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 BROKER 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 triumpantly. 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
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)
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!

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.
(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.
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