



**Wade Bradford**

Norman Maine Publishing

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**THUMBS UP!**

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## **THUMBS UP!**

**FARCE.** Two movie critics, Edward Nickel and Michael Gilbert, attend a film festival auction in hope of buying the white disco suit John Travolta wore in *Saturday Night Fever*. Nickel outbids Gilbert for the prized artifact, but Gilbert manages to purchase the disco suit worn by John Travolta's overweight stuntman. But the intoxicating effects of their winning bids wear off when the duo receive threatening notes that read "Stop the movie reviews, or else" and discover that their beloved disco suits are missing. Suddenly Nickel and Gilbert find themselves with a real life mystery on their hands. Determined to get their disco suits back, the two set out to investigate four chief suspects: a giant green dinosaur, two teen wizards, and a movie starlet. As Nickel and Gilbert infiltrate the seedy side of the movie business, Gilbert is kidnapped, brainwashed into being a wizard, and viciously attacked by horrifying marionettes. And then things really get out of hand! The two kidnap an egotistical movie director, become fugitives from the law, and incite a horde of nerdy movie fans.

**Performance Time:** Approximately 75 minutes.

## CHARACTERS

(7 m, 7 f, 7 flexible, extras)  
(With doubling: 4 m, 5 f, 6 flexible)

**EDWARD NICKEL:** Cynical film critic; tall, lanky, balding; wears a suit.

**MICHAEL GILBERT:** Film critic, but not as cynical as Nickel; short in stature, pudgy; wears glasses and a rather ugly tweed jacket.

**CAROLYN ROGERS:** Superstar actress and Nickel's former girlfriend; sensitive, smart, sophisticated; elegantly dressed.

**WINNY OPRAHPHIL:** Assertive entertainment reporter.

**CAMERON LUCASBERG:** Egotistical movie director and Carolyn Rogers' current beau; has a beard and is elegantly dressed.

**SHERIFF MARLOWE:** Crafty, good-natured long arm of the law; has a crush on Gilbert; female.

**ELLEN GRAYSON:** Nickel and Gilbert's manager; slick looking. (Can be played as a male character, Evan Grayson.)

**MAGIC STANLEY:** Teen actor who appears in the movie *Magic Stanley and the Study Hall of Doom*; creepy, speaks with a fake British accent; wears a Hogwarts-style outfit and seems to believe he has magic powers, as if he is a character from the movie.

**MORGANA:** Teen actress who appears in the movie *Magic Stanley and the Study Hall of Doom*; creepy, speaks with a fake British accent; wears a Hogwarts-style outfit and seems to believe she has magic powers, as if she's a character from the movie.

**MOM:** Late 60s, Nickel's mom; small, thin, lovable but often clueless.

**WOODSHOP TEACHER:** Appears in the movie *Magic Stanley and the Study Hall of Doom*; crude looking and wears a tool apron with tools poking out of the pockets; flexible.

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**LOUIE THE LIZARD:** Star of the popular, somewhat educational children's TV show, "Louie the Lizard"; wears a lizard/dinosaur costume and looks like a green version of Barney the dinosaur; male.

**ROBOT:** Appears in the movie *The Robot and the Rose*; the costume can be an entire robot body or a robot-type apparatus can be worn on the head; male.

**REVEREND:** Appears in the movie *The Robot and the Rose*; flexible.

**GROOM:** Stars in the movie *The Robot and the Rose*.

**MOVIE FANS 1, 2:** Nerdy.

**FEMALE FAN:** Tall and attractive.

**CAMERAMAN:** Works for Winny Oprahphil and must doggedly follow her everywhere; flexible.

**AUCTIONEER:** Flexible.

**WEALTHY PERSON:** Purchases a Star Wars lightsaber; flexible.

**HOTEL MANAGER:** Flexible.

**EXTRAS:** Audience members at the auction and at the film festival, auction presenters, student wizards, hotel employees, and police officers.

### Options for doubling:

Louie the Lizard/Cameraman (male)

Woodshop Teacher/Groom/Fan 1 (male)

Auctioneer/Hotel Manager/Attractive Fan (Female)

Reverend/Fan 2 (flexible)

## SET

A film festival in Tucson, AZ.

**Lobby of the Oasis Hotel:** Dignified establishment with Southwestern décor. There is a front desk and some lobby chairs. A set of doors is located CS and lead into an auditorium.

**Gilbert and Nickel's Hotel Room:** The set piece should be located SR and should be able to rotate to become part of the usual hotel lobby scene, or be on wheels to move on and off the stage. It really only needs to be a corner section of the room with perhaps a chair or a dresser. No bed is needed. There is the main entrance door on one wall, and a bathroom door on the other wall. There is also a cheesy painting hanging on the wall, which hides a small safe behind it.

**Louie the Lizard's dressing Room:** This is the same room as Gilbert and Nickel's hotel room. There is a different chair, a mirror, a dresser, and cartoon posters and marionettes hanging on the walls.

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

### ACT I

**Scene 1:** Hotel lobby, auction in progress.

**Scene 2:** Hotel lobby, film festival in progress.

**Scene 3:** Nickel and Gilbert's room.

**Scene 4:** Hotel lobby and hotel room.

### ACT II

**Scene 1:** Nickel and Gilbert's room.

**Scene 2:** Hotel lobby.

**Scene 3:** Hotel lobby.

**Scene 4:** Inside the auditorium (in front of the curtain).

**Scene 5:** Louie's dressing room.

**Scene 6:** Hotel lobby.

## PROPS

Star Wars type lightsaber	2 Newspapers
White disco suit, for Nickel	Glass of iced tea
White disco suit, for Gilbert	3 Magic wands
Auction paddles	Notepad
Hardcover book with Nickel's picture on the front	Sweat socks
Gavel	Clothes
Checkbook	Huge suitcase large enough for Cameron to fit into
Pen	Handcuffs
Duffle bag	Small handbag
Key	Yellow piece of paper
Microphone	Blindfold
Clock	Small TV
School desks or chairs	Tray on wheels
Chalkboard	3-D glasses
2 Hogwarts-style gowns, for Morgana and Stanley	Script
2 Sorcerer hats	Purse, for Mom
Ukulele	Cape, for Gilbert
Green lizard/dinosaur costume, for Louie	Magazines
Marionettes	Lobby chair
Remote control	Fashion magazine
Cheesy picture	Tickets
Safe	Garment bag
Washcloth	2 Pairs of sunglasses
Envelope	Pink perfume bottle with the initials "W.O." on it
Note	Long scroll with notes and diagrams on it
Small table	Police radio

## SOUND EFFECTS

Fanfare music  
Music indicating passage of  
time  
Zany music  
Sound of giggling puppets

Key being inserted into a  
lock  
Phone ringing  
Disco music



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**"I GUESS YOUR DADDY  
MUST HAVE BEEN  
A DIFFERENT  
DRUNKEN CLOWN."**

**-LOUIE THE LIZARD**

## ACT I SCENE 1

*(Tucson, AZ, the dignified lobby of the Oasis Hotel. The stage is dark, with the exception of a spotlight on an Auctioneer, who pounds the gavel. There is a high-class movie memorabilia auction going on with 10-12 Participants seated on both sides of the Auctioneer. One of them happens to be Edward Nickel. On the other side of the stage, sits Michael Gilbert. )*

AUCTIONEER: Do I have any more bids, ladies and gentlemen? No more? Very well then...going once, twice...sold! And the famous fedora worn by Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca* is sold for \$39,000. Thank you, sir. *(Lights up.)* Ladies and gentlemen, today we have seen more than a few legendary artifacts from Hollywood's glory years. The sled from *Citizen Kane*, Scarlet's gown from *Gone With the Wind*, and of course, an authentic lightsaber from *Star Wars*.

WEALTHY PERSON: *(Holding a lightsaber handle.)* This darn thing don't turn on!

AUCTIONEER: Sir, it's only a prop. In any case, your generosity and enthusiasm has helped launch our first day of Tucson's first annual Film Festival. And before we begin bidding on the final item, we, here, at the Hotel Oasis thank you for participating.

WEALTHY PERSON: Does it need batteries?

AUCTIONEER: Let's continue on, with our final and most remarkable item, on sale for the first time in decades. The famous disco costume worn by John Travolta in the motion picture, *Saturday Night Fever*. *(As the Auctioneer speaks, a Presenter brings out the white disco suit. If you wish, it could be on display in a large frame...or it could simply be carried out by one or two Presenters. The Participants "ooh" and "ahh.")* Shall we start the bidding at five thousand? *(Gilbert clears his*

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*throat, and then nervously raises his number.)* Five thousand from the esteemed film critic, Michael Gilbert. Do I hear six thousand? *(Nickel confidently raises his number.)* Six thousand from the equally distinguished critic, Edward Nickel. Thank you, sir. Shall we go to seven? *(Gilbert gives Nickel a scowl – we can clearly see the animosity between the two. Gilbert raises his number yet again.)* Very good, sir. Seven thousand it is.

*(Nickel quickly raises his number back up.)*

NICKEL: Ten thousand.

*(Shocked, the Participants begin murmuring.)*

AUCTIONEER: We have ten thousand, ladies and gentlemen. And worth every penny, I assure you. Do I hear eleven thousand?

*(Gilbert bites his nails. Everyone is looking at him. He closes his eyes and raises his number.)*

GILBERT: Eleven thousand.

NICKEL: *(Very happy.)* Twenty thousand.

*(Everyone in the room gasps. Angry, Gilbert jumps out of his seat.)*

GILBERT: You can't go straight to twenty thousand! That isn't fair!

AUCTIONEER: Calm yourself, Mr. Gilbert. We have an ambitious bid of twenty thousand. Do I hear twenty-one?

GILBERT: *(Points at Nickel.)* How can you afford this?!

*(Nickel pretends to drop a hardcover book from his jacket by accident.)*

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NICKEL: Whoops. I dropped something. *(He picks it up. It's a movie review book with Edward Nickel smiling on the cover.)*  
What's this? Oh, my best-selling book. Available in stores now.

AUCTIONEER: Gentlemen, if you please. Do we have a bid for twenty-one thousand? *(Gilbert glares at Nickel, then puts his head down in defeat.)* Very well. Going once. Twice. Sold for twenty thousand dollars to Mr. Nickel.

*(The Participants give him a smattering of applause. Nickel walks up to claim his newly purchased suit. Gilbert charges up and tries to grab the suit from him.)*

NICKEL: Gilbert, what are you doing? Let go!

GILBERT: You don't deserve it! You only gave the movie three stars! I gave it four!

NICKEL: Yes, but I'm the one who praised its costume design—you barely even noticed!

*(Nickel and Gilbert continue to struggle; their anger increases. Uncomfortable, the Participants begin to mutter.)*

AUCTIONEER: Gentlemen, please!

*(Nickel and Gilbert's manager, Ellen Grayson, runs up and puts her arm around them.)*

ELLEN: *(To Nickel and Gilbert.)* All right, fellas, enough clowning around. Michael, let go of the leisure suit. Sorry folks, creative differences, as usual. Enjoy the festival! *(The Participants begin to disperse, some laughing, some muttering comments like "Boy, those guys really can't stand each other." Nickel writes a check and gives it to the Auctioneer. After the majority of the Participants have wandered away, Ellen draws the two critics upstage.)* What is with you guys? I go to the

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bathroom, and as soon as I come back, you're at each other's throats.

*(Gilbert takes another disco suit out of his duffle bag. He shows it off.)*

GILBERT: Well, look at what I bought earlier today! The same styled disco costume worn by the slightly overweight stuntman of John Travolta. And for only five hundred dollars!

NICKEL: Big deal! Mine's so much better than yours!

GILBERT: No, it's not!

NICKEL: Yes, it is!

ELLEN: I feel less like your manager, and more like your babysitter.

*(Gilbert puts the disco costume back in the duffle bag.)*

GILBERT: He started it!

ELLEN: Don't get me wrong, I think it's great that you guys disagree. The more you two fight, the better your ratings are. But let's keep the rivalry sophisticated, okay?

*(Nickel and Gilbert grumble in reluctant agreement.)*

NICKEL: Look, we've got three lousy movies to watch today. I'd like to relax before I have to sit through them. Where's my room key?

GILBERT: And mine too.

*(Ellen hands them one key.)*

ELLEN: Here you go.

GILBERT: Where's mine?

ELLEN: Oh yeah, I meant to tell you the bad news.

NICKEL: *(Very edgy.)* We're sharing a room.

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ELLEN: The hotel is overbooked. And for the record, I'm sleeping out in my car. But, hey, look at it this way, it'll give you two time to bond.

NICKEL: Ellen!

ELLEN: Gotta go!

*(Ellen playfully runs offstage.)*

GILBERT: Great. We're roommates.

NICKEL: *(To Ellen, calls.)* There better be two beds!

*(Ellen pokes her head back in.)*

ELLEN: There's just one. But it's a king. *(Exits again.)*

NICKEL: *(To Gilbert.)* You get the floor.

GILBERT: No, you get the floor.

NICKEL: I know how to settle this.

GILBERT: A round of movie lines.

NICKEL: You go first.

GILBERT: "Here's your hat. What's your hurry."

NICKEL: *It's A Wonderful Life.* "There is no spoon."

GILBERT: *The Matrix.* "We need a bigger boat."

NICKEL: *Jaws.* Too easy. "Rockin' and a rollin' and whatnot."

GILBERT: *Grease.* "Play it again, Sam."

NICKEL: *Casablanca.*

GILBERT: Ha! You always fall for that! That line was never in the movie! You were always weak on the classics!

NICKEL: Fine. You win. I get both the pillows.

GILBERT: Oh, no you don't!

*(They exit, Gilbert following Nickel, ready to battle again. Blackout. Fanfare music.)*

## SCENE 2

(AT RISE: *The hotel lobby. The focus is on a set of doors CS leading into an auditorium. Winny Oprahphil holds a mic and stands in front of a Cameraman. Ellen stands beside her, chatting.*)

WINNY: *(To Ellen. Nods.)* Great, great. I can't wait to meet them. *(To Cameraman.)* Is my hair okay? Good. *(To Ellen.)* We'll talk after the segment, sound good?

ELLEN: You bet. Break a leg. *(Exits through the doors.)*

CAMERAMAN: Here we go. Five...four...three...

WINNY: Hello, Tucson! We're live at the first annual Southwest Film Festival. I'm Winny Oprahphil, and I'm at the entrance to the auditorium here at the beautiful Oasis Hotel where the magic is about to begin. In just a few moments, we will be watching not one but three world premiere movies and each one will be judged by everyone's favorite critic duo, Edward Nickel and Michael Gilbert. They alone will determine which film goes home with the grand prize and moves on to box office success. But before we meet our esteemed judges, let's meet who's coming this way. *(Director Cameron Lucasberg and actress Carolyn Rogers enter. The Cameraman should now move to a much less conspicuous location to give the other actors lots of room.)* It's superstar Carolyn Rogers and the world-famous director Cameron Lucasberg! Welcome to the festival.

CAROLYN: Why thank you –

WINNY: You two have become quite the couple. Are there wedding bells ahead?

CAMERON: *(Acting like a microphone hog.)* Well, Winny, right now we're both committed to promoting my latest film...*The Robot and the Rose*. It's a high-tech, spine-tingling thriller about a robot from the future that travels back in time to destroy the world. But his plans change when he falls in love... *(Indicates Carolyn)* ...with this beautiful woman right here. An excellent casting choice, if I do say so myself.

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*(Cameron kisses Carolyn's head.)*

WINNY: I'm sure it will be a hit, sir. Your fans love everything you do.

CAMERON: And I love them! *(Blows kisses to the audience.)*

*(Cameron starts to lead Carolyn through the auditorium doors.)*

CAROLYN: *(To Winny.)* It was very nice to have met—

CAMERON: Come on, we don't want to be late.

*(They exit through the auditorium doors.)*

WINNY: Folks, look who's headed this way. The stars from the soon-to-be blockbuster film, *Magic Stanley Part Five!* *(Magic Stanley and Morgana enter.)* Hi guys. You know, America loves your movies. We just love watching your adventures at that magical school for slightly delinquent wizards. What's it like working on a movie set that involves so many special effects?

STANLEY: *(Slightly eerie voice.)* Oh, those aren't special effects...

MORGANA: *(Same tone of voice.)* All the magic is real...

WINNY: How interesting... *(And with that, the two drift through the auditorium doors.)* Our next movie is based upon a popular, somewhat educational children's show, "Louie the Lizard"! There's no sign of that singing and dancing reptile, but here's something even better—our film critics! Nickel and Gilbert! Welcome, gentlemen!

*(Nickel and Gilbert, both feeling a bit self-conscious, approach her.)*

NICKEL: Hello there...

GILBERT: Good evening...



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WINNY: As you know, these three films are hoping to win tonight's grand prize. What does it take to get a glowing review from you guys?

GILBERT: Oh, we're just interested in good old-fashioned storytelling.

NICKEL: With brilliant direction, superb acting, breathtaking cinematography, and immaculate production design.

WINNY: Now it's been said by some that your expectations are far too high. Do the studios ever get mad at you?

NICKEL: They get upset now and then. But when we give a movie a positive review, they're overjoyed.

WINNY: What's the last movie to get a "thumbs up"?

NICKEL: Hmm...well...I think... *(He's stumped.)*

GILBERT: Time to go in! Show's about to start!

*(Nickel and Gilbert enter through the auditorium doors.)*

WINNY: And it's time for this segment to end, but we'll be right back after the world premiere of these three exciting films. And...cut! *(Pause. To Cameraman.)* Did my hair look okay? *(Lights out. A spotlight shines on a clock placed above the doorway. The hands spin rapidly around and around. Music cue. The lights come up. Winny is still standing at her post, smiling for the camera.)* And that's it. The fans, the stars, and the judges have just watched all three world premieres. And now, we get to find out what the judges have decided. *(Nickel and Gilbert enter. Their faces are sour, almost in pain from their viewing experience.)* Here they are, ladies and gentlemen...Nickel and Gilbert! *(They move downstage left to several chairs that have been arranged for an interview session. If possible, curtains in the middle of the stage are drawn. The auditorium entrance set piece is taken away.)* Before we find out the winner of our film festival, let's hear what you thought about each film. *(Gestures to the audience.)* The fans want your professional opinion.

NICKEL: If we must...

GILBERT: *(Jumping into a very professional mode.)* The first film we reviewed was *Magic Stanley and the Study Hall of Doom*, the fifth installment of a popular trilogy that should have ended a long time ago.

NICKEL: It rehashes the continuing adventures of young wannabe wizards who get into a lot of trouble while attending their second-rate school of magic.

WINNY: Now, on my local show, "Good Morning Tucson," I'm a bit of a critic myself, and I thought this was a delightful movie. Didn't you?

GILBERT: Not really.

NICKEL: Not even remotely.

WINNY: Ouch. Too bad. Do we have a clip?

*(The middle curtain opens up, indicating a "movie clip" is about to be shown. Instead of a 20-foot-tall silver screen, the "clips" are actually skit-like scenes. This first one starts off with several Students dressed in Hogwarts-styled gowns and sorcerer hats. The simplistic set consists of a few school desks and/or chairs and a chalkboard. Morgana leans over to Magic Stanley.)*

MORGANA: Magic Stanley...

STANLEY: Yes, Morgana?

MORGANA: I've heard that this is the toughest, meanest teacher in the entire school of magic.

STANLEY: Oh, how difficult could he be?

*(Suddenly, the Woodshop Teacher enters. He glares at the students, then sniffs as he crudely wipes his nose with his hand.)*

TEACHER: Well, you pathetic excuses for wizard-students, you've been spending your school years making love spells and potions and learning to turn rats into teacups...well, enough of that nonsense. Get ready for the hardest class you'll ever take. *(He flips over the blank chalkboard. On the other side in large letters "Woodshop 101" has been written.)*

That's right, woodshop! This semester, I'm going to be teaching you little worms how to whittle your own wands. We're going to be making bookshelves for your spell library. We'll also be constructing an enchanted coffee table that makes its own coffee. And the few of you who prove yourself worthy, well, you might make one of these...

*(He pulls a sheet from a birdhouse.)*

STANLEY: What is it?

TEACHER: It's a birdhouse.

MORGANA: What does it do?

TEACHER: Birds live in it.

STANLEY: Is it magic?

TEACHER: *(Very bitter and sarcastic.)* No, it's not magic! You spoiled little snobs. Does everything have to be magic with all of you? Huh? I see we have the famous Stanley Blotter in our class. *(Stanley, a bit nervous, rubs his forehead.)* I've got my eye on you. And stop picking at your lightning scab—that's disgusting!

*(Lights down on the "movie clip" performers. The middle curtain closes as the lights come up on Nickel, Gilbert, and Winny.)*

GILBERT: And the film goes downhill from there. They play magic dodge ball. They get stuck in magic detention. They outwit the magic lunch lady. They've run out of ideas.

NICKEL: I thought this movie was shallow. And, visually, it was unbelievable.

GILBERT: Come on, Nickel, the effects are fine. It's the acting that's horrendous. I don't believe for a second that those kids are sorcerers-in-training. I have to give this one a "thumbs down."

NICKEL: Me too. Thumbs down. *(They both give the thumbs down signal.)* Well, onto our next movie. As many of you know, Louie the Lizard is a popular children's television

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show produced right here in town. For some sad reason a producer decided to put his so-called musical adventures on the big screen, and the result is frightening for both kids and adults. Let's roll the clip...

GILBERT: Oh, let's skip this one...

NICKEL: Why?

GILBERT: Just because...

NICKEL: We always roll the clip. No matter how bad they are — come on, let's roll it!

*(The middle curtain opens once more to reveal Louie the Lizard, strumming a ukulele.)*

LOUIE: Hey, kids, are you ready to sing another Louie the Lizard song? Great! *(In the tune of "This Old Man," sings.)*

"I like the sun,

I like the rain

Let's sing a song that's public domain.

Fun for you and it's so much fun for me.

Plus I don't pay a royalty."

*(Sound effects of children applauding. Louie bows and the lights fade on him, and come up once again on Nickel and Gilbert.)*

NICKEL: Oh, I weep for the children.

GILBERT: For me, the film doesn't fail because of Louie the Lizard. At times he seems to be a likeable character. For me, the movie is totally ruined by the supporting cast.

NICKEL: Oh, I know what this is all about...I almost forgot! Your big phobia!

GILBERT: I don't know what you're talking about.

NICKEL: Let's show one more scene for the folks, shall we?!

*(The lights come back on to the middle section of the stage. Now Louie the Lizard is holding two marionettes. He makes the string puppets dance about while zany music plays. Sound Effect: Giggling)*

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*Puppets. Gilbert has a panic attack. He can't stand the sight of this. He covers his eyes and screams.)*

GILBERT: Nooo! Stop it! Turn it off! Turn it off!

*(Gilbert grabs the remote away from Nickel and shuts the "film" off. Gilbert pants, trying to calm down.)*

NICKEL: *(To Winny.)* You'll have to forgive him. He has a deadly fear of marionettes. It's some childhood thing, right Gilbert?

GILBERT: *(Trying to regain his composure.)* Don't be ridiculous. I just couldn't watch that...that scene...the acting was just awful...with their painted, lifeless eyes...and that soulless evil grin that haunts my nightmares!

WINNY: Maybe we should go on to our next film... Now, I thought this film, *The Robot and the Rose*, was inventive and technologically brilliant, and yet despite its sci-fi exterior, it had this romantic, heart-warming feel to it. Do you agree?

GILBERT: While I admit the idea is unique, the juxtaposition of the two themes just didn't gel for me. And, ultimately, I found the whole endeavor quite disappointing. Let's watch a clip.

*(The middle curtain opens up to reveal a Groom, a Reverend, and a Bride [played by Carolyn Rogers] – each wearing something simple, but something that indicates that a wedding ceremony is in progress.)*

REVEREND: And whosoever has any reason that these two should not be wed in holy matrimony, let them speak now or forever hold their –

*(A Robot enters, quite upset about what's going on.)*

ROBOT: *(Very monotone.)* Stop. Stop the wedding. Stop the wedding. Jane...I love you.

BRIDE/CAROLYN: Johnny?

ROBOT: Don't marry him. Marry me instead.

BRIDE/CAROLYN: Why, Johnny, I don't know what to say...

GROOM: Enough of this! You two make me sick. Why don't you tell Jane the truth about you.

ROBOT: All right. I will. Jane, I'm a robot.

*(Bride gasps, shocked beyond belief. Lights down. Middle curtain closes. Lights back up on Gilbert, Nickel, and Winny.)*

NICKEL: But worse than the visual effects and the lousy script is the actress Carolyn Rogers. How does this person keep getting work? She couldn't emote her way through a kindergarten Christmas play. As usual, Ms. Rogers is completely unbelievable.

GILBERT: How can you sit there and say that? She was the only decent thing about this otherwise awful movie.

NICKEL: Oh, please. Carolyn may have looks and a pretty smile, but she has no talent. She has no acting ability. The only reason she got the role is because she's dating the director.

*(Outraged, Carolyn stands in the audience or steps out onto the stage from the wings. She's incredibly hurt and angry.)*

CAROLYN: Edward Nickel! You are a bitter, ugly, vengeful creature, and I will hate you forever!

NICKEL: Oh...Carolyn...I didn't know you were here...

CAROLYN: Go home and choke on your Pulitzer, you horrible, horrible man!

NICKEL: See, now why can't you show this much emotion in your films?

WINNY: *(To Gilbert.)* What's going on?

GILBERT: *(Whispers.)* Ex-girlfriend.

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WINNY: Oh my stars!

*(Cameron Lucasberg steps up to comfort her.)*

CAROLYN: *(To Cameron.)* It's all right, honey. Don't listen to them. *(To Nickel and Gilbert.)* I'll be thinking of you guys when I accept my Academy Award...

NICKEL: Ha! In your dreams! And I bet you're dying to know if you've won tonight's prestigious award. Shall we tell them, Gilbert?

GILBERT: Only if you phrase it delicately...

NICKEL: Nobody wins! That's right, we both agreed, each film was equally awful...and until you Hollywood-types learn how to make a quality film, we're not giving you a single thumbs up.

CAMERON: You take that back!

NICKEL: Never!

*(Cameron charges toward Nickel. The two begin struggling and fighting.)*

WINNY: *(Doing damage control.)* Well, it's been a rough day for Hollywood, singing lizards, and ex-wives. Goodnight everybody!

*(Blackout.)*

### SCENE 3

(AT RISE: Gilbert and Nickel's hotel room. Ellen and the slightly bruised Nickel enter. The critic has a washcloth over his eye.)

ELLEN: How's the eye?

NICKEL: Fine. I'll feel better as soon as I get out of this backwater film festival. This trip has turned into an absolute misery.

ELLEN: Well, you were having a good time today.

NICKEL: Yeah, at least I got that suit. You should have seen the look in Gilbert's eyes. Do you want to see it?

ELLEN: Sure. Is it hanging up in the closet?

NICKEL: No, no, look... (Nickel moves a picture frame from the wall to reveal a safe.) They've got a cheesy little safe behind the cheesy little picture. (He turns the knob on the safe and begins to open it.)

ELLEN: You know, Nickel, I really wish you'd reconsider the festival award decision...it's gotten a lot of people riled up...

(Nickel opens the safe. It looks empty. Nickel is startled. He can't believe it. The only thing he can find inside it is an envelope.)

NICKEL: (Startled and outraged.) It's gone? It's gone! It can't be!

ELLEN: I don't believe this. You've been robbed. I'll call hotel security.

NICKEL: Look at this. (Opens the envelope.) It's like some second-rate ransom note.

ELLEN: What's it say?

NICKEL: (Reads.) "Stop the movie reviews...or else." Well, I think we know who did this.

ELLEN: Who?

NICKEL: Gilbert. Another victim of professional jealousy.

ELLEN: How did he get into the safe?



NICKEL: Well, I used my birthday as a combination. He probably knew that somehow. Ellen, I can't work with that man anymore. We're through as partners.

ELLEN: Now look, Ed, I know you don't want to hear this, but if you leave the show, your career is practically over. I mean, together you're household names. Not to mention, we don't even know that he took it. It could've been somebody else.

NICKEL: No, this is his handiwork. Who else could be behind all this?

*(There's a knock at the door. They stare for a moment, unsure what to do. Then, someone slides a note under the door.)*

ELLEN: What is it?

*(Nickel leans down to examine the note.)*

NICKEL: *(Reads.)* "To Michael Gilbert." It's in Carolyn's handwriting. *(He picks it up and opens it.)*

ELLEN: Uh, that's not addressed to you.

NICKEL: Oh, please. *(He reads it.)* I can't believe this. *(Reads.)* "Dear Michael, I'd really like to talk with you. Please meet me in the lobby. P.S. Don't tell Edward." Aha! So it's this big conspiracy against me. As usual!

ELLEN: What do you think is going on? You think Gilbert and Carolyn are, you know...a couple?

NICKEL: Oh, come on! Get real. I mean that's— *(Suddenly worried.)* That's impossible, right? I mean, there's no way she would even think of... *(Disgusted by the thought.)* Ugh! *(Sickened, he lets the note drop to the floor. Suddenly, they hear someone at the door, inserting a key into the lock.)* Someone's here. Hide!

**THUMBS UP!**  
**26**

*(Nickel and Ellen head into the bathroom. Gilbert enters, humming the tune from his favorite David Lean film, perhaps "Bridge Over the River Kwai." He sees the note on the floor.)*

GILBERT: Hello there. *(Picks up the note. Reads it.)* Hmm, well, well...looks like I still got it! And I've got a little something special to show her.

*(Gilbert grabs his duffle bag and exits. Nickel and Ellen emerge from the bathroom.)*

NICKEL: Come on, we're going to find out what Don Juan Gilberto is up to!

*(Nickel pulls Ellen along with him. They exit. Blackout.)*

## SCENE 4

*(AT RISE: The hotel lobby. Carolyn is sitting at a small table, sipping iced tea. Nickel and Ellen are sitting on the other side of the lobby, hiding behind newspapers. Gilbert enters. He sees Carolyn, slicks his hair back, and approaches. Carolyn stands when she sees him. They hug. It's clear that she knows Gilbert from way back.)*

CAROLYN: It's good to see you again, Michael...I suppose you can guess why I sent the note.

GILBERT: You want to get revenge against Edward by having a passionate rendezvous with lovable me. *(She laughs, but that isn't the answer she was looking for.)* I had to try. Let's see...you'd like me to make him stop giving you horribly unfair reviews.

CAROLYN: But not just for me. Cameron has a lot riding on this movie and... *(Sighs.)* We don't have the slightest chance of changing his mind, do we?

GILBERT: No. He certainly won't listen to me.

CAROLYN: He's been so bitter since we broke up. He must really hate me.

GILBERT: No. Believe it or not, the weirdo is still in love with you.

CAROLYN: You think so? Well, I guess that's flattering in a sad, demented way. Oh well...

*(Nickel and Ellen lower the newspapers from which they have been hiding, and discreetly speak to each other.)*

NICKEL: *(To Ellen.)* They're up to something. And we're going to find out what it is.

ELLEN: I can't take it anymore. This is too sleazy for me. And I'm an agent.

*(Ellen exits. Nickel stares intently and tries to listen to Gilbert and Carolyn as they quietly ad-lib a casual conversation. Morgana and*

**THUMBS UP!**  
**28**

*Stanley from the Magic Stanley movie enter and approach Nickel. They are still wearing their wizard outfits and they still speak in their rather mystical British accents.)*

MORGANA: Mr. Nickel...

STANLEY: Might we have a word with you?

NICKEL: What? Oh, you guys are from that movie. Hey, hope there's no hard feelings about the constructive criticism. And you know, if you go back to acting school for another ten years, you might end up halfway decent.

STANLEY: We want you to give us a good review.

NICKEL: And why should I?

MORGANA: You mustn't meddle with the dark powers of magic!

STANLEY: Behold the power of Stanley Blotter!

*(Morgana and Stanley brandish their wands at Nickel.)*

MORGANA/STANLEY: Wingardia Leviosa!

*(Nickel just stares at them. Nothing happens.)*

NICKEL: Get out of here!

*(Morgana and Stanley exit. Nickel returns to hiding behind his newspaper. Focus returns to Gilbert and Carolyn's conversation.)*

CAROLYN: *(To Gilbert.)* What's with the duffle bag?

GILBERT: Oh, I bought a little something at the auction today. Would you like to see it?

CAROLYN: Sure.

GILBERT: Your ex-boyfriend bought the real one. I got stuck with the stuntman's disco outfit, but I think in the long run... *(Looks through bag.)* Hey, it's not in here. There's just a bunch of smelly old sweat socks—which aren't mine—and

a note... *(Reads it.)* "Stop the reviews...or else." Excuse me, Carolyn, I have an appointment with a jerk.

*(Nickel pokes his head out from behind the newspaper. Carolyn stands.)*

CAROLYN: Well, give me another hug. Take care of yourself, Michael. And take it easy on us movie stars.

*(Carolyn gives Gilbert a kiss on the cheek, then starts to leave.)*

GILBERT: Nickel was a fool to let you go.

CAROLYN: *(Smiles, reflects for a moment.)* I think so too.

*(Carolyn exits. As soon as she's gone, Nickel springs into action and confronts Gilbert.)*

NICKEL: All right, you sniveling little creep, what were you doing with Carolyn?

GILBERT: Well, well, Mr. Green-With-Envy, my social life is none of your business. What I want to know is where you put my authentic stunt double disco costume?!

NICKEL: Nice try. We both know you stole my \$20,000 Hollywood artifact... *(Grabs the duffle bag.)* ...and I have a good mind to have the police throw you in jail. *(Nickel looks through the duffle bag. He can't find anything but socks.)*

GILBERT: *(Dryly.)* Ha-ha. You think this is funny? I know funny. I took a course at Harvard, "Advanced Funny 102," and this is not funny.

NICKEL: I know a way we can settle this. Let's just go back and take a closer look through the rest of your luggage.

GILBERT: What good will that do?

NICKEL: I have a feeling we'll find you-know-what, and then this annoying little mystery will be over. *(They walk SR. Lights up on their hotel room. The place is now a disheveled mess.)*

**THUMBS UP!**  
**30**

*Someone has been rifling through their things.)* What happened?

GILBERT: Man, you're a slob.

NICKEL: I didn't do this. *(Suddenly realizing.)* And you didn't do this either...I've been spying on you since you left this room.

GILBERT: Is anything else missing?

NICKEL: There wasn't anything else of value to take...except...my yellow notepad. I had all my movie review notes written on it...

GILBERT: Somebody's sure trying to scare us. You know what this means? *(Excited.)* We've got a real life mystery on our hands! I bet it was someone from one of the movies we roasted today.

NICKEL: Before you go into Sherlock mode, let's just get a hold of hotel security.

*(As if on cue, Sheriff Marlowe steps into the doorway.)*

MARLOWE: I'll do you one better...how about a sheriff?

GILBERT: Oh, hello...uh, officer, or sheriff...

MARLOWE: I'm Marlowe. *(Looks around the room.)* Whoa, quite a mess. Are you fellas rock stars?

NICKEL: Film critics.

MARLOWE: Well, you're very reckless.

NICKEL: We didn't do this. Look, there's been a theft.

MARLOWE: Yes, the hotel informed me. And what are the stolen items in question?

NICKEL: A highly expensive garment.

GILBERT: A disco suit.

MARLOWE: *(Writes down the information.)* Approximate value?

NICKEL: Twenty grand.

MARLOWE: Anything else?

NICKEL: A notepad with all of my ideas on it.

GILBERT: Approximate value: zero.

MARLOWE: This might be more productive if I talk to each of you separately. I'll start with you... *(Points to Nickel.)* Let's step out into the hall. *(To Gilbert.)* We'll just be a moment.

GILBERT: Sure.

MARLOWE: *(Suddenly interested in Gilbert.)* Hey, have I seen you on TV?

GILBERT: Uh, maybe. We've got a show in syndication, but it's mostly on the East Coast.

MARLOWE: Musta been when I was out in New York. You seemed real smart-talkin' about all that movie stuff.

NICKEL: *(Sheepishly.)* I'm on the show, too.

MARLOWE: *(Stares at Nickel for a moment.)* Hmm...I only remember him...we'll be back in a few, you smart film guy. Don't run off.

*(Nickel and Marlowe exit. Gilbert seems pleased with himself. He's getting quite a bit of unexpected female attention!)*

GILBERT: The ladies love me. Is it the cologne? *(He takes a whiff of himself, and nearly goes blind from the scent. Suddenly, a hand is seen from the open doorway. It knocks twice. Not looking behind him.)* Come in...

*(A gesturing hand is seen and a voice [Louie's] is heard.)*

VOICE/LOUIE: I don't want to waste your time. This message will just take a moment.

GILBERT: What do you want?

VOICE/LOUIE: Oh, it's not what I want. I have a special friend who has something to say to you.

GILBERT: Who?

*(Another hand comes into view. This one is holding a marionette puppet, seen earlier in the Louie the Lizard sequence. Gilbert's eyes widen in fear. Now, a squeaky high-pitched voice speaks for the marionette.)*

MARIONETTE/LOUIE: Hello, Mr. Gilbert! We heard you didn't like our movie. Aw, that's too bad!

GILBERT: (*Panic-stricken.*) Get away from me!

MARIONETTE/LOUIE: Have you considered maybe you're not looking at the film from a kid's point of view? We want a chance to make things right!

GILBERT: (*Curling up into a ball.*) It's the nightmare. It's come true! (*He rocks back and forth, sucking his thumb.*)

MARIONETTE/LOUIE: Well...looks like we caught you at a bad time. So, we'll just leave you these tickets to come visit us at the Louie the Lizard studios! We think if you talk with Louie, you'll get to like us a whole lot more. Then maybe we'll get that award you denied us!

GILBERT: Mommy!

MARIONETTE/LOUIE: Uh, see you later!

*(The marionette and hands disappear. Gilbert starts to regain his composure.)*

GILBERT: Sheriff Marlowe! Sheriff! (*Marlowe and Nickel run back into the room.*) Did you see him?

MARLOWE: See who?

GILBERT: A 12-inch clown puppet with strings all over his body!

MARLOWE: (*To Nickel.*) Do you understand what he's saying?

NICKEL: Not even remotely.

MARLOWE: Why don't you two get some rest. I'm going to question the hotel staff and see what I can find out.

*(Nickel and Gilbert grumble but willingly start to leave. Marlowe points to Gilbert.)*

GILBERT: But don't you have any questions for me?

MARLOWE: Yes. Do you have any plans for dinner tomorrow?



GILBERT: Well, I... *(He giggles like a schoolboy.)*

MARLOWE: No further questions. *(She exits.)*

NICKEL: Well, you're quite the ladies man today.

GILBERT: Yes, well...what can I say... Now, I've been thinking about the our mystery...

NICKEL: Oh, stop playing Scotland Yard.

GILBERT: Now think about it...how did the thief get in without breaking down the door? They must have had a copy of the hotel key.

NICKEL: Anyone can bribe a desk clerk.

GILBERT: Anyone with money or power. Like the producers of the "Louie the Lizard" show.

NICKEL: You don't have any proof—

GILBERT: Not yet. But maybe we could dig up some evidence of our own.

NICKEL: Forget it. Go off and play Columbo if you want. Just leave me out of it.

GILBERT: You have absolutely no imagination. No wonder you became a movie critic!

NICKEL: What's your excuse then?

GILBERT: You dragged me down with you!

NICKEL: Please. Spare me this decades old argument!

GILBERT: You think just because...

*(There is a knock at the door. Nickel goes to open it. Cameron Lucasberg is standing in the doorway, fuming like a volcano. He grabs Edward Nickel by his collar and pushes both of them back into the room. Gilbert watches in amazement as Cameron begins to rough up Nickel.)*

CAMERON: Where is she?! Tell me where she is, or I'll snap your puny neck!

NICKEL: *(Can barely speak)* Who? Carolyn? What's wrong?

CAMERON: Don't play coy with me, you sick little man. Take a good look at this. *(Cameron shows him a piece of paper.)* Don't tell me you didn't write it!

GILBERT: *(Reads.)* "Ha, ha, ha. We've kidnapped your girlfriend."

NICKEL: We didn't write that!

GILBERT: We would have used a lot more adjectives.

CAMERON: That's it... *(Cameron starts to choke Nickel with all his might. Suddenly, Gilbert picks up his duffle bag, pauses for a moment to build up his courage, and then he hits Cameron over the head. Cameron stands up straight, a little confused. He glances at Gilbert, full of rage.)* How dare you hit me?!

GILBERT: How dare I? I'll tell you how! This is for *Death Blazer!* *(He whacks the director over the head again. And with each horrible movie title, Gilbert continues to beat Cameron into submission.)* This is for *Death Blazer Part Two!* This one's for *Outer Space Bride!* And this one is for *Bulletproof Monkey!*

*(Cameron raises up his hand to stop the duffle bag.)*

CAMERON: No! I didn't direct *Bulletproof Monkey!*

GILBERT: You executive produced it!

*(Gilbert gives Cameron one final 'bonk' on the head and knocks the director out cold. Then Gilbert unzips the duffle bag and pours the sweat socks all over Cameron. Nickel is a little bit dazed, but at the same time impressed by Gilbert's aggression.)*

NICKEL: Gilbert, I-I...

*(Still standing on the bed, Gilbert raises up the duffle bag.)*

GILBERT: You want a piece of me?!

NICKEL: Whoa. Calm down. You watched one too many Tarantino movies. Thanks for saving me. Let's take care of fuzzy-face before he wakes up.

*(Nickel dumps all the clothes out of a large suitcase. They lift up the unconscious director.)*

GILBERT: What are we doing?

NICKEL: We're going to lock our favorite director in here for a bit so we can keep track of him. And then we're going to find Carolyn.

GILBERT: Shouldn't we tell the police about this?

NICKEL: Are you crazy? Someone's obviously trying to frame us!

GILBERT: Do you think someone really kidnapped her?

NICKEL: I don't know what to think right now.

*(Phone rings.)*

GILBERT: It's the kidnapers! Try to keep them on the phone as long as possible so we can trace them.

NICKEL: With what?!

GILBERT: Oh yeah.

*(Nickel picks up the phone.)*

NICKEL: Hello. *(Listens.)* Oh no. *(Gravely turns to Gilbert.)* It's worse than I feared... *(Into phone.)* Hi, Mom... *(Pause.)* Yeah, I'm in town... *(Pause.)* Yes, that was me on the news...in a towel... *(Pause.)* Of course I was going to stop by— *(Pause.)* Look, Mom, have you seen Carolyn recently? Has she stopped by the house for a visit? *(Pause.)* What? you're in the car? No, don't come over...we're... *(Pause.)* Mom? *(Hangs up.)* Great.

*(Marlowe steps into the room.)*

MARLOWE: Howdy, boys. Just thought I'd ask— Oh, am I interrupting something?

GILBERT: Why howdy, uh, sheriff. Good to see you again.

MARLOWE: I told you I'd be right over. Now, you mentioned something about a note...

GILBERT: We didn't kidnap anybody!

NICKEL: What she means is the note from the safe. *(Pulls it from his pocket.)* It's right here.

*(Marlowe takes the note from him and sits down on the suitcase.)*

MARLOWE: *(Reads.)* Hmm. Very interesting. *(Gilbert and Nickel are of course very nervous about where Marlowe is sitting.)* The letters are clipped out of a recent issue of *Cosmopolitan*, if I'm not mistaken. I recall glancing at a recent article... *(Looks at Gilbert.)* ..."How to catch a man and keep him." Not an easy thing to do nowadays...if you want a good man, you practically have to hit him over the head and lock him in a box.

NICKEL: Well, we must be going, sheriff. I'm sure there are more important crimes to investigate than our petty little problems. Right, Gilbert?

GILBERT: That's right. We were just straightening up, and we're quite busy —

*(Gilbert opens the bathroom door. Marlowe is busy writing notes onto her pad of paper. Gilbert opens the closet to discover Carolyn! She's slumped against the door, groggy, and almost asleep. Her mouth has been taped shut and she's been handcuffed. She slumps over into Gilbert's arms. Nickel helps her up. She opens her eyes, looks around confused, and then suddenly believes that she's been kidnapped — and that Gilbert and Nickel have done this to her!)*

CAROLYN: *(Unable to speak.)* Mmhmmhuhhmmmmhph!

*(Nickel pushes her back into the closet and slams the door.)*

MARLOWE: *(Glancing up.)* What was that?

GILBERT: What?

MARLOWE: Someone said, "Mmhmmhuhhmmmmph."

NICKEL: *(Patting Gilbert's tummy.)* Gilbert's got an upset stomach. Poor guy. You know, we shouldn't go out. We

should stay, but you should go. Gilbert's sick right now, and things could get messy. I'll take care of him.

MARLOWE: Aw, what a good buddy you are. *(To Gilbert.)*  
Are you coming down with something?

NICKEL: He probably is, and I bet it's contagious, so you better go, and it was great talking with you.

MARLOWE: Well, I'll let you know as soon as I find these criminals.

*(Nickel very abruptly leads Marlowe to the doorway and ushers her out.)*

NICKEL: Yep, head on out and look for them. Bye! *(He slams the door. Nickel opens the closet door. He helps Carolyn to her feet. She's holding a small handbag.)* Carolyn, are you all right?

*(Carolyn hits Nickel with her handbag.)*

GILBERT: *(To Carolyn.)* That was nice. They bound and gagged you...left your purse with you.

NICKEL: *(To Carolyn.)* You've got to believe me. We didn't do this to you!

*(Carolyn struggles with Nickel. She doesn't believe him. He tries to hold her steady. Just then, Nickel's Mom enters. Carolyn and Nickel freeze. Mom stares back in disbelief. Finally she raises up her hands.)*

MOM: *(Triumphantly.)* You two finally got back together!

*(Blackout.)*

## ACT II SCENE 1

(AT RISE: *The hotel room. Nickel has been trying to explain the situation to his Mom.*)

NICKEL: No, Mom. We're not back together. Someone tried to kidnap her.

MOM: (*Disappointed.*) Oh, is that all? Where's the bathroom around this place? (*She walks to the bathroom door, grumbling all the way.*) I'm never getting a grandchild out of that guy. (*She exits into the bathroom.*)

NICKEL: (*To Carolyn.*) Sorry about this. (*Nickel pulls off the tape.*)

GILBERT: (*To Carolyn.*) Are you okay? Did they hurt you?

CAROLYN: (*Shaking the handcuffs.*) Take these off of me.

NICKEL: I don't have the key. You know why? Because we didn't do this to you.

GILBERT: But we want to find out who did. What happened to you?

CAROLYN: After I left the lobby, I met with Cameron. We were going to go out dancing. But then he met some fans and he started signing autographs. That can take awhile—he loves his fans. So, I sat in the lobby, reading a magazine, and when I got tired, I went back to my room. As I was unlocking my door, someone sprayed me with this funny smelling spray. And then I blacked out. I woke up when you guys opened up the closet door.

NICKEL: Carolyn, I hope you know that I would never do anything to harm you or anyone else.

CAROLYN: Where's Cameron?

GILBERT: We knocked him unconscious.

NICKEL: It was an accident!

(*Mom comes out of the bathroom.*)

MOM: Michael, so good to see you. My, you're getting more handsome every day.

GILBERT: Hi, Mrs. Nickel. It's great to see you.

NICKEL: I'm your son. You should be praising me, not him.

MOM: Edward, don't be rude. And Carolyn...so lovely to see you again.

CAROLYN: Hi, Ma. I'd hug you...but, well... *(Shows handcuffs.)*

NICKEL: And Mom would hug you, Gilbert, but she's worried you might take it the wrong way.

MOM: Don't be silly...

NICKEL: No, really. Mom, he hasn't had a date in awhile.

MOM: Edward, that's enough!

GILBERT: You're right. That is enough. I'm sick of all your jokes at my expense. You know, I'm trying to help you out here. I'm trying to find out who took your priceless Hollywood artifact.

NICKEL: Oh? Well, maybe I'd be a lot better off right now without your so-called help.

GILBERT: *(Starts to leave.)* Fine! I'm out of here!

MOM: Where are you going?

GILBERT: For a walk!

*(Gilbert leaves the hotel room and slams the door behind him. Nickel rubs his eyebrows in frustration, regretting what has just happened.)*

CAROLYN: *(To Nickel.)* Why are you always so mean to him?

NICKEL: What? He always makes fun of me being bald! He's just as mean as I am!

MOM: You two have always gotten worked up over the smallest things. It's hard to believe you two were best friends once.

CAROLYN: *(To Nickel.)* What?! You never told me that.

NICKEL: We were just kids then. It was a long time ago. Hey, there's a nail file in the bathroom. Maybe we can pick the lock on these things.

**THUMBS UP!**  
**40**

*(Nickel and Carolyn head toward the bathroom.)*

CAROLYN: Why do you have a nail file?

NICKEL: I like a good manicure as much as the next guy.

*(They exit into the bathroom. A moment after they are gone, Mom sits down on the bed. She is startled when the suitcase begins to shake.)*

CAMERON: *(Shouts from inside the suitcase.)* Get me out of here!

MOM: A talking suitcase? What will they think of next?

CAMERON: Open this thing!

MOM: Just a minute.

*(Mom unlocks the suitcase. Cameron pops his head out, gasping for air. He is dazed and confused.)*

CAMERON: Who are you?

MOM: I think the question is, who are *you*?

CAMERON: *(Pompous at first.)* Who am I?! Why I'm...I'm...  
*(Suddenly fearful.)* I don't know...I can't remember who I am!

MOM: Oh, sweetie, that happens to me all the time.

*(Cameron stands up. He frantically staggers about.)*

CAMERON: Where is this place?! What's going on?! I've got to get out of here! *(He runs out of the room in a panic.)*

MOM: What a nice young man.

*(Carolyn, still in handcuffs, and Nickel exit the bathroom.)*

NICKEL: Were you yelling about something, Mom?

MOM: Why I never yell. I'm a lady.



**THUMBS UP!**

41

*(Carolyn spots something under a chair. She picks up a yellow piece of paper.)*

CAROLYN: Hey, what's this? And why does it have my name on it?

NICKEL: Oh, that's a piece of my notepad. At least the thief didn't take all of it.

CAROLYN: Is this your review about me?

NICKEL: Hey, don't read it!

CAROLYN: Let's see how horrible you are this time. *(Reads.)*  
"Carolyn Rogers' performance breaks down with the rest of the robots. This is mainly because her romantic moments aren't as powerful as earlier films. Lucasberg isn't good enough for her, and this movie made me wish for the good old days when Ms. Rogers' films were happier, and closer to my heart." *(She's touched.)* Ah, Nick. That's the best worst review you've ever given me.

NICKEL: I just think, you know, on a professional level, that Cameron's not the right, uh, director for you.

CAROLYN: So, you guys were just joking, about Cameron, right? You didn't really knock him out cold. Where is he?

NICKEL: Oh my gosh! I almost forgot! *(He goes to the suitcase.)*

CAROLYN: What did you do to him?!

NICKEL: Gilbert told you. He beat him up with a bag of old socks. *(Opens suitcase.)* He's gone?! How could he be gone?

CAROLYN: You put my boyfriend in a suitcase.

NICKEL: Yes. But now he's disappeared.

CAROLYN: Disappeared?

NICKEL: It's like he's vanished into one of his own plot holes.

*(Blackout.)*

## SCENE 2

*(AT RISE: Hotel lobby. Gilbert walks through the lobby. Stanley and Morgana approach him.)*

STANLEY: Hello, Mr. Gilbert.

MORGANA: We wanted to offer you an invitation...

GILBERT: Hey, you're the kids from that horrible—I mean—interesting movie.

STANLEY: Oh, it's much more than just a movie...

MORGANA: Ever so much more...if you'll only come with us so we can show you.

GILBERT: Look, kids, I'm afraid I don't have time to hear about magic tricks—

*(Suddenly, Cameron stumbles into the lobby upstage.)*

CAMERON: Someone help me! Please, I need help!

GILBERT: On second thought, I'd love to hide out—I mean—hang out with you guys...as long as it's far away from that man over there.

MORGANA: Oh, we'll take you to a secret place.

STANLEY: But first we must blindfold you.

*(They put a blindfold over Gilbert's eyes.)*

GILBERT: Hey, where did everybody go? *(Blackout. A moment later, a single spotlight shines on Gilbert, who is seated CS in a chair. His hands are behind his back. Morgana and Stanley stand on each side of him. They pull off the blindfold.)*  
Where am I?

MORGANA: Some place safe and secure.

STANLEY: Where no one can hear us.

GILBERT: *(Struggling.)* Hey, who tied me to this chair?

MORGANA: It's all part of the initiation.

## THUMBS UP!

43

GILBERT: What? Wait a minute, you're the one's who have been stealing from Nickel and me!

MORGANA: We don't know what you're talking about.

STANLEY: We just want you to give our film a good review.

GILBERT: I'm sorry. Your movie is just a little too silly to earn a thumbs up from me.

STANLEY: But it's not a silly movie.

MORGANA: Our school of magic is real.

GILBERT: Wait. You guys really believe all that wizard stuff?

You've been brainwashed! This is some kind of cult!

MORGANA: We prefer to call it a "club."

STANLEY: And we want you to join.

MORGANA: And so we're going to brainwash you.

*(Stanley rolls in a small TV, or a box made to look like a TV, on a tray with wheels. The television screen is turned away from the audience.)*

STANLEY: This is our latest training video. After you watch this, you'll believe in magic, just like we do.

MORGANA: You'll need these. *(She puts a pair of 3-D glasses on Gilbert.)* 3-D glasses, to help you enjoy the experience.

GILBERT: This clap trap won't trick anybody! *(He suddenly ducks, reacting to what he sees on the television.)* Eeeck! Birds! *(Regains composure.)* Do what you will. My mind is like steel—you'll never crack it! Never!

STANLEY: This is going to be a long, grueling experience. It might take days, even weeks.

MORGANA: Shall I put on some coffee?

STANLEY: Sure.

GILBERT: You'll never break me, I tell you... *(Music plays to indicate the passage of time. Lights slowly fade then come back up to the same scene. Gilbert is uncomfortable, shifting in his seat.)* It's not working! You can keep me here forever, and it still won't work! *(Lights fade. Music keeps playing. Lights fade back up. Gilbert's hair is a little more ragged, his expression is a little*

**THUMBS UP!**

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*more hopeless.) Okay...I don't want to watch anymore, guys, I can't take it! Please turn it off! (Lights fade and come back up once more. Now Gilbert has a completely different expression – he has this glazed, blissful look upon his face along with a big bright smile. He's brainwashed.) Hail to the school of wizardry! Behold, I am now one of your magical brothers! Ha, ha, ha, ha!*

*(Stanley is standing by him, pleased. Morgana enters the spotlight as well.)*

MORGANA: Coffee's done.

*(Blackout.)*

### SCENE 3

(AT RISE: Hotel lobby. Nickel, Carolyn [still in handcuffs], and Mom enter looking for Cameron. Mom starts to wander around as they talk.)

NICKEL: We have to find Cameron before he gets Gilbert in trouble.

CAROLYN: You care about him all of a sudden?

NICKEL: Look, the only reason I clobbered your boyfriend is because Cameron was strangling me. Gilbert's right. I shouldn't be such a jerk all of the time.

CAROLYN: Were you really best friends once?

MOM: (*Bouncing up to them.*) Dear, didn't he ever tell you? They went to school together. Why, they were both leaders of the Drama Club.

NICKEL: She's a senile old woman... (*To Mom*) ...and you've got no proof, Mom!

(*Mom pulls a script from her purse.*)

MOM: Here's a screenplay they wrote together!

(*Carolyn grabs it.*)

CAROLYN: Really! (*Reads title.*) "Summer's Heart in the Cold of Winter." That's quite a title. You never told me about these things

NICKEL: It was a long time ago.

CAROLYN: (*Flipping through the pages.*) This looks pretty awful.

NICKEL: Well, those who can't do, criticize.

(*Gilbert enters, wearing a cape.*)

MOM: Why, Michael, where did you run off to?

**THUMBS UP!**

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GILBERT: Run? I don't need to run—I can fly! Does anyone have a broomstick? Or a dustpan? A dustpan will work.

NICKEL: What's with the cape?

*(Gilbert twirls around.)*

GILBERT: Foolish buggle! *(To Carolyn.)* That's what we call you non-magic folk. *(To all.)* This is a cloak of invisibility! Behold! *(He places the cloak over his head, and then believes he is invisible.)* Astounding, isn't it! Where did it go? *(He lifts up magazines from a lobby chair.)* What's this? Floating magazines? Is this hotel haunted? No! It's simply... *(Pulls off cloak)* ...magic!

MOM: Poor dear, you must be running a fever.

NICKEL: Gilbert, we don't have time for this. Mom, we're going to look for Cameron Lucasberg.

MOM: I don't know who that is—but good luck!

CAROLYN: Shouldn't we call the police?

NICKEL: Maybe you're right. Do you have a cell phone? *(She starts looking in her purse, which is hard to do because she's still in handcuffs. Nickel suddenly becomes suspicious.)* How odd that the kidnappers let you keep your purse...

CAROLYN: I thought that was strange, too. *(Pulls out a fashion magazine.)* What's this doing in here?

*(Nickel grabs the magazine.)*

NICKEL: Let me see that. *(Opens it up. Finds a page that has many of the letters clipped out of it.)* Aha! Someone's been clipping out the letters...to make a phony ransom note!

CAROLYN: That's not even mine— Wait, you don't think I staged my own kidnapping!

NICKEL: Let's find your boyfriend and get to the bottom of this.

**THUMBS UP!**

47

*(Angry now, he drags her offstage. Mom, worried about Gilbert's "fever," guides him downstage right. Marlowe and Cameron enter from upstage. Cameron is still suffering from amnesia.)*

MARLOWE: *(To Cameron.)* And you have no idea who you are?

CAMERON: Not an inkling. And it's driving me mad. I have this feeling there was something I was supposed to tell the police, but I can't for the life of me remember...

*(Several nerdy Movie Fans, who have been mingling in the lobby, notice Cameron. They become very excited and dash up to Cameron.)*

FAN 1: Mr. Lucasberg, may I have your autograph?

MARLOWE: Wait, you know who this is?

FAN 2: Of course! This is Cameron Lucasberg!

CAMERON: What did you call me?

FAN 1: Cameron Lucasberg, the greatest director in the history of all film making.

CAMERON: *(Slowly regaining his memory.)* That's right. That's who I am! The finest director who's ever lived!

MARLOWE: Hey, good for you. You got your memory back. Do you remember how you lost it in the first place?

CAMERON: I think...someone hit me on the head... *(Sees Gilbert from across the lobby.)* It was that guy over there! *(Points to Gilbert.)*

GILBERT: Uh-oh! *(Covers himself with the cloak.)*

MARLOWE: *(Looking up from notepad.)* What?

CAMERON: My attacker!

MARLOWE: The guy hiding under the blanket?

GILBERT: They can see me somehow!

*(Gilbert runs offstage. Marlowe runs after him.)*

**THUMBS UP!**  
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MARLOWE: Sir, may I have a word with you? Sir? Get back here! *(Exits.)*

CAMERON: I'll help you catch him.

*(Cameron tries to move past the Movie Fans until a tall, attractive Female Fan stands in front of him. He's immediately enchanted by her.)*

FEMALE FAN: Could I have your autograph, Mr. Lucasberg?

CAMERON: Why of course...

FEMALE FAN: Or are you in a hurry?

CAMERON: Not anymore.

*(Nickel and Carolyn return to the lobby. They approach Mom, who relaxes in a chair.)*

NICKEL: Mom, any sign of Cameron?

MOM: I think that's him over there, surrounded by that flock of nerds.

NICKEL: *(Staring across the room at Cameron.)* Look at that jerk. Acting like he hasn't done anything wrong.

CAROLYN: He hasn't! You're being an idiot.

NICKEL: We'll see who the idiot is!

*(Gilbert frolics back on stage.)*

GILBERT: Ha, ha! I escaped from that wicked sorceress. And I didn't even have to use my magic wand! *(Brandishes his new wand.)*

NICKEL: Gilbert, I've found out who's behind all this chaos!

GILBERT: Merlin?

NICKEL: No! Cameron Lucasberg!

*(They approach Cameron and his Fans. Cameron finally glances up from signing autographs.)*



**THUMBS UP!**

49

CAMERON: Carolyn! Thank goodness you're alive! I've been so worried.

CAROLYN: Really? Looks like you're busy with your fans...as usual.

NICKEL: Quit the bickering, you two. I know what you've done, Lucasberg. You didn't like the sting of our movie reviews, so you thought you could get us out of the way by framing us with a phony kidnapping.

CAMERON: You're insane.

GILBERT: Let me cast a spell on him! Smirkus Jerkticus!  
*(Waves wand around.)*

CAMERON: And what's that supposed to do?

GILBERT: It's an ugly spell. But I guess that's a bit redundant.

CAMERON: *(Growling.)* Why you—!

*(Cameron throws a punch at Gilbert or pushes Gilbert to the ground. Nickel helps Gilbert up.)*

CAROLYN: Are you okay, Michael?

*(Gilbert seems to be coming out of a dream... coming back to reality.)*

GILBERT: I...was brainwashed...or hypnotized... Why am I dressed like a hobbit?

CAMERON: *(Using a powerful voice.)* My loyal fans...you love me, don't you?

FANS: Yes.

CAMERON: Then do me a favor and destroy these two worthless movie-hating humanoids!

*(The Movie Fans nod and obey. Gilbert and Nickel cower together as the Fans march toward them.)*

**THUMBS UP!**  
**50**

NICKEL: Wait! You should know something about your so-called movie-making god. You like his over budgeted fantasy action films?

NERDS: Yes.

NICKEL: Have you heard about his new ten picture deal? He's never making another sci-fi movie again. He says they're beneath him. You know what comes after *Robot and the Rose*? Costume drama after costume drama. That's right. So called chick flicks! His next film set to shoot is about Marie Antoinette's handmaid... and it's a *musical*!

*(All of the Fans gasp in horror. They look to Cameron.)*

FAN 2: *(To Cameron.)* Does he speak the truth?

CAMERON: Well...actually...yes. In fact, we've just started casting. Who do you like, [Britney] or [J-Lo]? *(Or insert the names of other pop music stars.)*

FANS: *(Blood thirsty.)* Get him!

*(And like so many Igors turning on their mad-with-power master, the Fans lurch forward and begin pushing and shoving Cameron.)*

CAROLYN: *(To Nickel and Gilbert, concerned.)* You guys better go. He's going to kill you the moment he's done beating up his fans.

GILBERT: Thanks, Carolyn.

CAROLYN: Ed...I know you don't trust me, but...whoever is trying to frame you...it's not me.

NICKEL: You're wrong...I do trust you.

CAROLYN: I'll try to clear things up here...

*(Carolyn and Nickel smile at each other. Gilbert tugs Nickel away, and the two film critics run off.)*

CAMERON: *(Still struggling with Fans.)* You can't do this to me! I'm the king of the world!

**THUMBS UP!**  
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*(Blackout. Curtain.)*

## SCENE 4

*(In front of the main curtain. Nickel and Gilbert enter the auditorium. They are searching for something.)*

NICKEL: Why are we in the auditorium?

GILBERT: I think this is where those kids brainwashed me.

Hey, I'm telling you, it's true! And I think those magic weirdoes are behind all of this nonsense.

NICKEL: This is ridiculous.

GILBERT: Look! Here they come.

*(Morgana and Stanley walk onto the stage. This time, they are behaving in a much more casual, almost surfer style.)*

MORGANA: *(Waving her wand.)* Wingardia Leviosa...

STANLEY: No, no, remember—it's all in the wrist.

GILBERT: Aha! We've found you! Now where's our stolen disco suits? We know it was you who sent us those threatening letters!

MORGANA: *(To Stanley.)* Dude, I told you that hypnosis stuff wouldn't work.

STANLEY: Aw, man, it wore off! Bogus. That would have been so cool!

GILBERT: What do you mean? And why aren't you talking in your normal British voices?

MORGANA: Like, these are our voices.

STANLEY: Dude, we totally had you guys fooled. You thought we were real wizards! That's how awesome our acting is!

MORGANA: We thought if we could brainwash one of you, you'd say awesome things about our new movie.

STANLEY: You know, instead of dumping on us like you usually do.

MORGANA: But we didn't steal any disco suits.

STANLEY: And we haven't been making any threats. We don't want you to stop your reviews, man. It'd just be nice if you'd lighten up on the harshness. They're only movies, dude.

NICKEL: *(To Gilbert.)* They don't seem like prime suspects anymore. And how could they have gotten into the room and the safe?

GILBERT: With their... magic wands?

MORGANA: *(To Stanley.)* Dude, he's still brainwashed!

STANLEY: That is so awesome!

*(Morgana and Stanley bust up laughing and exit.)*

GILBERT: Fine! Maybe these punks didn't do it. Maybe Lucasberg didn't do it. But there's still one more Hollywood delinquent left on our list of suspects: Louie the Lizard. *(Takes out the studio tickets.)* And I've got a free ticket into his den of crime!

NICKEL: You've got to stop watching those cheesy detective movies.

GILBERT: What? I thought I sounded cool!

*(Nickel exits. Gilbert follows.)*

## SCENE 5

*(Curtain goes up to reveal Louie the Lizard's dressing room. Louie the Lizard, still dressed in his costume, slumps down in his chair. There is a knock at the door.)*

VOICE: Five minutes, Mr. Lizard.

LOUIE: *(Cranky old man voice.)* Ugh! I'm coming, I'm coming. And here I thought I'd make it to Broadway...now look at me. I could have been a contender...

*(With a sigh, Louie shuts off the light as he leaves the room. Lights dim. A moment later Gilbert and Nickel enter, sneaking around.)*

GILBERT: Now, when he comes back in, I say we jump him!

NICKEL: I don't know about that. Where's the light switch?

*(Backing up against the wall, Gilbert stands next to the marionettes.)*

GILBERT: Uh, Nickel...I don't think we're alone in here. There's a little tiny hand on my shoulder. *(Nickel flips on the light. Gilbert looks behind him.)* Oh, it's just a marionette. *(Suddenly fearful.)* Aaaagghhh!! *(Gilbert panics and gets tangled up in the puppet strings.)* It's the nightmare again!

*(The door opens. Louie the Lizard enters.)*

LOUIE: What's going on in here? *(Gilbert, scared and angry, jumps up and grabs Louie the Lizard. Gilbert pushes Louie to the ground and sits on his lap.)* Ow! You're hurting me!

NICKEL: We know your people are trying to frame us. Who's behind it? Your producer?

LOUIE: I don't know what the heck you're talking about. *(To Gilbert.)* Would you get this guy off of me? He's wrinkling my scales!

NICKEL: First, let's have a confession. You were mad about getting a bad review, weren't you?

LOUIE: Boy, you guys sure raked me over the coals, heh, heh!

NICKEL: So you tried to get revenge?

LOUIE: What are you talking about? Your lousy reviews were like manna from heaven. I only stopped by with my puppets because the studio made me. I can't stand this job! And I've got a 10-year contract with these people. I'm gonna die in this stupid costume. I was hoping your review would help put the Louie franchise out of business.

GILBERT: Okay, we believe you. Just get these freaky things off of me! *(Shakes off the marionettes.)*

LOUIE: Look, kiddo...take it easy. What do you have against marionettes?

GILBERT: *(Calming down.)* Well...I guess...you see, my father was a puppeteer. He used to dress as a clown and use marionettes at children's parties.

LOUIE: Hey. That's how I started out.

GILBERT: But he was drunk all the time. And when I was eight years old, he left my mom and me...and I've hated marionettes ever since.

LOUIE: *(Suddenly all choked up.)* Why...I was a drunk too...and I left my tubby little boy and his mama when he was only...eight...

GILBERT: D-Daddy?

LOUIE: My long lost little son?

*(Still sitting on top of Louie, Gilbert and Louie embrace in a warm tender hug. Nickel watches, very confused by what he sees.)*

GILBERT: Daddy, I missed you so much. I love you, Dad!

LOUIE: I love you too, Elmer!

GILBERT: Elmer?

LOUIE: Yeah. Elmer Jones from Cleveland.

GILBERT: No. Michael Gilbert from San Jose.

**THUMBS UP!**  
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LOUIE: Oh. I guess your daddy must have been a different  
drunken clown.

GILBERT: Yeah.

**[End of Freeview]**