GRACE
The newspaper said you were here...I don’t have your phone number...I guess we’re reverse stalking each other now?

Mark doesn't look up. Several KIDS in wheelchairs being helped onto the ponies. Patches nibbles at Grace's hair. Grace steps into some pony poo. Mark offers her a kleenex.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Thanks. I guess it's all part of the job.

MARK
Sorry. I haven't returned your calls. I could say I was busy, but really I was--

GRACE
It's ok. I already know you're mad at me. I understand your silent treatment.

MARK
I was mad at myself. I'm through not being true to my heart and my ideals.

They walk. They get jostled by the Family text zombies.

MARK (CONT'D)
You should try that, too.

GRACE
What?

MARK
Being true to yourself and your ideals.

Grace steps back.

MARK (CONT'D)
I had a light bulb thinking--

GRACE
--moment. A light bulb moment.

MARK
I never want to be in a position where I shoot another commercial holiday. Are you really an artist or just slogging crap?

GRACE
I need to make money, what's wrong with that, I use my creative skills...

They approach the FACE PAINTING AREA.
MARK
This is called bettering your life?

GRACE
Stability, security, for graphic artists, commercial artists. It's not white or black. It's colorful, like a rainbow.

MARK
You're doing this for your future?

Grace, without looking, mixes paints. Many Kids approach her.

#1 KID
Miss, I'd like a butterfly face.

#2 KID
Miss, miss, may I have the lion one?

#3 KID
Hey, I'm next. Miss, I love creepy bats.

GRACE
Yes, I'd love to paint all your faces.

Grace paints one face, a beautiful, colorful, glittery butterfly. The other Kids see this and clamor over to Grace.

The Kids climb on her. Grace spills the paint and glitter.

She lines up the Kids and does all their faces one at a time.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Children, a straight line in front of me.

Grace takes photos of the Kids' painted faces with her phone.

She takes selfies with them. The Old Couple smile in the b.g.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Everyone say, "Rainbow, please!"

ALL KIDS
Rainbow, please!

Mark sees Grace through his lens. She smiles. He smiles back.

LATER.

Grace and Mark eat ice cream, walk. Mark's face is painted a tiger. Grace shows Mark the Kids' painted faces on her phone.

MARK
Wait a sec.

GRACE
What? Did I say something wrong?
Mark stops.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You mad, again?

Mark points to Grace’s mouth, an ice cream smudge. Grace tries to lick it off with her tongue, no luck.

Mark wipes it off with his fingers. At the same time, Grace licks the ice cream off, she licks Mark’s finger instead.

They put their fingers into their own ice cream and then put it into each other’s mouths. They lick each other’s fingers.

She attempts to swallow his fingers, chokes.

MARK
Is this allowed without exchanging phone numbers first?

Grace rummages in her bag for a kleenex, pulls a condom out her bag. She wipes her mouth with it (by mistake).

MARK (CONT’D)
Rain check?

She sees the condom, laughs. He laughs, rubs his red eyes.

INT. STOCKROOM. DEPT. STORE - DAY
Grace scans the notice board.

GRACE
I know it was here...

She looks under the other job ads, store flyers and notices.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Am I going blind?

Tears down all the notices, stands in a pile of paper, cries.

GRACE (CONT'D)
That job is mine.

She picks up a job ad – ‘Hiring in Vera Wang’. She takes it.

ADMINISTRATION AREA
Grace pounds on Glen’s door, tries the locked handle.

GRACE
I know you two are in there. Not fair.

Squealing and laughter behind the door. She stares at it.

GRACE (CONT'D)
You’re not at a conference anymore.
She pounds on the door. It is quiet behind the door.

GRACE (CONT'D)
There should be equal opportunity for all employees, no shoe in for any favors--

Deb taps Grace from behind. Grace jumps and screams.

DEB
Are you alright, Grace?

Grace stares at Deb, but points to the door.

DEB (CONT'D)
Glen's on his lunch break.

Deb exits. Grace does a double take at Glen's door.

INT./EXT. WORKSHOP AREA. HARDWARE AND GARDEN CENTER - DAY

The couples make their wedding gazebo arches and wedding wishing wells. The Judges watch. Ed films.

No Ian or Mark. Grace texts madly on her phone.

HANK
This is your last chance to impress the Judges and the blog fans. Please remember that your wedding gazebo arches and wedding wishing wells must match the theme of your wedding.
(sotto)
Especially the wedding wishing wells.

Hank grabs Grace. She drops her phone.

HANK (CONT’D)
Flying solo, again? I see you couldn’t convince your soulmates, ha, that this wasn’t important enough to attend. Just act like you can finish this on your own.

Helga and Boris set up their cameras, take photos.

Grace whispers to Boris and Helga.

GRACE
Could you tell Mark to get better soon? I think the face paint got into his eyes.

BORIS
You be the cause of Mark’s bad eyes!

HELGA
You not bother Mark. He be so nice. You be naughty influence on our kind Mark.

Grace trips over their camera stand as she flees.
Hank eyes Sofia’s and Bev’s arches and wells which look nothing like their previous wedding design themes. Amateur.

HANK
All of you are doing just splendidly.
Right, Judges? I know it is an improvised wedding design event, but they are--

The Judges whisper. They whisper to Hank. They argue.

HANK (CONT’D)
Good news. Our Judges consider this to be a bonus round. The winner will win double points since there are two items today.

Bev climbs on top of her arch. Her high heel gets caught. Ken pulls her leg. Both legs are caught in the arch, dangling.

Sofia grabs a decoration from Grace’s pile.

GRACE
Excuse me, Sofia. This is my pile.

SOFIA
No, this is my pile. No need to get out your claws.

GRACE
No, I got to sharpen my claws.

SOFIA
You’ve got something on your face.

Sofia attempts to wipe Grace’s face. Grace swats Sofia away.

GRACE
I know what you’re doing. You’ve been trying to sabotage my designs. And hers.

They both grab the decoration, a tug-of-war begins.

SOFIA
I have only always tried to help you.

GRACE
I know you’re messing around with Hank. You and your kind think of only screwing your way to the top of the rope.

SOFIA
What are you talking about? I’d never do such a thing, missy. I can climb my own rope--I mean ladder. Get it right.

GRACE
You think screwing him will win this contest? You don’t know how to design.
SOFIA
You’re blind. He doesn’t like our kind.


Grace eyes Hank. Sees his manicure, swishes his wrists around, adjusts his toupee, brushes hair behind his ears.

GRACE
(sotto)
WTF? Is she right?

Grace eyes Hank. He types on his phone. Grace eyes Sofia. Sofia checks her phone. Types.


GRACE (CONT’D)
No, yes? I know I’m right.

Grace decorates her arch, runs out of ribbon. She exits.

Sofia eyes Grace exiting. She puts some Christmas lights on Grace’s arch and well. Grace returns.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Hey. Get down from my arch. WTF?!
Christmas is over, you ding dong.

A gong rings. The Judges approach. Grace’s arch is beautiful, the unlit Christmas lights still hang on. The other arches and wells are terrible and half done.

HANK
There’s no more time left. The Judges will assess the wedding gazebo arches and the wedding wishing wells.

The Judges approach Grace’s arch and well.

Hank nods to Sofia. Sofia plugs in the Christmas lights. No one sees this. The Judges step back, gasps.

Grace struggles to dismantle the lights, gets tangled.

GRACE
Not my lights. That jezebel, Sofia--

SOFIA
That head case is calling me names.

The Christmas lights burst into flames. Everyone screams.

All flee. Boris and Helga struggle to move their camera equipment. Ken and Leo hide behind the others.

Bev puts out the fire with a fire extinguisher.
They don’t call my ancestors Bravefeather for nothing.

Grace, tangled, covered in soot and fire extinguisher powder.

Hank storms over to her, takes out the massive wedding design contest contract from inside his coat, out of thin air.

She does a double take. No one else seems surprised.

HANK
Are you crackers?! This wedding train will not stop, it must go ahead as planned. No arch, no wishing well, no points, no prize. Full steam ahead.

Everyone takes a step back.

HANK (CONT’D)
You have failed as a designer.

Grace holds back tears.

GRACE
I love weddings, I love my fiancé, I love this whole train ride, I love the--

HANK
You should say your final good-bye now.

GRACE
Wait. I can fix this, all of these arches and wells. I have the power to transform--

Hank turns to exit, trips over the old camera equipment.

Helga and Boris catch Hank, all get tangled up. Knock into the fire extinguisher, it flies in the air. All get sprayed.

The contract flies through the air.

Only Grace sees it. She leaps across, catches the contract.

INT. GRACE AND POLLY’S APT. - DAY

Grace, dirty, enters with the massive wedding design contest contract under her arm, her artist folio, some grocery bags and hears laughter from the kitchen. Tiptoes.

GRACE
Polly and Ian better be using condoms.

KITCHEN

Grace jumps in, the food flies out of the grocery bags, the contract flutters through the air, her artist folio hits Polly and Deb. Some Spam cans in the b.g.
Polly and Deb scream, swat the food away.

POLLY
What are you doing?!

GRACE
I thought you and Ian--

DEB

Polly tosses some candy to Grace. It sticks to her hair.

POLLY
I can get anything you like. Name it, I can get it. No charge. Bonus of the new job. What's your candy? High or low? Sweet or sour? Blue or red? Sugar or saccharine? Bland or salty. Hard or soft?

Polly steps aside. On the counter is a mountain of candy.

GRACE
I have a wedding to be at. I hope...

Grace eyes the old candy with tinsel and pine tree needles.

POLLY
Meet my new roommate.

Deb offers to help Grace with her grocery bags. She resists.

POLLY (CONT'D)
I'm lucky to find a new roommate who can afford this skyscraper rent now.

GRACE
So lucky to have Deb. Don't worry, she's adaptable, able, flexible. Not like me.

Deb lets go of the bags. Grace flies back and hits the candy.

POLLY
We can all hang out at your new place, since you two are like best friends at the drawing and decorating department.

The candy falls off the counter. Polly picks one up, eats it.

GRACE
I haven't won, yet. It's visual display.

DEB
Yup. Visual display.

POLLY
I invited Deb to the wedding since we're all going to be close friends now.
Grace steps back. Polly picks up the fallen candy.

**GRACE**
Uh, I’m losing this wedding design conte--

**DEB**
You’re the most luckiest person. Congratulations on finding a soulmate.

Grace steps over the candy and Polly on the floor.

**DEB (CONT'D)**
I hope your marriage lasts forever.

Grace catches her foot on a candy cane, trips. Gasps.

**DEB (CONT'D)**
It'd be bad to be a divorce statistic. That's not the right statistic you want to be involved with. Better to have the before statistic.

**GRACE**
Divorce is ok. It's common, like 50%, closer to 60%, maybe 70%. See it's for everybody.

**DEB**
It's a dirty 70% statistic.

**GRACE**
No, it's a clean statistic, a clean 80%.

**DEB**
Better to be clean than dirty, right?

**GRACE**
No, better to be dirty than not clean.

Deb and Polly suck on the dirty candy.

**DEB**
Is your fiancé that...box boy?

**GRACE**
Ian.

**DEB**
There's so many of them. So common.

**GRACE**
No, I think less than us.

**DEB**
Redhead?

**GRACE**
Only one. See, not so common.
DEB
He's the one that breaks all the boxes, isn't he? It's great for someone like you to have found someone with special needs who has found love just like you.

Deb smirks, pretends to blow-job the candy. Grace eyes her.

GRACE
It's great for someone like you to have found someone who has special needs who has found a great roommate just like me just for you. Perfect situation, right?

Deb eyes Grace -- WTF?

POLLY
I am so relieved. I don't have to get a third roommate for the couch. Deb can pay the huge rent increase. No probs.

DEB
My boyfriend and I broke up. I need to move in earlier than March first.

Grace stares at Deb -- WTF? Deb stares back, then smirks.

GRACE
Boyfriend? Isn't Glen--Right, you don't have a boyfriend?!

POLLY
Perfecto. You can move in on February fourteenth. Grace's big day.

GRACE
But, what if I don’t win--

Polly and Deb, with the old Christmas tree candy all over their mouths, look at Grace.

Grace drops her grocery bags. All the glass jars break.

The contract lands on the wet floor.

It gets soaked in the liquids. They all look at it.

Grace eyes it. Opened in the middle.

Sees some signatures she doesn’t recognize.

Polly offers Grace some dirty candy.

POLLY
We can party at Grace's place together.

DEB
Every weekend.
Grace opens her mouth to scream, but nothing comes out.

INT. WAREHOUSE. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Grace spots a WAREHOUSE CLERK, male, driving a mini-forklift.

GRACE
Hey! Is Ian around? He’s not answering--

Grace follows the mini-forklift. Stumbles in her high heels.

WAREHOUSE CLERK
Got a problem with an order?

Grace ducks here and there to avoid the mini-forklift.

GRACE
No, nothing like that.

WAREHOUSE CLERK
Good. Then, he quit his job.

GRACE
What?!

WAREHOUSE CLERK
Been saying he’s in the money. Gave notice a while back.

Grace gets hit with a dropped box.

WAREHOUSE CLERK (CONT’D)
We've all been invited to some big party on Valentine's Day at some garden, fancy hotel, free booze and food all night.

Grace steps over the box as she turns to leave.

WAREHOUSE CLERK (CONT’D)
Parties every weekend at some mansion, a pool, BBQs, cinema, games room, like for eight years he says, just like Gatsby.

Grace twists her ankle in her high heels.

WAREHOUSE CLERK (CONT’D)
It’s like he’s won the lottery.

Grace takes off her high heels.

WAREHOUSE CLERK (CONT’D)
You invited?

GRACE
It’s our--my party, dude!

Grace exits, slams the door.
INT. FOYER. HOTEL - DAY

Hank organizes a real wedding. Grace guns for him with the massive stained wedding design contest contract.

Hanks eyes Grace, flees from her, with his clipboard.

GRACE
You're right. I was wrong.

Many SERVERS set up.

HANK
Thank-you? What are you talking--?

GRACE
I've made a terrible mistake. I want to come clean about this--

HANK
OK. Back on your medication? You've seen the light? Or, is the train crashing now?

GRACE
I want to change the groom!

Hank shushes her. She flips to the page with the unrecognized signatures. He turns to organize the other wedding.

HANK
I'm with a new bride. You had your turn.

GRACE
I demand a swap. I will marry for love. I know what’s in this wedding contract--

HANK
(to the other BRIDE)
--Excuse me, I'll be right back.

Hank grabs the contract from Grace. She resists.

HANK (CONT'D)
No swapping. You mean for the prize, don't you? Don't confuse the two. Or, should I say get it straight? Dim wit.

GRACE
I will do anything to change the fiancé. I will even continue your cover-up--

She digs her high heels into the carpet as they tug.

HANK
You mean you'll do anything to get the wedding design contest prize jackpot?

Both dig deep into the contract.
HANK (CONT'D)
There's a queue for this type of service. People who really want to get married.

The Hotel Security Guards eye the two fighting.

GRACE
I want to marry Mark.

HANK
Too late. You signed the contract. You have to marry whoever signed it. That's...Redhead? Filetstake? Karrotkrotch?

The contract rips into two. They fall down.

Hank doesn't see the contract ripping into two. Grace does.

HANK (CONT'D)
You want me to turn a blind eye? Cut a bride--groom in two? It must continue since all the sponsors are waiting for this media wedding. I will sue you to high heaven. I will get your million dollars either way, Cinderella--not.

He puts his portion of the contract on his clipboard.

HANK (CONT'D)
Marriages are not about love. Tragic, not magic. It's a business. If you haven't...

Hank points to the new COUPLE surrounded by their FAMILY in the b.g., raving about the dress and decorations.

HANK (CONT'D)
...figured it out by now, then definitely say good-bye to the wedding prize that you most cherish. Loud and clear?

GRACE
But,--

HANK
Marriage is not as magical as brain washed brides-to-be think it is.

Hank points to a GIGGLING BRIDE in another banquet area.

HANK (CONT'D)
Let me jog your memory bank. I asked you about your fiancé before, and if this is what you wanted. You kept reassuring me that everything was fine. Splendido.

GRACE
But,--
Hank orders the Servers around, then turns to leave.

HANK
You are the most flaky bride I've ever met, the worst. You need a reality pill. Not a spam pill.

GRACE
(sotto)
But, I like spam.

Grace follows. They swerve around the Servers.

HANK
You want 'ever after', you can't handle 'ever after'. I have been the one shelling out 'ever afters' for decades, many times to the same bride. Wake-up, there is no 'ever after', Jack-o.

Grace grabs a drink, weaves between the Servers.

HANK (CONT'D)
Remember to bring that man to tonight’s wedding contest rehearsal. I'd love for the contest to go off without a hitch tomorrow. A winner has to be announced and a wedding has to be performed.

Grace grabs a glass. Hank winks at Grace.

HANK (CONT'D)
Get your poker face on. Keep faking it like you've been till the end of tomorrow night for the wedding prize. Renew your medication? Good luck at winning it. Ha. Why are you so vacuous?

Hank takes a glass, gulps it, gives it to Grace. He exits. She eyes her ripped portion of the contract.

GRACE
I don't do vacuums.

INT. VACUUM AREA. DEPT. STORE - DAY

Grace wraps a cord around a vacuum. The area is tidy.

RUSSIAN STORE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Time for Valentine's Day cleaning!! For one minute only, all vacuums 50% off!

PARENTS with BABIES/ TODDLERS rush in. Grace is blown over.

VACUUM MOM #1
Moms and Dads. We're finally here.

Grace SNAP turns. She sees them. All beaming, rushing in.
VACUUM MOM #2
That’s the yellow one in my dreams.

VACUUM MOM #3
Is it on sale? Miss, what percentage off--

VACUUM MOM #3 turns it on. She is catapulted, flies behind
the vacuum, holding her Baby.

They grab the vacuums, pull the cords, plug them in.

A symphony of vacuum sounds. A dust cloud.

Grace tries to stop each one. All shriek with delight.

She grabs a Toddler sucked by a vacuum, sucks them both now.

She grabs a Toddler eating dust balls. The Toddler throws up
on her. Grace coughs.

She sees a Toddler on the vacuum display on the podium.

She rushes across, leaps over the vacuums, all the nozzles
suck on her legs.

She leaps onto the ‘extended’ podium. Snatches the Toddler.

The vacuum display collapses. She gestures a ‘touchdown’.

A beeper goes off.

VACUUM MOM #1
It’s time.

Moms breast feed their Babies. Dads bottle feed their Babies.
One Mom breast feeds her Twins. All exit with their vacuums.

The vacuum area is a shithole now.

Glen enters, death stares Grace, holding a Toddler.

The Toddler exits.

Glen points to some vomit on her top. She vacuums it off.

GLEN
Finally throwing in the towel, Grace?

INT. WINDOW DISPLAY. DEPT. STORE – DAY

Deb’s new Valentine’s Day window display design is tacked on
the wall with the store approval stamp. Terrible design.

Grace finishes her revised window display. Grace has followed
the design to a ‘T’ and it looks awful.

GRACE
That should make Glen happy?
Mark taps on the window. He gestures for her to pose with the mannequin. She plugs her nose as she points to the mannequin.

Grace waves to him to come inside. The Old Couple walk by with the Blind Guide Dog.

Mark enters, takes snaps of Grace. Grace takes selfies.

**JAPANESE STORE ANNOUNCER (V.O.)**
Red alert. To the school girls in St. Abby's uniforms, stop squeezing the buns. I will tell the head mistress. You are hurting the buns! You are corrupted.

**GRACE**
What do you think?

**MARK**
I definitely think they should be arrested. Sent to bakery hell.

Grace positions Mark like a mannequin in the window display.

**MARK (CONT'D)**
I would rather be behind the camera.

She positions a female mannequin sitting on his lap.

**GRACE**
It'll be fun. You'll improve all this.

Grace fiddles with a boa around his neck, adds Valentine's Day candy, puts a hat on him, etc. Takes some snaps as well.

**MARK**
Why did you change all this?

**GRACE**
New team leader...sucks big time?

**MARK**
No, it's not that bad.

**GRACE**
So, how long ago did you meet your ex?

**MARK**
We met as volunteers at a youth center.

**GRACE**
The last time you saw her?

**MARK**
Night before my wedding. Actually, caught them in the act. I know...So cliché.

**GRACE**
She was just trying to get ahead.
Mark eyes Grace, takes off the boa. Grace puts it back on.

MARK
Not only was I fired, but blacklisted.

GRACE
Bummer times two.

MARK
It's the blackest of the blacklists. I can't get no one to take my calls.

Grace takes a snap with Mark, dolled up Valentine's style.

GRACE
This one, I'll post on 'fakebook'. This should definitely get you the top job.

MARK
I hope my five thousand fake friends 'like' me.

GRACE
You don't do Facebook. That's the problem, you're invisible. No one knows you even exist. I'm up to ten thousand fake friends now.

Both laugh.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Sounds pathetic? Yet, I'm still single.

MARK
I didn't think I wanted to be with another person...until you.

GRACE
I haven't stopped thinking...about you. What it would be like to be in a real relationship with just one person...

MARK
Uh, how's that promo? You in the lead?

Ian enters the window display, waving his paycheck.

IAN
Fake it like we've won already. Say goodbye to all this.

Ian smirks, doesn't notice Mark.

IAN (CONT'D)
Happy times are here to stay. This is it. No more working for Uncle Sam, bunchkins.

Ian shows Grace his new Rolex watch. Grace doesn't look.
GRACE
Bunchkins? When did you start talking like that, dude? Where were you earlier?

Ian gyrates. Moves closer to Grace, who steps aside.

Ian gyrates against the mannequin, sandwiches mannequin.

Ian grabs Mark to squeeze in the mannequin.

Mark jumps up. Ian screams a girly scream. Pushes Mark.

IAN
What's he doing here?

Mark takes the stuff off him. Ian gets tangled with Mark.

GRACE
What do you mean, sweet pea?

Mark's camera is tangled with the boa.

IAN
We had an agreement. We shook on it.

Mark puts his camera on the mannequin's lap to untangle it.

GRACE
This isn't a wedding event. Do you see a sign saying 'no Mark' zone, Mr. No Show?

IAN
You want to win this wedding crap as much as me. We're two peas in a pod.

Ian waves his paycheck in her face as he untangles himself.

IAN (CONT'D)
If he's anywhere near me, I will cancel everything. You lose.

MARK
Was that true or not?

GRACE
Yes, I did say I wanted this wedding--

MARK
No, about us?

GRACE
Uh, of course. I wouldn't say it if I didn't mean it, Mark. But, I need the--

Mark bumps and trips over the display stuff as he exits.

MARK
Fooled, again. No. Lost, again. You win.
Ian smirks, gyrates against Grace. Mark exits.

**IAN**

We shook on ‘money, and no Mark.’ Didn’t say I’ll come to these--Don’t text me anymore about these uh, wedding appointm--

**GRACE**

Tonight! Or, you lose it all.

Grace grabs Mark’s camera and runs out. No Mark.

**STAFF ROOM**

Visual display department STAFF meeting. Glen has a tan.

**GLEN**

Great to see the displays are finished.

Deb smiles.

**GLEN (CONT’D)**

Prepare for positive news tomorrow. I have more great news. I have made up my mind for the new promotion.

Grace half steps forward. Staff mutters.

**GLEN (CONT’D)**

A lot of applications came forth. But, the person who now has the... 

Grace steps forward, takes a selfie. Staff exchange looks.

**GLEN (CONT’D)**

...new position as assistant senior visual display artist is Deb Tackohs.

Glen claps. Deb stands beside Glen. Both have the same orange-brown tan with whitish areas around eyes (ski trip).

**GLEN (CONT’D)**

Tomorrow, we must win the Valentine’s Day window display contest. I--Don’t we all want to beat this losing streak?

Glen picks up a plaque.

**GLEN (CONT’D)**

After careful consideration, the employee of the month for January is...Deb, again.

Deb feigns surprise. No one claps.

Grace stares straight ahead, ‘zombie-like’.

A photoshoot of the employee award ceremony. The DEPT. STORE PHOTOGRAPHER, male, arranges people. He points to Grace.
DEPT. STORE PHOTOGRAPHER
Can you straighten out the mannequins?

Grace doesn't move. She is pushed behind Deb for the photo. She trips; a domino effect - topples over displays, etc.

Glen stands over Grace. Glen ducks as the Staff clean up.

GLEN
Grace-this is atrocious-I can fire you-your work isn't up to snuff-you're not a team player-you don't work hard-you can't take time off after Valentine's Day!

Grace, frozen, eyes glazed over. Staff fixes the area.

GLEN (CONT'D)
Mayhem follows you everywhere.

A Valentine's trinket falls on her head.

INT. BUS. MOVING - NIGHT

Packed. The Bus Passengers cough, sniffle, sneeze, hack up phlegm. All on their phones talking, playing games, etc.

Grace squeezes on with her artist folio, not zipped up.

FEMALE BUS PASSENGER
(on the phone)
I was gushing out all day. It was deep red, not the pretty light red. Loads of thick clotting this time. Gotta try out--

A MALE GYM PASSENGER takes off his coat.

The bus jolts. Grace’s face lands in the Male Gym Passenger’s hairy, wet armpit. Her face/hair are wet from his armpit.

Grace feels her artist folio being tugged.

Two FERAL KIDS, Chucky-like, rip her drawings out. They shove them into their mouths.

Grace stares at them, zombie-like. They grab her.

FERAL KIDS’ MOM
Hey, those are my kids. You can’t take--

FERAL KIDS’ MOM grabs her kids. Feral Kids reach for Grace.

Various animated Passengers’ arms miss Grace. She doesn't duck. She gets bumped. She turns around right into--

A MALE BUS RIDER sprays his hair with an aerosol hair spray into Grace's face.

Her artist folio hits the Feral Kids. They eat more pictures.
Grace sees ‘Snosrap Elite Design School’ and ‘Congratulations Graduates’ banners.

Many Snosrap Students in their graduation gowns, with scale replica models, paintings, plaques, awards, diplomas.

GRACE
Snosrap...My fail.

The bus stops.

BUS DRIVER (O.S.)
The numskull carrying the huge, skinny black suitcase who pokes everyone in the ass. This up-the-ass is overrated. Stop it! Get your kicks elsewhere.

Grace runs off the bus, jostles Passengers with her artist folio, grabs her drawings out of the Feral Kids' mouths.

EXT. GAZEBO PAVILION. CITY GARDEN PARK - NIGHT

The wedding gazebo arches are in front of the main gazebo, in a row, includes Grace's burnt arch. The arches have signs from #1 to #3. Sofia's arch has #1 and Grace's arch has #3.

The main gazebo pavilion is decorated for the main event. The wedding wishing wells are at the entrance of the area.


Pandora holds the mock million dollar cheque.

All the ladies are in high heels.

HANK
No time to waste. Time to act excited. That’s what a contest rehearsal is for.

All talk, their phones in the air, except Grace's.

Grace’s face and hair are wet/shiny from the bus ride, still ‘zombie-like’, doesn't blink, stares straight ahead.

HANK (CONT'D)
You all have to act surprised. Pretend--

Hank sneezes, pulls his scarf/hat on. Pops an allergy pill.

MONTAGE.

- Ian plonks Grace beside him. She keeps falling over. He picks her off the grass and dirt.

- All the Brides hold their fake-bouquets.

- Helga and Boris set up their camera equipment.
- Sofia and Leo fight with Bev and Ken for the middle place.
- They keep dragging their arches to the middle position.
- Ian nor Grace move their arch. It is in the first position.
- All pose for Helga and Boris, except Grace.
- Everyone takes selfies on their phones, except Grace.
- The Judges give Hank the winning envelope.

MONTAGE ENDS.

Ian positions Grace for a selfie.

IAN
Babe, it's you and me forever.

Hank has the envelope. The couples stand under their arches.

HANK
Thank you for attending the first ever 'Design Your Wedding Contest'. It's been an exciting journey following these couples. Today, we reveal the winners.

GRACE
(sotto)
Eight more years.

Pandora brings in the mock million dollar cheque.

HANK
Let’s practice with the first couple.
Grace and Ian, pretend that you have won.
“I hereby present the winners with a million dollar cheque to start their life together forever.”

Ian yells, pumps his fists in the air, drops Grace. He picks her up. They stand together with the mock cheque.

Everyone takes snaps of Grace and Ian with the mock cheque.

All these FLASHES go off.

HANK (CONT’D)
Let’s have a kiss for the photographers.

Grace stares straight ahead. Ian kisses Grace's dirty face.

Helga and Boris knock over their cameras, they start flashing automatically, non-stop.

Others still snapping with flashes.

Grace WAKES-UP. She blinks erratically due to the flashes.
She drops her side of the mock cheque.
She grabs Mark's camera from her bag.
She exits with Mark's camera, her bag and her artist folio.
All chase her. All weave in between the chairs and arches.

HANK (CONT'D)
Stop her! Don’t mess this up.

SOFIA
Cheater, come back.

BEV
You’re ruining the contest, witch.

BORIS
You be still, bride, no be nasty now.

HELGA
Potato sack, you no be sauce dipping.

HANK
We must finish rehearsing the ceremony!

GRACE
Don’t wait up for me.
All pile on top of Grace. She crawls out, sees Pandora about to hit her with the mock cheque. Grace exits.

INT. LOCAL COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER BUILDING - NIGHT
Grace, dirty, runs to Mark's desk. Empty. Spots a REPORTER.

GRACE
Do you know where Mark is?
The Reporter looks her up and down.

REPORTER
Maybe...Can I help you?

GRACE
I’m one of the finalists with the Design Your Wedding Contest.
The Reporter starts recording on an iPad.

REPORTER
Congratulations. But, I don’t think he's covering your story.
The Reporter looks around.

REPORTER (CONT’D)
Sorry to say, but he got fired.
GRACE
He can't.

REPORTER
He lost the newspaper's best camera.

Grace returns that camera. She exits.

EXT. CAFETERIA. COMMUNITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS
Grace runs across the two buildings.

INT. CAFETERIA. COMMUNITY CENTER - CONTINUOUS
Grace scans the packed room, peeks over the kitchen counter.

HOMELESS LADY
You, again? Don't butt in, dirtbag.

HOMELESS MAN
Ya can butt in front of me anytime.

He licks his toothless smile. The Volunteers serve food.

GRACE
Excuse me, has anybody seen Mark tonight?

HOMELESS MAN
Mark can't do what I can do for ya.

Homeless Man gyrates against Grace.

Grace swings around, hits him with her artist folio. Groans.

VOLUNTEER
Who's looking for Mark?

GRACE
Do you know where he is?

The Volunteer checks a clipboard on the wall.

VOLUNTEER
His name's off the volunteer roster.

HOMELESS MAN
Do I hear wedding bells?

GRACE
Not now, pops. The clock has struck way past midnight.

Grace exits.

EXT. GAZEBO PAVILION. CITY GARDEN PARK - NIGHT
Grace, with several knapsacks/bags of art stuff, climbs the fence protecting the wedding contest area.
She fixes her wedding gazebo arch and wedding wishing well.
Uses her phone as a flashlight, says past midnight. Packs up.
Her arch and well are beautiful. Kicks the sign #3 off.

GRACE
My proud.

She turns to exit, sees the other arches and wells.
She looks in her knapsacks/bags. Full of art stuff. Smiles.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Let’s make everybody happy. Art Nouveau or Art Deco?...Back in the pit.

EXT. GAZEBO PAVILION. CITY GARDEN PARK – DAY

The WEDDING WORKERS finish putting on the sponsors’ logos onto the new beautiful ‘Grace-revised’ gazebo pavilion, wedding gazebo arches and wedding wishing wells.

A banner over the main gazebo stage — ‘Congratulations — Design Your Wedding Contest Finalists’.

Packed. All sit/stand (everyone from the script): Old Couple, Blind Person, Blind Guide Dog, Dept. Store Clerks, Customers, Bus Passengers, Hotel Security Guards, Snosrap Students, etc.

Hank stands with the Judges. He takes out his allergy bottle.

The Blind Guide Dog jumps on Hank. He drops his pills.

Ken, Leo and Ian (in Mark’s wig, no glasses) stand beside their arches, tuxes are covered with the sponsors’ logos.

Ken and Leo wear their still unfinished tuxes.

All of the outfits and designs are from the previous wedding design event contests.

Hank eyes several SUITS, both sexes, in the front.
A FEMALE SUIT wears a name tag: ‘TV Executive, Ms. Horatio.’
A MALE SUIT wears a name tag: ‘TV Executive, Mr. Algers.’

The MEDIA and REPORTERS stands at the front.

Mark is hidden behind the Local Community Newspaper’s camera.

The Expo Hostess stands beside the two cars, big wedding cake, designer luggage, globe with the honeymoon photos.

Pandora holds the mock million dollar cheque.

Patches nibbles on the arches at the front.
Ed films. The Blog Followers film and take snaps. Flash.
The Choir sings.
MUSICIANS play music.
The Cupid Mascot dances.
A horse-drawn carriage arrives.
Sofia, Bev and Grace exit the carriage. Their wedding gowns and veils are covered with sponsors’ logos.
Bev waves.
Sofia blows kisses.
Grace hesitates.
Sofia and Bev admire their new ‘Grace-revised’ wells.
Sofia and Bev almost run down the aisle.
The horses take a dump.
Polly runs up and drags Grace out of the carriage.
Her wedding veil gets ripped on the door.

POLLY
Now people can see your face.

GRACE
No, I want to cover my face. I don’t want anybody to see me like this. What--

Grace covers the half-ripped veil over her face.

GRACE (CONT’D)
I’m a walking billboard.

POLLY
Everybody already knows it is you! Duh, famous! Isn’t this what you wanted? These are all your haters. These trolls all love you, that’s why they came today.

Grace sees the Wedding Workers put the sponsors’ logos on.

GRACE
Everything is a billboard.

Grace’s tiara is on crooked, causes her bun to fall out.
She adjusts her wedding diaper.

GRACE (CONT’D)
This wedding diaper is killing me.
Polly pulls it up from behind, giving Grace a wedgie.

POLLY
No wonder why. You have it on backwards!

A bee buzzes around the horses.
They kick poo towards Grace.
Grace steps on the poo, slips and slides about.
The poo flies onto the Guests.
All wipe/smear the poo off.
The Choir dances down the aisle.
The Cupid Mascot joins in.
Grace's bouquet attracts the bees - buzzing.
The horses, spooked from the flashes and the bees, bolt.
Grace's gown is caught in the door, it partially rips off.
A FLOWER GIRL throws flower petals down aisle.

GRACE
Who are you? Uh, I didn't hire you, uh, design you.

A RING BOY walks beside the Flower Girl.

GRACE (CONT'D)
That's not the ring I designed...My wedding prep list?!

Grace's Parents and Polly drag her.
The Blog Followers wave.

MRS. HICCUP
Honey, this is a momentous moment. You will never have this experience, again.

MR. HICCUP
Not for a first time marriage.

The Choir approaches in the aisle.
The Cupid Mascot dances.
Grace waves like the Bride-To-Be at the Hen Party at the pub.
One phone in the air shows Grace's wedding gown along with the same beautiful wedding gown she had designed.
The Crowd sees Ian at the altar and Mark in the Media area.
The Crowd starts whispering.

#1 BLOG FOLLOWER
Isn’t that the first fiancé at the front?

#2 BLOG FOLLOWER
That’s the first groom without glasses.

#3 BLOG FOLLOWER
That new groom looks like him.

#4 BLOG FOLLOWER
Who is Grace marrying if she wins?

Grace hears the whispers. She can’t make it out.

Grace cranes to see at the front of the main gazebo pavilion.

She sees Ian. He winks, smirks, adjusts Rolex. No Mark.

KEN
This is it, mates. No turning back.

LEO
It’ll be over. You should be so lucky--

IAN
Don’t need luck. Hitching up to a winner.

LEO
You don’t know the half of it.

IAN
Good luck...
   (sotto)
Suckers.

KEN
Don’t you wear glasses? Can you see?

Ian checks his pockets, grabs his glasses from his suit.

Double checks to make sure he has his wig on.

The bridal party gets entangled with the Choir in the aisle.

GRACE
No, no, no.

MRS. HICCUP
It'll be fine.

MR. HICCUP
Think of the rest of your life.

MRS. HICCUP
You don’t want to be poor like us.
MR. HICCUP
Working for peanuts forever.

The Choir points at Grace. She flees.
The Choir corrals her towards the altar.
Grace sees Hank, the Judges, Deb, Glen, and the Media.
All reach the main gazebo stage.
Sofia and Bev admire their new ‘Grace-revised’ arches.

SOFIA
(sotto)
We didn’t have money to improve these.

BEV
Who made this? I should win now. My ancestors’ spirits are with me.

Polly drags Grace.

POLLY
That's it. You're doing well. One step--

Grace's shoe has horse poo on it.
She slides across steps, does the splits. All gasp.

IAN
You never showed me that move before.

The couples stand under their arches. Hank has a mic.

HANK
Welcome to the Design Your Wedding Contest. I would like to thank all the sponsors for this wonderful event. Thanks to our three Judges who were absolutely great in picking the designs. A million thanks to the bloggers for voting for the designs. Remember to drop all your coins into the wedding wishing wells. Bills preferred. Drum roll please.

Drum roll. The Expo Hostess gives Hank the envelope.
The Suits are impressed as they look at the Crowd.

HANK (CONT’D)
The winners of the first ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’ are...Sofia and Leo. Congratulations. It couldn’t go to a more deserving couple who truly love each other. Their designs were the best.

Sofia shrieks, freaks out.
Bev cries and berates Ken.
Bev stomps on her bouquet.
Grace is frozen.
Ian has a meltdown, pulling at his wig.
The Judges gasp, look at each other, shakes their heads.
Sofia drags Leo over to the WEDDING OFFICIANT, female, mic'd.
The Wedding Officiant's back is to the Crowd. There are many sponsors' logos on her outfit.
Grace's eyes dart around: sees the Crowd, Judges, Parents, Media, Pandora, mock million dollar cheque, mansion photos, designer luggage, two cars, Patches eating the big cake.
A bead of sweat drips between Grace's eyes.
Grace sees Mark getting jostled with the other Media.
He looks up. They lock eyes.
He points to his camera. He mouths 'thank you'.
Grace half steps off the mini-gazebo. The Crowd gasps.
Polly pulls Grace back.

WEDDING OFFICIANT
Dear friends and family, welcome.

The Wedding Officiant scans Sofia's wedding gown.

WEDDING OFFICIANT (CONT'D)
(Auctioneer)
Without all their support, this would not be possible. May we begin the ceremony?

Hank nods, ushers to rush the ceremony.
Grace’s hair is Chucky-like, tiara half off. Bees buzz about.

WEDDING OFFICIANT (CONT'D)
We are gathered here today to witness and celebrate the union of Sofia and Leo in this marriage. Through their time--

Grace pulls out the ripped massive wedding design contest contract from her wedding diaper. Runs to the front.
GRACE
Stop the charade! This is not a real wedding at all.

WEDDING OFFICIANT
I beg your pardon?

GRACE
This isn’t even a real bonafide contest, let alone a real design contest.

The Wedding Officiant and Grace fight over the mic. Gasps.

Grace waves the ripped wedding design contest contract.

GRACE (CONT’D)
This is the actual wedding contract that we all had to sign. Who is Mabel Edith?

The Crowd googles on their phones. A photo matches Sofia.

#1 BLOG FOLLOWER
That’s Sofia.

#2 BLOG FOLLOWER
Sofia is Mabel Edith.

#3 BLOG FOLLOWER
She’s a fake bride. Leo is her brother.

#4 BLOG FOLLOWER
She’s already married...to Hank.

GRACE
That’s right, folks. This is a sham. There is no Sofia Vegas. ‘Vegas’, really?

SOFIA
‘Hiccup’, really?

Sofia grabs the mic from Grace.

The Wedding Officiant grabs it back.

Grace grabs the mic from the Wedding Officiant.

Grace drags the Wedding Officiant around the stage. They flee from Sofia.

SOFIA (CONT’D)
Please, everyone. This loser bride thinks she can stop me from getting married.

Hank rushes onto the stage, chases after them.

HANK
That is a lie. This is a disgruntled bride who is upset that she lost.
GRACE
It’s over. Buck stops here. Sofia and Hank had a wedding company that went bust, everybody, belly-up. They made up this scam to get a TV deal to pay for their bad hooplah from the other brides.
Yeah, Sofia wants to be on TV. Ha, TV. Ya suck! Famous ain’t your game, duckface.

The Crowd tears down the sponsors’ banners.
The Suits storm out.
Hank runs after them, grabs their legs, being dragged behind.

HANK
This is a sure-fire success, Ms. Horatio.
I know everything about weddings, Mr. Algers. Nobody knows anything except me--

The Judges grab Hank’s legs. They all get dragged behind.
Some grab Hank’s toupee. He hangs onto it.

HANK (CONT’D)
She’s lying. This is a total success. It will be a huge hit on TV. Me as the host.

The Media and the Crowd rush forward with their phones.
Grace shoos away the bees with her bouquet.
Bev chases Sofia.

GRACE
Damn it, get away!

Grace runs in circles dragging the Wedding Officiant.
Sofia trailing them.
Bev jumps on Sofia. The bees follow.
Polly chases Grace. She slams into people and the arches.
Ian runs from Grace with the bees.
Ian’s wig is half-off, more bald spots, the double-sided tape dangling. He keeps fixing his (comb-over) wig.
Some point to Ian’s wig half-off.
Grace tosses her bouquet to Polly.
The bees follow the bouquets.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Who invited these monsters here?
Grace's veil catches on the Cupid Mascot's bow and arrow.
Mark approaches the gazebo the same time as Grace steps off.
Mark catches Grace, puts her back on. Everyone claps.
Hank gets back up on the stage, grabs Ed to film him.

HANK
The wedding must go on. You all signed a contract. You are bound by all this.

Ian smirks at Grace. He nods to Hank.
Hank looks at Ian's wig half-off.
Hank chases Ian. Both men have wigs half-off.

IAN
I'm in.

Ian takes the wedding ring from the FLOWER GIRL, puts it on and waves his hand in Grace's face, Rolex watch hand.

GRACE
It's not yours anymore. You lost. We all lost. Why aren't you listening. There is no million dollars. This is not real.

Grace pushes Ian aside.

GRACE (CONT'D)
(to Mark)
If I was to get married, I'd only do it for love. How about rethinking marriage?

Grace pushes Hank aside.
Hank grabs Grace as he falls. Grace and Hank fall.
Grace points to Mark.
Media closes in on Mark. FLASH.

The Crowd cheers Grace on.

IAN
No way! Grace doesn't love him. He's only in it for the money. It's you and me.

GRACE
WTF?! We're only shag buddies.

IAN
I'm ready to get married now.

Ian gets down on one knee, kisses her hand. Winks at Grace.
IAN (CONT'D)
Come on, Grace. Let's do it.
(whispers)
Think of the money.

A bee lands on Grace's nose.
She swats it with her bouquet.
Her nose swells up. Screams!

GRACE
Ian, listen to me. This cheque is fake.

Grace grabs the mock cheque from Pandora, a tug-of-war fight.
Grace rips up the mock cheque.
She lunges at Ian.
Polly tosses Grace's bouquet.
It hits Hank in the face, catches in his toupee.
He sneezes. Snot flies everywhere.
The gazebo roof collapses.
The decorations fall down on all.
The balloons and confetti fall down.
The DOVES escape, poop on all.
Ian still has the ring, holds it up high.

IAN
I signed the contract. I want to get married. I've been dumped.

Deb immediately puts up her hand.

DEB
I'm single. I'll marry you.

Deb runs up to Ian, hugs him.

DEB (CONT'D)
I can be your sugar baby?!

Ian rips off his wig and glasses. Tosses his wig to Hank.

IAN
Mr. Hank, you need this more than me.

Bev and Ken fight with Sofia, Leo and Hank.
Ian grabs Deb. Turns to Grace.
IAN (CONT’D)
You’ve ruined my life. A bet is a bet.

Grace struggles to take off her wedding diaper.
She throws it away.
It hits Hank. His toupee flies off.

GRACE
(to Deb)
Good luck...you'll need it...forever.

Glen stands up, dusts off the confetti.

GLEN
No one can take time off. No days off till we win any contest.

Glen storms out.

MARK
Helga and Boris send their regrets. They both have a concussion.

Glen returns.

GLEN
Everyone is fired.

Glen exits.

MARK
I don't want to get married because of some contest, no matter how much money.

The Crowd cheers.

MARK (CONT’D)
I never believed in true love before you.

The Crowd claps. The Choir sings and dances.

MARK (CONT’D)
But, I would like to spend my life with you. I’ve seen you at your worst and your best. The worst is not that bad.

GRACE
Thanks. I think.

MARK
Dear ‘friends’, I know I am lucky to have met you even by mistake...

Mark points to the Crowd.

The Crowd cheers.
Grace and Mark kiss for the Crowd and the cameras. Flash.
The Cupid Mascot hugs them.
Grace and Mark push the Cupid Mascot away.
The Cupid Mascot rolls into Hank, rolls around the stage.

GRACE
Get off my broken gazebo.

Grace looks at her Parents. They hesitate, then clap.

MRS. HICCUP
Congratulations, honey.

MR. HICCUP
You got it right, indeed.

Grace looks at Mark. Both shrug.

GRACE
People, listen up. St. Valentine’s has left the building. Foreve--

The Cupid Mascot rolls into Grace.
The Crowd claps and shoot all their devices into the air.

GRACE (CONT’D)
Are you and I the only ones who get this was all a sick joke?

MARK
No one will believe this was all a farce until I write about it in the papers.

Ian jumps up/down, shows off the wedding ring. No one looks.
Ian runs to the new cars, gyrates against them, drools.

HANK
(sotto)
What a massacre.

Hank holds a big Valentine’s heart, backs away from it all (snot drips from his nose, confetti is stuck on his mouth).

Hank reaches for a wig without looking.
Puts on Mark’s wig.
The bees buzz at Hank.
Grace and Mark are dirty.
They hold hands and jump off the gazebo stage into...
EXT. TREVI FOUNTAIN. ROME, ITALY - DAY

...the Trevi Fountain.

Grace pops out of the water, clean face, with her torn veil.

Mark pops out of the water, clean face.

They both look up at the fountain statue.

GRACE
Baroque, my favorite.

Grace and Mark both take off their fake, colorful kids’ candy ‘wedding rings’.

They toss them with their right hand, over their left shoulders into the fountain.

The ITALIAN SECURITY GUARDS chase them.

An ITALIAN CROWD and TOURISTS gather.

Grace and Mark run around in the fountain.

They grab their knapsacks, old and duct taped up.

Grace and Mark toss more fake, colorful kids’ candy ‘wedding rings’, with tinsel and pine tree needles on them.

The Crowd, including KIDS, plunge into the fountain looking for the wedding rings, thinking the rings are real.

#1 ITALIAN KID
I be first see diamond ring. Richie rich.

#2 ITALIAN KID
I be rich when I find first.

Mark shows Grace his newspaper article on his phone: ‘Scam Wedding Design Contest - Host and Fake Bride arrested.’

A photo of Hank and Sofia in handcuffs.

Grace and Mark take selfies waving like the Bride-To-Be.

The Crowd realizes the rings are fake.

Some laugh, some curse.

Some Kids splash Grace and Mark as well as climb on them.

Grace and Mark hug the Kids.

One Kid puts on the fake, colorful kids’ candy ‘wedding ring’, shows everyone.
Grace takes a selfie of the three of them. All lick their fake, colorful kids’ candy ‘wedding rings’.

Grace instantly posts them on a different blog from the ‘Design Your Wedding Contest’ blog.

This blog has a ‘true love trip’ crowdfunding website for Grace and Mark’s world trip as ‘consciously unmarried’.

On the side of the blog are the gifts/rewards for money:

-Grace decorating a wedding gazebo (Grace’s wedding gazebo photos before the fire)
-Grace decorating a department store’s window display (her original Valentine’s Day display)
-
-Grace drawing a family portrait

The amount on the money pledge’o’meter is at the top of $100,000 and flowing over.

Grace’s offer to ‘decorate a window display’ has reached its bid with Glen’s bid from the department store.

Glen posts on the blog – must win something soon, end this losing streak or he will be fired, begs Grace to come back.

The Fans have posted the City Garden Park’s wedding decorations on the blog.

Grace and Mark kiss each other in front of the fountain.

GRACE
This is my jackpot...my love jackpot.

MONTAGE CREDITS - photos taken from the various cameras:

-Grace’s, Mark’s, Polly’s, Helga and Boris’s, Dept. Store Photographer’s camera, Otto’s Engagement photos, etc.

-A selfie of Deb showing her baby bump sitting in front of the TV eating old Christmas candy with Polly and Ian.

-A selfie of Ian as a janitor at the dept. store (i.e., cleaning toilets, cleaning vomit, dumping out trash, etc.).

-A selfie of Deb working on the new St. Patrick’s Day window display with Polly patting Deb’s stomach. Terrible design.

MONTAGE CREDITS END.

FADE OUT.