



Carpoolers

"The Toaster"

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Revised Network Draft

"THE TOASTER"

COLD OPENING

EXT./INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

LEILA and CINDY peer out at a car full of CARPOOLERS (GRACEN, LAIRD, AUBREY and DOUGIE). The men sit comically motionless.

CINDY
What are they doing out there?

LEILA
Oh, you know them. Probably talking about work...

INT. CAR - SAME MOMENT

But the Carpoolers are listening to 'riff rock' full blast. They groove almost imperceptibly. After the song ends:

GRACEN
Okay. Now I'm ready to face my family.

AUBREY/DOUGIE
Me too./Let's hit it.

Cleansed, fortified, they get out - ready for home.

MAIN TITLES: Music: UP-TEMPO. The CARPOOLERS move toward us, a little like rock stars. As they arrive at the car and strike a pose, the sprinklers explode behind them backlit by the sun.

ACT ONE

INT. BROOKER'S KITCHEN - MORNING

LEILA stares at a toaster, delighted by its high-tech gleam. She drops in the bread as her husband, GRACEN, enters.

GRACEN
New toaster?

LEILA
Yeah...

GRACEN
What was wrong with the old one?

LEILA
Nothing. But this is the new one.

GRACEN

Yikes...Looks expensive. I hate to ask, but-

LEILA

-Two hundred. But...you should taste the toast.

They turn to see MARMADUKE dressed only in his underwear. He arrives just as the toast pops. He snatches 'Gracen's toast.'

GRACEN

Hey man, what you got on for the day?

MARMADUKE

Why you asking me?

GRACEN

Because it's your day...man.

LEILA

Marmaduke has an interview...and I'm at the house. My flip's almost done. I can smell the money!

MARMADUKE

Da-ad? Can I borrow a shirt with a collar and a whatcha' call it...tie?

GRACEN

And pants?

MARMADUKE

Da-ad, I don't need pants. It's an online interview. Like they all are nowadays. Don't you know anything?

GRACEN

Apparently not...see, I didn't even know a toaster could cost two hundred dollars.

LEILA

Don't worry. I paid for it with my own money.

(looking out window)

The boys are here!

EXT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - MORNING

The car pulls up. Inside are AUBREY (sweet to a fault) and DOUGIE (young and eager at times seeming 'a bit much.')

DOUGIE

Hey, check this on out. I've been reading up on what makes a great handshake.

AUBREY

Have you? Sure, I'll give it a whirl.

DOUGIE

(slowly shakes his hand)
Is that fantastic or what?...I plan to make five million dollars with that thing. Do you know what a handshake is?

AUBREY

I believe I do. Yes.

DOUGIE

A business man's kiss.

AUBREY

Ewww...

Grossed out Aubrey looks at his hand like he just had sex with it. Laird (the 'playboy dentist') literally hops the fence.

LAIRD

Hey, Aubrey how was your night?

AUBREY

Busy. Keeping things together at home. Apparently a couple of my kids are vegetarians now...you?

LAIRD

Killer. You ever met a woman so hot, you could have sex with her phone number?

AUBREY

I can honestly say that I haven't.

Dougie extends his hand to Laird. He just glares at it.

LAIRD

No thanks. I'll pass.

DOUGIE

I've perfected my handshake. I was working on it all night.

LAIRD

Really? So that's what you do when your wife goes to sleep?

DOUGIE

Hey, just tryin' to 'care and share.' Hopin' to get to know you.

LAIRD

You want to get to know me? Come watch me get a lap dance...C'mon, this is your third day in the car. Yesterday it was "seven words that will change your life"!

DOUGIE

Frankly, I think you're afraid of my handshake. Because it says a lot about me. It says that I'm the new generation, that I'm bursting forth with new ideas. The future couldn't happen fast enough for me. And that's the kind of game I'm going to bring to this carpool.

LAIRD

Keep talkin' - you'll be walkin'.

AUBREY

Don't fight!

Gracen emerges, not happy to be throwing away his old toaster.

LAIRD

What are you doing with that?

GRACEN

Throwing it out. It still works but apparently it's the 'old' toaster.

LAIRD

(taking it)
Can I have it?

AUBREY

(secretly to Dougie)
She took everything. This will be the closest thing he'll have to actual furniture...Gentlemen, let's carpool.

INT. CAR - A MOMENT LATER

DOUGIE

There's a mailbox up here on the right. Is there any way I could mail a letter real quick?

LAIRD

Sure.

Laird snatches the letter and throws it out the window.

AUBREY

No stops. It's kind of a rule.

DOUGIE

Laird, someday, I'll get you back for that. It may not be today, it may not be tomorrow-

(suddenly yanks Laird's tie)
-Oh! I guess it was today.

GRACEN

Children please...behave.

INT. CAR - MORNING RUSH HOUR

The freeway is crammed. The carpool lane, a lone ribbon of freedom. The car blasts down the lane.

GRACEN

Well, this time she spent two hundred dollars on a toaster.

LAIRD/AUBREY

Oooh.../That's bad.

GRACEN

That's a hundred dollars a slice.

DOUGIE

Two hundred's a lot. But it all depends on how much 'bank' you got.

(off Gracen's look)
Don't mean to get too personal.

AUBREY

-Nothing's too personal. We're Carpoolers.

GRACEN

Okay Aubrey, how much do you make?

AUBREY

Well, it's complicated really.
There's many ways to look at it,
gross, net, how much allowance my
wife gives me-

LAIRD

-Why is it that us guys can get lap
dances next to each other, but it's
"too personal" to talk about our
income?...Okay guys, on three we'll
all say how much money we make.

VARIOUS

Okay./Fine./Great idea.

LAIRD

One...two...three...

Beat. Nobody speaks. They all break out laughing.

AUBREY

...Actually, my wife gets my check.
I don't even know what my salary is.

GRACEN

Well you should. And maybe you should
remind her that marriage is a tricky
shadow dance of give and take and
that lately it's like you've been
playing catch-up in your own home.

AUBREY

Okay then...

EXT. COMMUTER CENTER - LATER

Pulling in, they see an empty spot at the same time as a high-
end BMW does (this is the 'cool' carpool - their rivals).
Laird jumps out and blocks them as Aubrey nabs the spot.

CUT TO: The guys moving toward the buildings in the distance.

LAIRD

Leila simply needs to talk to you
about the way she spends your money.

GRACEN

My money? See, all the money I make
is 'our money', all the money she
makes is 'her money.' She bought it
with hers.

DOUGIE

And how much green does she bring to the scene?

GRACEN

Lately she's been making loads but I don't know. There are things we don't talk about, and money's one of them.

LAIRD

You know what would be disturbing? If your wife made more than you.

GRACEN

Not a chance. From a hobby, c'mon? ...Could she?

DOUGIE

Why is that even on your radar?

LAIRD

Listen, Bambi, here's how it works. Men go off to war, and women shop. And if we don't do what men are supposed to do, are we really 'men'? And if men don't provide for women- do they really need us?

GRACEN

I wish I knew how much she made.

LAIRD

Let's find out.

GRACEN

I can't. Nope. No way.

LAIRD

Say no more. Just leave it with me.

DOUGIE

(under)
What does that mean?

AUBREY

Trouble...

END OF ACT

BUMPER

EXT. FREEWAY - SOME OTHER DAY

SUPER: "CARPOOL RULE - NUMBER 15"

Cars drive down a bustling freeway. Papers fly through the air and adhere to a car's windshield causing a near-accident.

Up ahead, we see the source of the trouble: a whirlwind of documents coming from inside the Carpoolers' car.

Inside: All stare at Dougie. He has opened his briefcase while the windows were down. FREEZE. SUPER: "NO WORKING IN THE CAR."

ACT TWO

INT. GRACEN'S OFFICE - LATER

Behind a door reading: "GRACEN BROOKER MEDIATOR," he sits with a feuding couple SUE and TED HENDZEL and RIKKI their son (8).

SUE

-No I'm talking, Ted! Gracen tell him the whole neighborhood can see that Ted's been dating cheerleaders.

TED

What I do in my house, my hot-tub, is my business!

SUE

Yes, but if Rikki's coming over, the least you can do is pick up the pom-poms and the panties!

TED

Hey, I'm just trying to teach the kid about life. In this case 'the good life.'

Ted and Rikki high-five. Gracen seems distracted.

GRACEN

I see. I wonder...is it possible that the real issue here is money?

SUE/TED

Money?

GRACEN

Yes, sometimes things fall apart because a man feels like he's not doing what a man's supposed to do.

TED

Hey, that's what the cheerleaders are for!

GRACEN

I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about providing. Are you two locked in a power-struggle over money?

SUE

I didn't think so...but maybe?

GRACEN

Now, I want each of you to write down how much money you make.
(to the kid)
You too, Rikki...

He hands them pens and paper, then notices Laird at the door.

LAIRD

I hate to interrupt, but I already have.

GRACEN

What?

LAIRD

(bad code)
I have some information about the person we were talking about this morning. You know, the married lady with the sexy legs?

GRACEN

Okay. You folks excuse me.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

LAIRD

(bursting)
I know how much money Leila has!

GRACEN

Really? How'd you find out?

LAIRD

Gracen, I'm a dentist. I can move in any circle. I'm a healer, like a doctor. I wield the power of a cop. Yet, I'm a friend of the worker, respected-

GRACEN

-You're a dentist.

LAIRD

Yes. Yes I am...more specifically, I had a 'cleaning and a sleep over' with a woman who works at your bank. Apparently there's been a lot of 'activity' in Leila's account. You wanna know how much is in there?

GRACEN

No! I'm not going to check up on people that I love. I'm not going to...go give my son a drug test.

LAIRD

Marmaduke? Definitely.

GRACEN

Bad example. But it's wrong to snoop-

LAIRD

-Tell me, is it wrong to stand on your ex-wife's wobbly fence, putting a mirror up in the hollow of a tree, trying to catch a glimpse of whose socked feet are on top of her this time? I should have seen the signs. The late night calls, the ass-print on the sliding glass door. If I had I might still be married...or divorced a whole lot sooner.

GRACEN

You might be seeing things through the prism of your own experience.

LAIRD

Maybe. But my point is...information is power. So I'll just write 'the number' down, so if you want to take a peek - it's here.

He tucks it in Gracen's shirt.

INT. MARMADUKE'S ROOM - DAY

At his computer sits Marmaduke, shirt, tie, but pantless. He's printed and taped-up a picture of a bookcase of 'smart books.' To a web-camera, it will look real. He logs on.

COMPUTERIZED VOICE

After the beep, say your name. BEEP!

MARMADUKE

Marmaduke Brooker.

COMPUTERIZED VOICE

You are now in a virtual waiting room. We will be with you shortly.

We hear MUZAK. A picture of a plant comes on-screen. Then, the broadcast switches to MR. HEGGIE (60), sitting at a desk.

COMPUTERIZED VOICE (CONT'D)

Mr. Heggie will see you now.

MR. HEGGIE

(off bookcase)

Wow. You certainly like to read.

MARMADUKE

Well, I dabble.

MR. HEGGIE

I read your resume and I'm quite impressed.

MARMADUKE

Really?

MR. HEGGIE

Yes. Most people with a resume this lame would lie about it.

MARMADUKE

To tell the truth, I think it's important to be truthful.

MR. HEGGIE

I see here under "hobbies" you've listed "being interested." And under "interests" you listed "finding hobbies."

MARMADUKE

Listen, if you want to go hire some guy who's all busy with hobbies and interests, be my guest!

MR. HEGGIE

Okay...you sold me. Someone from accounting will be on to talk about fees and payments. You got the job.

MARMADUKE

Yes!

Marmaduke jumps in the air triumphantly. As he does, Mr. Heggie clearly catches him in his underwear.

EXT. RUN-DOWN SUBURBAN HOUSE - DAY

Leila carries an open-house sign across her lawnless house flip. She's in her element as she conducts the workers.

LEILA

I need a lawn. Where exactly is my lawn?!

WORKER # 1

We're painters, Ma'am.

LEILA

Well then...let's get you painting.

She leads them to the front door, but before they can enter:

LEILA (CONT'D)

(pointing to boots)
Mind taking those off?

WORKER # 1

Our work boots?

LEILA

Yes. What's the point of fixing up a house if you're going to get it all muddy again?

The guys comply as other bootless workers emerge from inside.

LEILA (CONT'D)

Where exactly do you think you're going?

WORKER # 2

We'll finish later. We got another-

LEILA

-Not a chance.

(grabbing boots)

I'm keeping these until you finish
the job!

WORKER # 2

Give me back my work boots!

LEILA

You'll get them Saturday, after the
open house.

She tosses them in the trunk. SLAM. Then, her phone rings.

LEILA (CONT'D)

(into phone)

You got it? Marm, that's fantastic!

INT. GRACEN'S OFFICE - A MOMENT LATER

The phone rings. Gracen picks up.

GRACEN

Hey, Leila. He did? Wow. That's
great. Just out of curiosity, did he
say how much he's going to make?

(pained beat)

Wow, that's a lot of money...to some
people.

Caving, he covers the phone and looks at 'the number.'

GRACEN (CONT'D)

OH Christ! That's a lot of money!

EXT. RUN-DOWN SUBURBAN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Behind her, Leila sees the bootless workers making a run for
it.

LEILA

(into phone)

What, Sweetie? Oh! Gotta go. My crew
is escaping.

END OF ACT TWO

BUMPER

INT. CAR - SOME OTHER DAY

SUPER: "CARPOOL RULE: NUMBER 21"

The Carpoolers drive home from work, singing soulfully to "All Out of Love" by Air Supply. (?) We and the guys notice that Aubrey is a little too into it.

GRACEN

Are you crying?

AUBREY

Yeah. Truth is, I lost my virginity to this song.

FREEZE. SUPER: "WHAT HAPPENS IN THE CARPOOL LANE - STAYS IN THE CARPOOL LANE."

ACT THREE

EXT. COMMUTER CENTER - AFTER WORK

Dougie and Aubrey stand with Laird. He looks at something.

AUBREY/DOUGIE

What a figure./What I could do to that!

Gracen snatches it back. We realize it's 'the number.'

GRACEN

Yes, it's more! My wife makes more money than I do!

Gracen looks over to see the 'cool' carpoolers have overheard. They eat sushi and snicker.

DOUGIE

(under)
How come they get sushi?

Gracen slams the trunk shut feebly.

GRACEN

Would you open the trunk? I forgot to take off my jacket.

Aubrey opens it. Gracen can't help himself, he slams it again.

INT. CARPOOL LANE - A LITTLE LATER

The guys drive in steely silence.

LAIRD

There's no delicate way to ask this question. Does she get on top a lot?

GRACEN

On top of what?
(realizing)
For God's sake, Laird!

LAIRD

Let me ask it this way - When you guys tenderly make love, are you the toaster, or the toast?

GRACEN

It's been...people get busy. Sometimes things that are supposed to happen, don't happen as often as they should...none of your business.

LAIRD

Gracen! You got a babe of a wife, you're not keeping her 'serviced,' and she makes more money than you! Don't you see it man? You're losing control of your home. You're on your way out. You're the old toaster.

DOUGIE

Simple power politics. "Never own a dog you can't beat up."
(off their look)
Like I told you yesterday, seven words that can change your life - "Words can't change your life, actions can."

GRACEN

He's right. I've got to get rid of that toaster.

LAIRD/DOUGIE

Yes, like I said./Right, like I said.

GRACEN

Soon as I get home it's gone!

INT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

A 'toast party' is in full swing. Some neighborhood women, including DORINDA and Sue Hendzel, mill around the toaster.

SUE
Mmm, that is so good.

DORINDA
That's mind-blowing toast.

The door opens. There stands Dougie's wife, CINDY.

LEILA
There she is...

CINDY
(offering a box)
Hi Leila. Thanks for having me over.
I made you a little thank you gift.

LEILA
Well, I wanted you to meet everybody.

Leila opens the present. It's oven mitts.

LEILA (CONT'D)
You made oven mitts?

CINDY
Yeah, and I made the box too. No
biggie.

LEILA
That is so...generous. Thank you.

Leila turns to the group.

LEILA (CONT'D)
Hey, everyone? This is Cindy. She and
Dougie just moved here.

"Hellos" all around.

SUE
Cindy, tell us about yourself.

CINDY
(nervously)
Oh, there's nothing much to tell,
really...okay. I was born in an apple
orchard. I had the world's best
childhood.

(MORE)

CINDY (CONT'D)

All my great-grandparents are still alive, so I guess I'm pretty lucky. At Christmas, I like to chop down my own Christmas tree. Then I plant one to replace it! I love being a homemaker, although I don't make my own bread, because bakers have to make a living too! I'm passionate about recycling. I'm crazy about scrap-booking. I'm trying to get my husband to start a coin collection, but we'll see how that goes!

EXT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

The car pulls up and the Carpoolers stare in horror at the party going on inside.

GRACEN

What are they doing in there?

INT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - SAME MOMENT

Leila notices the car outside.

LEILA

Oh, hey. They're home.

Leila and Cindy peer out the curtains at the Carpoolers sitting motionless as in the Cold Opening.

CINDY

What are they doing out there?

LEILA

Oh you know them. Probably talking about work.

EXT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - SAME MOMENT

The guys get out of the car. Gracen notices:

GRACEN

I didn't know she was having a party?

LAIRD

It's happening already. You got to get rid of that toaster!

Leila and Cindy wave at them from the window.

GRACEN

I can't now. Look at all those people. I don't want to-

LAIRD

-To be the man of the house?

GRACEN

Look, I am. And I'm gonna go show her. You want to come watch?

AUBREY

I can't. 'Cause at work today, I went into my boss's office to ask how much I make, he thought I was asking for a raise and he gave me one. So, I'm going home to demand my wife raise my allowance.

Gracen turn to Laird: "Well?"

LAIRD

(scoffing)

Not a chance. Brother, if you're not careful you're gonna be living alone with your best friend's toaster!

He grabs Gracen's old toaster from the trunk and storms off.

INT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - A MOMENT LATER

Gracen and Dougie enter to the sight of people eating toast. Cindy runs up to Dougie and they embrace - A young couple.

CINDY

So, how was carpooling? Anything interesting happen?

DOUGIE

Nothing really jumps to mind.

CINDY

Then why did I get a call from someone who found our phone bill in a tree?

DOUGIE

Oh right...I was going to tell you about it as soon as I got home.

CINDY

No secrets.

DOUGIE

No. Of course not.

GRACEN
(to Leila)
We're having a toast-party?

LEILA
I made an executive decision. I knew
you wouldn't mind...hungry?

He scoffs at the toaster and spread of jellies and jams.

GRACEN
Nah, princess. I need something a
little more filling than that.

Thumbs in belt loops, he strides toward the fridge.

LEILA
(under, confused)
Princess...?

Gracen noisily opens the fridge. He grabs some milk and takes
a huge gulp straight from the carton.

GRACEN
(all animal)
Now that hits the spot...

LEILA
You're drinking my almond Lactaid
now?

Beat. He looks at the carton in horror. He gets an idea: He
walks away, leaving the refrigerator door wide open.

Shocked looks all round. But then, the fridge door swings shut
on it's own with hydraulic precision. The crowd coos.

SUE/DORINDA
Look at that!/What an amazing fridge.

LEILA
Yeah, it's new. A specialist had to
come from Germany to set it up. It's
kind of expensive, but it's worth it.

DORINDA
Maybe we should all start flipping
houses.

Good-natured laughter. Gracen is thwarted. Leila smiles. A
ground-pounding noise comes from outside. People turn to see
the family car has now been 'pimped out.'

SUE

It's Ted. And look what he's done to
the Taurus!?

Then, young Rikki walks to the door. Leila opens it.

LEILA

Hi there, Rikki.

RIKKI

Oh, hi mom. Dad's helping me sell
raffle tickets.

SUE

I can see that.

Gracen sees a way to make a statement.

GRACEN

This is on me...I'll take thirty.
(pulling out wallet)
And how much are they?

RIKKI

They're twenty dollars each.

GRACEN

Oh...is that all?
(that hurts)
Then in that case...I'll need fifty.

LEILA

Gracen! Isn't that a bit much?

GRACEN

No, not for me. And, I'm sure it's
for a good cause.

RIKKI

It's to buy new tennis ball-machines
for the club.

GRACEN

See? That's an important cause.
Let's see...
(offering credit card)
Do you take credit cards?

RIKKI

(unsure)
I'll go ask my dad...

As he does, everyone turns to see a melodramatic Marmaduke. He's wearing his pajamas and holding a pillow. He grabs a platter of food then realizes people are staring at him.

MARMADUKE

What are you all looking at? Haven't you ever seen a hungry kid before?

Marmaduke turns to go back to his room but bumps into Dougie.

DOUGIE

You're Marmaduke, right?

MARMADUKE

Yeah.

DOUGIE

I'm Dougie. I carpool with your Dad.

Dougie shakes his hand. Marmaduke finds it unnerving.

MARMADUKE

(suspiciously)
How old are you?

DOUGIE

Twenty-two.

MARMADUKE

So am I...I know you. Did you go to Rosemead High?

DOUGIE

Yeah. This is my wife, Cindy.

MARMADUKE

(to Dougie upset)
You think you're so great with your big job and your pretty wife? I have a job where I don't wear pants!

LEILA

(embarrassed, explaining)
The job's on the internet.
(off stunned looks)
Oh, it's not that kind of job!

Marmaduke storms into his room.

LEILA (CONT'D)

(aside to Gracen)
He's really acting strange. I'll go talk to him.

GRACEN

No no no. It takes a man's strong hand to tame a wild horse.

Leila shrugs. She has no idea what to do with either of them.

INT. MARMADUKES ROOM - A MOMENT LATER

Marmaduke lies face-down on his bed. Gracen enters.

GRACEN

Hey. How's it going?

MARMADUKE

(glumly)
Why you asking me...

GRACEN

I heard about the job.

MARMADUKE

You heard I lost my job?

GRACEN

No, I heard you got a job. I guess I missed something.

MARMADUKE

Dad, it sounded like a dream job. Five thousand a week for recommending my favorite music.

GRACEN

That does sound like a dream job.

MARMADUKE

But then they wanted a 'sign up fee' of two thousand dollars. So I gave them your credit card number and expiration date. Then they fired me.

GRACEN

They fired you?

MARMADUKE

I wonder if it was some sort of scam.

GRACEN

Yeah. It sounds like a scam. Of course you didn't have a job where you made more than your old man.

MARMADUKE

Wow. I feel better that it's not my fault I lost another job.

GRACEN

You should feel better.

(has to add)

Except for the credit card part...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gracen walks in. People look at him awkwardly.

LEILA

Your card didn't go through.

GRACEN

What?

LEILA

They phoned it in. It was declined. Here, why don't I just get it?

EVERYONE

I'll help./Let me pitch in.

It's a degrading spectacle as everyone scrounges for money.

LEILA

Sweetie, go get my purse.

Gracen, beaten, goes and grabs LEILA'S PURSE.

EXT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - SAME MOMENT

Through the window we see Gracen with the purse. From ANOTHER ANGLE: we realize Laird is watching from behind his fence.

LAIRD

(to himself)

That's it. Do the dishes. Then put on an apron, like a trained little monkey. You need help, my brother. You need help.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT./INT. BROOKER HOUSE - NIGHT

Gracen stands at the toilet. He is torn as he contemplates leaving THE TOILET SEAT UP. He turns. There stands Leila.

LEILA

Can't decide if you want to pee
standing up or sitting down?

Flustered he shuts the door on her. It's "on." She storms off.

INT. LAIRD'S HOUSE - SAME MOMENT

Laird's house is, as advertised, almost empty. The glow from Gracen's toaster illuminates his face. He picks up the phone.

INT. AUBREY'S HOUSE - SAME MOMENT

A portrait of a modern disconnected family: The house is a cacophony of self-absorbed kids. Aubrey, dressed in his pajamas, picks up after them, cooking, handing out money etc. The phone rings. Like animals, the kids run to answer it.

KIDS (O.S.)

I got it./I got it./I got it./Hello?

SON (O.S.)

It's for Aubrey.

DAUGHTER (O.S.)

Who's Aubrey?
(realizing)
Oh...Dad! Phone!

AUBREY

(into phone)
Who is it?

LAIRD

(from phone)
It's Laird.

AUBREY

I should keep this line free in case
one of my kids gets a call.

LAIRD

What are you doing?

AUBREY

I'm holding down the fort. My wife is exhausted from watching TV.

As he turns, we see some over-sized female feet on an ottoman.

LAIRD

I need your help. Can you get out of the house?

AUBREY

Alright. If you really need me.

He hangs up. He takes a breath. This is a big moment. Grasping for a plan, he grabs the garbage.

AUBREY(CONT'D)

Daddy's taking out the garbage!

INT./EXT. AUBREY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Kids watch as he leaves, goes past the curb and keeps going.

VARIOUS KIDS

What's he doing?/Dad never goes out at night.

INT. DOUGIE'S HOUSE - A MOMENT LATER

Dougie and Cindy are asleep in bed. An angelic child sleeps in a bassinet. The phone rings. Dougie answers it.

DOUGIE

Hello Laird.

LAIRD

(from phone)
It's Laird!

DOUGIE

I know. I have caller-ID. Why are you calling me so late?

LAIRD

I want to try out that world-class handshake everyone's talking about.

DOUGIE

I'm in my pajamas. Let's 'get it on' tomorrow.

LAIRD

Right now...unless you're afraid of
my handshake.

DOUGIE

(rising to the challenge)
I'm already there...

LAIRD

Oh, and one more thing...

Click. Laird hangs up. Dougie is not happy about it.

EXT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - A LITTLE LATER

Laird waits as Aubrey arrives with his garbage. Dougie approaches, offers his hand. Laird just stares at it.

LAIRD

Save it, Bambi. I brought you here
for another reason...we're going to
give Gracen his life back by stealing
his toaster!

DOUGIE

I'm not insane, so - no.

LAIRD

You want to get to know me? Help me
break into my best friend's house.

DOUGIE

Sorry, it's not part of my 'five year
plan' to do hard time for armed
robbery!

AUBREY

I'm not armed! Are you guys armed?

LAIRD

Dougie, when I met you there was
something I hated about you, but
there was also something I liked
about you. Meaning you're just smart
enough and dumb enough to fit into
this carpool. What are the 'seven
words that can change your life?'

DOUGIE/AUBREY

"Words can't save your life - actions
can."

LAIRD

Well? Do you mean what you say?

DOUGIE

I said Gracen should get rid of his toaster. Not us.

LAIRD

But, sometimes friends need their friends. We help each other out. It's what carpoolers do.

AUBREY

(suddenly sure)
I'm in!

DOUGIE

I'm in.

Dougie extends his hand. Laird finally shakes it.

LAIRD

One more thing...

DOUGIE

What?

Laird slaps him.

LAIRD

We're even.

Dougie smiles. Then together, they move toward the window.

INT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - A MOMENT LATER

Leila walks into the kitchen - preparing for a fight. Leila just misses them as she turns and marches back upstairs.

INT. GRACEN AND LEILA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Leila walks into the bedroom and stands over Gracen.

LEILA

Okay, I can't stand this anymore.
What's eating you?

GRACEN

Nothing. Nothing at all...
It's that damned toaster!

LEILA

What? That's it?

GRACEN

And the way you've been throwing your money around.

LEILA

So what if I've been buying a few things? If I have money to spend-

GRACEN

-Yeah, I know how you have the money.

LEILA

Well, I don't have that much.

GRACEN

Yes, you do. I know - I saw your balance.

LEILA

My account balance? I can't believe you'd snoop to find out my bank balance! How'd you get it?

GRACEN

(spinning)

C'mon. I'm a mediator. You know I can move in any circle. I solve problems like a lawyer, yet I get paid more like a cop-

LEILA

-What are you talking about?!

GRACEN

I was jealous...because you make more money than me.

LEILA

Oh...wow...

GRACEN

From a hobby you've been at for like, two years!

LEILA

You think what I do is a hobby? It's something I'm really good at.

GRACEN

I know you are and I'm proud of you...maybe I did think of it as a hobby. I shouldn't have. I'm sorry.

(MORE)

GRACEN (CONT'D)

My job's always been to provide for you two, and lately...see, if I don't know my job, then I don't know my place.

LEILA

Your place is here.

(holding him)

And your job is to keep loving us... Maybe I do spend too much money sometimes. I've been trying to help take the load off of you...but still I should talk to you before I spend four hundred dollars on a toaster.

GRACEN

Four hundred? I thought you said it was two hundred.

LEILA

Oh grow up! From now on, let's pool our money.

GRACEN

You're right. What's ours is ours.

They laugh and cuddle. It turns the corner toward sex. She moves to straddle him.

GRACEN (CONT'D)

(oh no you don't)

Uh-uh...

Countering, he rolls her over and gets on top. She smiles.

INT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME MOMENT

The guys crawl through the kitchen window. Immediately, they get tangled in the blinds. They hear a noise and freeze. The sound gets closer. The fridge door opens, revealing Marmaduke, dressed only in his underwear. He notices them.

MARMADUKE

(nonplussed)

Oh, hey guys.

AUBREY/DOUGIE/LAIRD

Hey./Hi./Hey there.

Without missing a beat, Marmaduke takes two quarts of milk and goes back to bed as though nothing were amiss. Beat. The guys search through the darkened kitchen for the toaster.

DOUGIE
(whispering)
I got it! Let's go.

Suddenly, the lights flip on. There stands Gracen catching the guys. Dougie holds the toaster. Laird holds a blender.

LAIRD
You don't see me...we're here to get rid of your problem-toaster.

GRACEN
And why are you stealing my blender?

LAIRD
I thought it would look more realistic?

GRACEN
I appreciate that you guys were willing to break into my house and rob me, but things with me and Leila are quite fine. In fact, we're having a late-night snack because we just worked up 'quite an appetite.'

LAIRD
(catching the drift)
Oh yeah? Were you the 'toaster' or the 'toast'?

GRACEN
A little bit of both.

LEILA (O.S.)
Gracey?

They freeze. Leila's coming down the stairs. Panic. In the scramble to leave they drop the toaster, breaking it. Leila walks in to see: the broken toaster and the Carpoolers outside, scurrying off and getting doused as the sprinklers go off.

Leila rolls her eyes and heads upstairs. A smile crosses Gracen's face. He chases her back to bed triumphantly.

MUSIC: "Won't Get Fooled Again" by The Who.

INT./EXT. BROOKER'S HOUSE - THE NEXT MORNING

Aubrey and Dougie watch Gracen kiss Leila good-bye. Marmaduke rushes out. He gives Gracen a sheet of paper.

MARMADUKE

I wanted to make up for the credit card thing. I think this will more than do it. It's a list of my favorite music.

GRACEN

(off list)
Who's "Freedom Jail"?

MARMADUKE

Oh, that's my band. We haven't rehearsed yet, or learned our instruments.

GRACEN

Great. Keep me posted.

Gracen turns to see Laird sheepishly carrying back the 'old toaster'. Gracen's happy to take it, until:

GRACEN (CONT'D)

It smells like perfume.

LAIRD

The woman from the bank. I had to thank her for giving me that information.

(off Gracen's look)
Yeah, like you've never used a hot toaster as foreplay.

Just then a WOMAN'S HEAD pops up from the other side of the fence. She jumps over and starts walking towards them.

LAIRD (CONT'D)

Guys, mind if we give my 'friend' a ride home on the way to work?

INT. CAR - A LITTLE LATER

Rocketing down the carpool lane, the Carpoolers are none too pleased as the woman sits in the back between them - FREEZE.

SUPER: "CARPOOL RULE: NUMBER 1 - NO GIVING RIDES."

END OF SHOW