

MALCOLM IN THE MIDDLE:

WEDNESDAY'S CHILD (IS FULL OF WOE)

An original script
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2002.03.30

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COLD OPEN

EXT. MALCOLM'S FRONT YARD - DAY (LATE AFTERNOON)

We are close up on MALCOLM who looks resigned (shoulders drooping, hands thrust deep in pockets), as if things have happened over which he has no control (as usual). Background noises build in volume as he speaks.

SFX: BACKGROUND NOISES GROWING IN VOLUME: COUGHING, RETCHING AND SPITTING, WITH OCCASIONAL MOANS, AND THE SOUND OF TWO DISTANT FIRE ENGINES' SIRENS, COMING CLOSER.

MALCOLM

(to camera)

In the few short years that I've inhabited this Earth, I have managed to make some personal observations. For example: for every family there is a day of the week they can't quite handle. In the case of this family, it's Wednesday. I was born on a Wednesday, and if I live to be a hundred, more of my birthdays will fall on a Wednesday than on any other day. I worked it out.

(BEAT)

And I don't exactly know why, but every time something bad happens, it's on a Wednesday.

(BEAT)

And it's usually my fault. Everything's my fault. It's not fair.

WIDEN TO REVEAL

The front door is open and thick gray smoke is billowing out of it. LOIS, HAL, REESE, DEWEY are in a group behind MALCOLM, holding on to each other for support, bent over coughing and retching.

HAL is wearing full makeup and some of LOIS' clothes (frizzy black wig, stockings, boustier, heels). LOIS is dressed in HAL's tuxedo, without makeup.

(CONTINUED)

MALCOLM (CONT'D)
 (shrugging in resignation)
 And today is Wednesday, so what do
 you expect?

Two fire engines (water carriers) arrive noisily at the driveway.

SFX: LOUD KLAXONS (HORNS), TIRES SKIDDING ON GRAVEL, COMPRESSED
 AIR RELEASED BY BRAKES

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FIRE ENGINES - DAY - THE NEXT MOMENT

A total of seven firemen jump out and unfurl hoses, etc. FIREMAN #1 and FIREMAN #2 don breathing apparatus and run one hose into the open front door. The hose fattens visibly as water is pumped into it. FIREMAN #3 and FIREMAN #4 run another hose down the side of the house towards the back. FIREMAN #5 - the captain - surveys the scene, hands on hips. FIREMAN #6 - a paramedic - pulls out a medical kit and walks toward the family group.

FIREMAN #7 grabs an ax and starts to run with it past the family group towards the house, but LOIS, despite her obvious physical distress, suddenly reaches out and makes to grab him very firmly by the arm. As she does so, LOIS speaks.

LOIS
 (coughing, but firm)
 Not in my house, you don't.

She grabs the fireman's arm and the sudden restraint causes him to swing round and fall.

GO TO SLOW MOTION

FIREMAN #7 - as he falls - lets go the ax, which arcs in slow motion towards MALCOLM's head.

SFX: THE WHIPPING SOUND OF THE HANDLE OF THE SLOWLY-SPINNING AX

CUT TO:

EXT. MALCOLM LOOKING INTO CAMERA - DAY - THE NEXT MOMENT

MALCOLM ducks in a matter-of-fact manner - like this kind of thing happens to him all the time - and the ax sails past him and off screen.

(CONTINUED)

SFX: THE AX EMBEDS ITSELF WITH A LOUD METALLIC THUD IN THE
PASSENGER DOOR OF THE FAMILY CAR

The camera swings to show the ax embedded in the passenger door
and then swings back to MALCOLM as he straightens up.

MALCOLM
(exasperated, to camera)
See what I mean? Whose fault do
you think that is? It's just not
fair!

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

(CONTINUED)

ACT ONE

FADE IN

INT. THE KITCHEN - DAY - SOME WEEKS PREVIOUSLY

LOIS is cooking - pans are boiling on the stove with "things" in them. She has a cookbook open, close to her face, as she looks at it and touches each of the ingredients arranged on the table in front of her - as if checking that she has everything. HAL is sat at the far end of the kitchen table, hiding behind a newspaper. The back door opens.

The three boys walk into the kitchen from the back yard. They dump their backpacks just anywhere. LOIS is still behind the cookbook but she doesn't miss a thing.

LOIS

(firmly)

AWAY! Put those away. Don't leave them out for me to tidy up. I'm not your slave and this is not a hotel.

The boys look at each other but don't move to obey.

MALCOLM

(to camera)

Whoever heard of a hotel with slaves? It doesn't make sense.

(BEAT)

No wait, it does.

(BEAT)

Mom? Can I have a burger?

REESE

(looking warily at the pans on the stove)
Yeah, me too.

DEWEY

(looking at first MALCOLM then REESE)
Can I have one too, Mom?

(BEAT)

Please?

(CONTINUED)

All three head for the refrigerator even as LOIS speaks:

LOIS

(lowers the cookbook, slightly exasperated)
 But I'm cooking ...Oh, yes, all right, but only one each and one bun each - I don't want you using up all the buns again. Hal, remind me to get a giant bag of sesame seed buns from work. We can freeze them and they'll last longer.

(BEAT)

And vegetables or salad. You boys make sure you eat something green with those burgers.

She raises the cookbook back to her face.

HAL

(absent-minded, from behind the newspaper)
 Yes, dear.

The boys ignore her. REESE pulls one of LOIS' pans off a hot plate and puts a fresh one in its place. MALCOLM pulls three unfrozen burgers from a pack he has taken from the fridge and throws them into it.

REESE splashes in some olive oil, MALCOLM turns on the hot plate, DEWEY pulls six sesame seed buns out of a pack he has taken from the fridge, takes them apart and spreads them out on the table. MALCOLM explains as they work:

MALCOLM

(to camera)

This is neat. We worked out that if you use two buns for each burger, you can put on twice as much relish - or ketchup - and you get points for eating more bread and sesame seeds, which are good for you - I think. Is that cool or what?

DEWEY

(to camera, holding up the hotdog relish)
 This is green, right?

(CONTINUED)

DEWEY spoons large quantities of the relish onto each bun as the burgers begin to sizzle in the pan.

SFX: SIZZLING BURGERS

MALCOLM

(to camera)

And as long as we use olive oil we're eating healthy, so who's gonna complain?

(BEAT)

Did you know that one burger gives you twenty five grams of protein? That's like half my daily requirement. I looked it up.

MALCOLM turns back to the task of cooking the burgers. He and REESE jostle for control of the pan handle, and REESE wins, grinning.

MALCOLM

(to REESE)

Hey! You know you can't cook.

REESE

I know you can't fight.

MALCOLM scowls briefly at REESE, picks up a spatula and pokes at the burgers. DEWEY continues to heap relish onto the buns until he has emptied the jar.

LOIS

(lowering her cookbook again briefly in order to look at HAL)

Hal? Make sure they get something other than just a burger.

HAL

(still absent-minded, still from behind the newspaper)

Yes, dear.

DEWEY hums a tune to himself as gets three large plates and places them on the table. He clumsily picks up the relish-laden buns from the table and dumps them out onto the plates, leaving piles of relish on the table.

SFX: DEWEY HUMMING

(CONTINUED)

DEWEY then goes to the refrigerator and picks out three cans of soda. He looks around to see if anyone is watching and then briefly but vigorously shakes two of the cans and places them on the table.

MALCOLM and REESE collaborate on moving the hot pan to the table: REESE handles the pan, MALCOLM uses the spatula to put the burgers onto three of the relish-laden buns.

REESE puts the pan back on the stove (the hot plate is still on full), MALCOLM dumps the spatula on the table and they high five each other. DEWEY tries to high five them both and they ignore him. HAL, without looking up, puts his hand out from behind the paper and DEWEY high fives HAL.

Each of the boys piles their buns together to make a mound of dripping food.

MALCOLM, REESE and DEWEY carry their plates and one soda each off to the living room and drop onto the couch. The camera follows them.

DEWEY grabs the remote and switches on the TV.

SFX: CARTOONS ON THE TV

The boys balance the sodas precariously on the couch and begin to stuff the food into their mouths, much of which falls back out again.

CUT TO:

INT. THE KITCHEN — DAY — A FEW MOMENTS LATER

DEWEY's soda can manipulation makes itself felt off-screen.

SFX: (O.S.) FAINT SOUNDS OF CARTOONS ON THE TV FOLLOWED BY THE SOUNDS OF CANS OF SODA BEING OPENED SIMULTANEOUSLY AND EJECTING THEIR CONTENTS OVER MALCOLM AND REESE.

MALCOM (O.S.)

(annoyed)

Urgh! Dewey! I'm gonna get you for this!

REESE (O.S.)

(menacingly)

And then I'm gonna get you for this!

(CONTINUED)

DEWEY (O.S.)
(shouting, telling tales)
Mom! Malcolm and Reese made a mess
and they're not cleaning it up!

HAL is still reading the paper and LOIS is turning the pages of her cookbook. Without moving her gaze from the book, she reaches out, pulls the now empty but smoking pan off the hot plate and turns it off.

HAL
(to LOIS, sounding intrigued from behind the newspaper)
Lois? Did you ever ... go to see
the Rocky Horror Picture Show?

LOIS
(still behind her cookbook)
Rocky Horror? No. Why?

HAL
(nonchalantly, still from behind the newspaper)
Oh, just wondered. They're showing
it at the movie theater a week from
today. Next Wednesday at 2am.

LOIS
(pauses, then lowers the cookbook)
Why on earth are they showing it at
that time? Sounds like a misprint.

(BEAT)

Why? Are you interested? I didn't
think you liked musicals.

HAL
(lowering his paper to look at LOIS)
Oh, I don't. But this is ...
different. People go to the movie
... ah, dressed up. They throw
things and shout and stuff.

(BEAT)

(raises his paper)
You know we once discussed ... ah,
dressing up. I ... ah, thought it
might be ... ah, fun.

(CONTINUED)

LOIS

(jaw drops, looks slightly surprised, then smiles almost shyly)

Why, Hal. Yes, I agree. It might be fun. Why don't we go? We haven't been out in weeks. We could do with some time off for good behavior.

LOIS narrows her eyes – while still smiling – as she looks past HAL to the living room, as if checking on the boys.

HAL

(clears his throat from behind his paper)
OK. If that's what you want.

LOIS

(continues to smile)

Do you think you can get into some ... ah, clothes?

HAL

(clears his throat again from behind his paper)

Ah, yes, OK. If that's what you want.

LOIS

(raises her cookbook again)

Shouldn't you make sure they fit OK? This evening, maybe?

HAL

(clears his throat yet again from behind his paper)

Yes, OK, good idea.

(BEAT)

After the boys have gone to bed.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BATHROOM – LATER THAT EVENING

MALCOLM, REESE and DEWEY are preparing for bed. They are in their night things and are jostling for position at the bathroom sink. They talk with their mouths full of toothpaste, which muffles what they say.

(CONTINUED)

MALCOLM

(to DEWEY)

Dewey, I think I saw a big spider
crawl into your bed.

DEWEY pauses brushing his teeth for a few seconds. His eyes
widen but he pretends not to be affected.

DEWEY

(nonchalantly continues to brush his teeth)
Uh-huh?

REESE realizes what MALCOLM is doing. He follows up MALCOLM's
statement.

REESE

Yeah, I saw it too, Dewey. Big and
scruffy with long hairy legs.

The camera swings to the open bathroom door as HAL walks by,
wearing boxers and a tee. HAL hears REESE's remark and looks
down at his own legs.

HAL

That's a point - I'll need to
shave.

HAL walks on past the door.

The boys finalize getting ready for bed. They jostle and fight
and generally cause each other problems as they finish brushing
their teeth.

MALCOLM and REESE continue to tease DEWEY about the big spider
they pretended to have seen earlier.

MALCOLM

(to REESE, in a matter-of-fact voice)

I read somewhere that really,
really big spiders - like that one
we saw earlier - make a kind of
scratching sound as they climb up
walls and into beds. You can
actually hear them walking, they're
so big.

REESE confirms this.

(CONTINUED)

REESE

(to MALCOLM)

Yeah, and really big nasty hairy spiders also have big teeth like that kid in your class with the fangs...

(pulling a snarling face with clawlike hands)

...and they can give you a nasty bite if you move suddenly when they're walking over you.

DEWEY's eyes widen further.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. THE BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

DEWEY's eyes are still wide when HAL comes in to the bedroom to tuck the boys in and read DEWEY a bedtime story. DEWEY clutches at the bed covers and pulls them up to his nose so only his wide eyes are visible.

HAL doesn't notice - his thoughts are elsewhere (on preparations for the evening) - and he picks up one of DEWEY's bedtime story books, doesn't notice it is upside down and proceeds to read a very short, completely made up story that makes no sense.

HAL

(to DEWEY)

Once upon a time there was a fairy princess who met a charming prince and they decided to swap clothes for the evening while they went to the movies and it was great fun and they all lived happily ever after, the end.

(BEAT)

Goodnight then, son...

(kisses Dewey on the head)

...and goodnight you two boys - sleep tight.

(CONTINUED)

HAL switches off the main bedroom light and closes the door. In the moonlight we can see DEWEY's eyebrows rise above his wide eyes as MALCOLM and REESE surreptitiously tap and scratch their fingernails against the bedroom wall.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BATHROOM - A SHORT TIME LATER

HAL is wearing boxers and shaving his legs with a wet razor. He only shaves up to about an inch from the line of the boxers, leaving thick hair jutting out of the shorts. He is humming to himself.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (AN HOUR LATER)

HAL is going through LOIS' drawers, pulling out various items of lingerie and holding them against himself, looking in a full length mirror to see how they fit. Although he has shaved most of his legs he has not shaved anything else and his chest, back and arms are hairy.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

LOIS is sitting on the couch drinking a cup of tea and watching the weather report on the television. The weather person reports a heavy rainstorm heading into the area. LOIS gets up and opens the door leading to the darkened hallway and the bedrooms.

LOIS

(softly to HAL)

Hal? Make sure all the big windows are closed. There's a storm heading this way tonight. We don't want the rain pouring in.

(BEAT)

And be careful with my clothes.

LOIS goes back to her tea and the couch and puts her feet up.

(CONTINUED)

LOIS
 (to herself)
 It's one way to get a new wardrobe.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (THE SAME MOMENT)

HAL is now wearing black lace underwear with hair jutting out, rolling around on the bed trying to get into a frilly black boustier. Hearing LOIS' instructions, he stops and grins.

HAL
 (in a low voice to himself)
 Better and better. Lois always gets a little scared by storms, which means she has to cling to her manly man for protection.

He succeeds in putting on the boustier and then begins to try to put on a stocking, making large holes in it in the process.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT (A SHORT WHILE LATER)

The camera pans over the three boys in their beds.

REESE is lying on his back and has a large plastic sword clutched to his chest. He is asleep with a big smile on his face.

DEWEY is covered with bedclothes and where his head lies on the pillow we see a large brown paper bag with two eye holes cut in it, facing away from MALCOLM and REESE. The camera moves in to the holes and we can see DEWEY's eyes inside, still wide open.

When the camera moves to MALCOLM, he turns over in bed restlessly and awakens. He licks his lips and gets out of bed. The camera follows him as he walks out to the bathroom to get a drink.

We see him pour and then drink a large glass of cold water

MALCOLM
 (to camera)
 Sleeping is thirsty work. Don't ask me why.

(CONTINUED)

The camera follows him back to the bedroom. As he passes the master bedroom, the door is ajar and we and he can see HAL's reflection in a full length mirror. MALCOLM's jaw drops.

FADE OUT

(CONTINUED)

ACT TWO

FADE IN

INT. THE HALLWAY - NIGHT (CONTINUING FROM PREVIOUS SCENE)

ANGLE SHOT OF MALCOLM'S FACE

MALCOLM's eyes widen in amazement, his jaw drops. He looks to camera and back to the doorway and back to camera again.

MALCOLM

(in a low voice to camera)

Am I dreaming? I must be dreaming.

(BEAT)

Wait a minute.

MALCOLM pulls his ears, ruffles his hair, pushes his nose upwards hard with one finger, crosses his eyes and sticks his tongue out. His tests for being awake are complete.

MALCOLM

(still in a low voice, to camera)

No, I think I'm definitely awake.

MALCOLM turns back to look through the bedroom door at his father, now sporting a large frizzy black wig.

MALCOLM

(turning to camera, still in a low voice)

No-one will ever believe this! Not
in a million billion trillion
years.

(BEAT)

Unless...

He scurries back to his bedroom, followed by the camera, and quietly looks through various drawers and piles of things until he finally finds what he is looking for: a Polaroid camera.

The camera follows him back to the master bedroom. MALCOLM crouches down low at the open door and aims the camera at the mirror, in front of which his father is still posing. He fires off a shot and the flash temporarily blinds HAL.

MALCOLM runs back to his bedroom and quietly closes the door.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

HAL is still blinking from the flash.

HAL
(speaking to himself)
Gosh. That was fast. I never saw
a storm move in so quickly. Maybe
I better had check all the windows.

He goes to check the windows behind the curtain.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIEW OF THE MASTER BEDROOM WINDOW FROM THE STREET - NIGHT
(THE SAME MOMENT)

We see HAL in drag checking the windows just as two elderly ladies walk by with a small dog. They turn as they see the curtain move, showing HAL's hairy upper torso silhouetted in the light from the bedroom.

ELDERLY LADY #1
(haughtily to ELDERLY LADY #2)
I think someone should tell Lois
about Epilady...

They walk on.

CUT TO:

INT. THE BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT (THE SAME MOMENT)

MALCOLM is sat on his bed checking the development of the photograph. He has to tilt it to look at it in the available light. We look at the photograph over his shoulder. He has caught the reflection of HAL full frontal in drag and posing.

CUT TO:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

LOIS switches off the TV, turns out the living room light and goes out of the door into the hallway leading to the bedrooms. The camera follows her as she goes to the boys' bedroom door, quietly opens it and checks inside.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

INT. THE BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT (THE SAME MOMENT)

MALCOLM is in bed, eyes closed, but we can see a corner of the photograph sticking out from under his pillow. LOIS doesn't see it. She crosses to the window and checks that it is closed, then quietly leaves the room, shutting the door on her way out. The camera moves down to the eye holes in DEWEY's brown paper bag. His eyes are closed.

CUT TO:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

HAL is posing on the bed, disporting himself - now in full drag - in front of LOIS. LOIS laughs loudly then clamps her hand over her mouth. HAL grins.

HAL

That storm moved in quickly. There was a huge flash of lightning a few minutes ago - but I haven't heard any thunder yet.

He looks a little puzzled.

LOIS climbs onto the bed and lies facing HAL.

LOIS

I've had a thought.

HAL

(grins mischievously)
Oh, yeah?

LOIS

(smiles back at HAL)
Not that. Who are we going to get to babysit the boys for this weirdos night out? Everyone we know won't come near us.

(BEAT)

(grins and moves her eyebrows up and down)
Especially if they could see you now.

(CONTINUED)

HAL
 (grimacing)
Yeah. I'd forgotten about the
babysitter.

(BEAT)

 (wistfully hopeful)
You don't think they're old enough
to look after themselves?

 LOIS
Hah!

 HAL
 (disappointed, but then looks thoughtful)
I could try the German accent this
time. It might work on old Mrs
Forbes.

(BEAT)

 (using a stage Germanic accent)
I'll giff her a call from verk
tomorrow.

(BEAT)

 (normal voice)
Are you ... going to get ready for
bed now?

 LOIS
 (smiles coyly)
Are you?

 HAL
 (smiles back)
I'm all ready - if you are.

LOIS pulls gently at some of the hair on his chest.

 LOIS
 (frowning slightly)
The least you could do is wax your
chest. Hang on a minute - I think
I have a couple of sheets
somewhere.

LOIS gets up off the bed, and goes in search of her waxing kit.
We see her apply some of the material to HAL's chest.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

EXT. VIEW OF THE MASTER BEDROOM WINDOW FROM THE STREET — NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

We hear the sound of the waxing sheet being pulled sharply and HAL's reaction.

SFX: RIPPING SOUND FOLLOWED IMMEDIATELY BY A LOUD SCREAM OF PAIN FROM HAL.

The camera pans back and we see lights going on in various windows of various houses in the street, and we hear a dog barking.

SFX: DOG BARKING.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. A CLASSROOM AT MALCOLM'S SCHOOL — THE FOLLOWING DAY

MALCOLM and STEVIE are next to the school computer, talking.

MALCOLM

(awkwardly)

Stevie...I...I think my Dad might be a...a cross dresser.

Stevie is being deliberately obtuse.

STEVIE

(breathless)

He gets...angry putting...clothes on?

MALCOLM

(a little frustrated)

No! He's a...I think he's a... transvestite.

STEVIE

(breathless)

Isn't that where...vampires...come from?

MALCOLM

(raising his voice)

No! No! Why are you saying that?

(CONTINUED)

STEVIE
 (breathless)
I know...I know...I was
just...pulling your...chain.

(BEAT)

What makes you...

Malcolm looks around and then pulls out the polaroid.

 STEVIE
 (squinting at the photo)
You can't really...I...can give
you...a better picture...than this.
Watch.

STEVIE places the photograph in a flatbed scanner attached to the computer, calls up some photo editing software, scans the photo, enlarges it and then crops it. HAL appears larger than life on screen. STEVIE saves the file. He prints a large copy on the attached color printer and hands it to MALCOLM.

 MALCOLM
 (protesting, to STEVIE)
Don't leave the file on the
computer - I don't want everyone
knowing my Dad's a - whatever he
is.

STEVIE sighs and deletes the file. At this point a TEACHER enters the room. MALCOLM clasps the printout to his chest.

 TEACHER
 (disapprovingly)
Come on you two boys - there's
fresh air outside and plenty for
everybody.

The TEACHER shoos the boys out, and in their haste they leave the Polaroid behind in the scanner.

The camera stays with the TEACHER, who lifts up the flatbed scanner cover and discovers the Polaroid.

(CONTINUED)

TIME CUT TO:

INT. THE TEACHERS' LOUNGE AT MALCOLM'S SCHOOL - DAY - LATER

There are numerous teachers drinking coffee or tea, sitting reading newspapers, talking. Enlarged prints of the photograph of HAL in drag are circulating rapidly among them. The polaroid has been pinned to a noticeboard.

The PRINCIPAL enters the room and sees the polaroid and the prints. She recognizes HAL from her many dealings with the boys' parents. She is not amused.

She snatches the polaroid and one of the prints and marches out of the room.

CUT TO:

INT. THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE AT MALCOLM'S SCHOOL - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

The PRINCIPAL picks up the phone, and presses a SPEED DIAL button labeled "NOTHING BUT TROUBLE". It dials MALCOLM's home number and LOIS answers.

SFX: LOIS' MUFFLED VOICE ON THE PHONE.

PRINCIPAL
(abrupt, curt manner)
Is this Malcolm's mother?

SFX: LOIS' MUFFLED VOICE ON THE PHONE.

PRINCIPAL
(continuing abruptness)
No. This is not about any of the children. This is about you. I should be very much obliged if you and your husband could be in my office at 8.30 sharp tomorrow morning. Good day.

She hangs up the phone without waiting for a reply from LOIS.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE AT MALCOLM'S SCHOOL - DAY - THE FOLLOWING DAY (WEDNESDAY)

(CONTINUED)

We watch as the PRINCIPAL shows HAL and LOIS the polaroid picture and a copy of the printout of HAL in drag. HAL squirms, pink with embarrassment, LOIS is almost purple with anger and shame.

PRINCIPAL

(abrupt, curt manner)

I'm sure that this is permissible in today's moral climate but I do not think it appropriate for you to circulate such material in my school. Please do not let it happen again. Good day.

She stands up, hands HAL the polaroid picture (but retains the printout) and gestures to the door. HAL and LOIS (spluttering) leave the office.

The camera follows them out into the hallway where a couple of young women teachers look at HAL and their eyes and mouths widen in recognition. They walk by, trying hard to suppress their giggles which erupt as soon as they are past HAL and LOIS.

The unhappy parents try to escape from the school without further embarrassment.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FAMILY CAR - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

HAL is sitting in the front passenger seat, LOIS in the driver's seat. LOIS' face is dark with suppressed anger, HAL has a pained expression on his face.

LOIS

(querulous)

What I don't understand is where the hell that picture came from in the first place.

LOIS starts the car.

LOIS

(continuing)

What day is it today?

Both their faces show recognition at the same time. They turn to face each other and exclaim in unison.

(CONTINUED)

LOIS AND HAL
 (together)
 MALCOLM!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE PLAYGROUND AT MALCOLM'S SCHOOL - LATER THE SAME DAY

It is still Woeful Wednesday. The Krelboynes (LLOYD, DABNEY, ERASERHEAD) are meeting with MALCOLM and STEVIE to discuss the photograph. They are sitting at a table.

ERASERHEAD
 (to MALCOLM)
 I think you're getting off lightly.
 My Dad wears a diaper and a baby
 bonnet and my Mom has to spank him
 with some sticks of celery.

LLOYD
 (to ERASERHEAD)
 Yours too? I thought I was the
 only one who had...special parents.

DABNEY
 No, I think we're pretty much in
 sync as far as that goes. I always
 thought Malcolm was the odd one
 out, but apparently I was wrong.

STEVIE
 (to himself)
 And I...used to...like celery.

ERASERHEAD brings them back to focus on more important matters.

ERASERHEAD
 (to the group)
 How about getting back to business?
 How are we doing on components for
 the FartAlyzer?

MALCOLM has been out of the loop.

MALCOLM
 (incredulously)
 The what?

DABNEY explains.

(CONTINUED)

DABNEY

(to MALCOLM)

The Fartalyzer. It's an instrument to analyze farts as a way to classify the lesser elements in the school.

(BEAT)

(proudly)

It was my idea.

MALCOLM isn't usually that enthralled with their nerdishness, but in this case he thinks it's a laugh and he goes along with it.

MALCOLM

(to camera)

Sounds pretty weird...and cool, after a fashion...if somewhat elitist. But what the hey...we're only young once.

LLOYD takes up the story.

LLOYD

(to MALCOLM)

We have a sample provider who will make available control materials on demand.

MALCOLM

Huh?

LLOYD

It's Raymond "The Cheese" Cutter - you remember when everyone came pouring out of Mrs Dibble's classroom and they thought the drains had backed up? That was The Cheese.

(BEAT)

(to the group)

How are we doing on the raw materials?

(CONTINUED)

DABNEY

I found someone who can get us an atomic absorption spectro-photometer.

ERASERHEAD

I know someone who can get us an oxyacetylene cylinder.

STEVIE rouses them to action.

STEVIE

Then let's...get into...gear and ...do it!

CUT TO:

INT. HAL'S OFFICE AT HIS PLACE OF WORK — DAY (WEDNESDAY)

HAL looks around a little furtively and then picks up the telephone. He dials a number that he reads from a small piece of paper, and we hear the muffled voice of an elderly woman.

SFX: MUFFLED PHONE VOICE OF AN ELDERLY WOMAN SAYING "HELLO".

HAL speaks, using a very strange accent.

HAL

(in a stage Germanic accent)

Hallo? Iss ziss Mississ Vorpss?

SFX: MUFFLED PHONE VOICE OF AN ELDERLY WOMAN SAYING "YES".

HAL

(continuing in the strange accent)

Fee haffn't met before, but a friend off mine tellss me zat you are eggssellent viss chiltren ass babyssitter. I foss funterink iff you coot possibly babyssit mine kittiess for me tonight, chust for a few hourss?

HAL looks up to see his boss standing in the doorway looking puzzled. HAL coughs and gestures that he will be free in a moment, and his boss shakes his head in puzzlement and walks out of the doorway, leaving the door open.

The voice on the other end of the phone gives a muffled response that sounds like "OK".

(CONTINUED)

SFX: MUFFLED PHONE VOICE OF AN ELDERLY WOMAN SAYING "OK".

HAL
 (holding up crossed fingers)
 I haff chust sree liddle oness und
 zey are abssolutely no truppel at
 all.

The heads of HAL's colleagues begin to appear around the door as they come to see what he's up to.

HAL
 (shrugs his shoulders, puts his hand over the
 mouthpiece, mouths his explanation)
 Trying to get a babysitter.

His colleagues give "Ohs" of understanding – they too have similar problems getting babysitters.

TIME CUT TO:

INT. LOIS' PLACE OF WORK – DAY (WEDNESDAY)

LOIS is in her uniform and she looks tired. She is close to ending her shift. She is using the last few minutes to shop for her family. CRAIG is following her around like a puppy.

CRAIG watches as LOIS picks up a jumbo size bag of sesame seed burger buns and drops it into her trolley. He senses that she is preparing for a barbecue.

CRAIG
 (wistfully)
 Do you know, I can't remember the
 last time someone invited me to a
 barbecue. Did I tell you I was
 second runner up to Southern County
 Wiener Schnitzelling Champion,
 three years running? The ladies
 used to gather round in droves to
 watch me schnitzelling my wiener.

LOIS looks at him slightly askance.

LOIS
 (sarcastically)
 Craig, your social life never
 ceases to amaze me. I'm surprised
 you haven't featured on Sixty
 Minutes.

(CONTINUED)

CRAIG doesn't get the sarcasm at first and initially beams as he basks in what he thinks is a compliment. Then the penny drops and so does his face.

CRAIG
(brightly at first, then crestfallen)
Why, thank you...Oh.

LOIS
(apologetically)
Look, Craig, I'm sorry, but whatever you think I'm doing, I'm not. And even if I was, I wouldn't be and neither would you.

CRAIG
(confused)
Huh?

LOIS
(looks up as if hearing something)
Sounds like someone being ill.

CRAIG
(more confused)
What?

There is a faint sound of someone being sick. The store's PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM blares out a message.

SFX: DISTANT SOUND OF AN ADULT MALE VOMITING.

PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM
Craig - clean up on aisle five...
aisle six...aisle seven...Sir, can
you please stand still?...aisle
eight...aisle nine...

CRAIG stomps off in a fit of pique, leaving LOIS to complete her shopping.

FADE OUT

(CONTINUED)

ACT THREE

FADE IN

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - LATER THAT SAME DAY

LOIS struggles in through the back door with armfuls of bags of shopping. She sets them down on the table, pulls out an enormous bag of burger buns and stuffs it, with some difficulty, into the freezer. She hears a noise O.S. - the thud of something falling.

SFX: (O.S.) THE SOUND OF SOMETHING HEAVY (A BODY) FALLING WITH A THUD.

LOIS
(with curiosity)
Hal? Is that you? You're home early.

The camera follows her as she walks through to the master bedroom. HAL is partially dressed again in her lingerie, on his hands and knees on the floor. He looks apologetic, and as she enters he struggles to get to his feet.

HAL
(with slight embarrassment)
Sorry, hun, I haven't quite mastered the knack of getting into these tights. I think I'd do better with the stockings.

LOIS looks at her watch.

LOIS
(with slight exasperation)
You're getting ready way too early. We aren't due to leave until almost midnight. What are you going to do when the boys get home?

(BEAT)

I hope you realize that after ruining all my clothes you're going to have to replace them.

(CONTINUED)

HAL

(coyly)

Ah. I managed to arrange the babysitter somewhat earlier. I thought we could maybe manage a meal somewhere where they don't know us, before the show. You know, make a full evening of it.

LOIS looks slightly taken aback and then pleasantly surprised and pleased.

LOIS

Yes, OK. Good thinking, Hal. I'll have to get a move on though.

(BEAT)

What will you tell the boys? We haven't dealt with Malcolm properly yet.

HAL

Ah, I had an idea about that. We'll tell the boys that it's fancy dress - which it is, in a way, sort of - and that way we don't have to deal with anything because it's all been just a tiny misunderstanding.

HAL beams at his own ingenuity. LOIS isn't so sure.

LOIS

(grimacing)

Hah! I might swallow that but I don't think the boys will and nor will that principal. I still haven't worked out what I'm going to do about that, but I suppose your idea is just as good as any other crack-brained solution.

(BEAT)

Come here and let me fix your makeup.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The three boys have also come home early. As they dump their bags anywhere, MALCOLM can see the bags of groceries on the table.

MALCOLM
(shouting)
Mom? Can I have a burger please?

CUT TO:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - DAY (THE SAME MOMENT)

LOIS is putting mascara on HAL. She pauses as she shouts back to MALCOLM.

LOIS
(shouting)
Yes, all right, but use the buns in the freezer. If they're frozen you might need to thaw them in the microwave for about twenty seconds each. Don't forget to have something green with it.

(BEAT)

Your father and I are going out to a movie tonight so Mrs Forbes has agreed to come and babysit. I want absolutely perfect behavior all night this time.

(BEAT)

Oh, and if she asks you anything about Germany say you don't know much English.

(BEAT)

In fact, try not to talk at all.

HAL laughs.

(CONTINUED)

HAL

(quietly to LOIS)

It worked like a charm. She didn't even remember the address. There's something to be said for having a poor memory after all.

(BEAT)

Now my boss wants me to do it for him too. His kids are even worse than ours.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

MALCOLM begins preparation for the usual double-decker burgers. This time he takes command.

MALCOLM

(to REESE)

Reese, you're in charge of Dewey. It's your job to safeguard the sodas. I'll cook everything and bring it through.

DEWEY and REESE take three sodas from the refrigerator, and the camera follows them as they take them into the living room and sit down on the couch to watch TV while the food is taken care of by MALCOLM.

REESE looks to see if MALCOLM can see him, raises his eyebrows at DEWEY, and vigorously shakes the can of soda he has brought through for MALCOLM.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

MALCOLM begins to set everything in motion, and then realizes he still has to thaw the partially frozen buns in the microwave.

He takes six partially frozen buns from the freezer and places them on a plate in the microwave. He goes to put them on for twenty seconds each (1 minute 20 seconds) - but miskeys and enters 12 minutes just as the KRELBOYNES arrive and knock at the back door. MALCOLM doesn't see his error and hits the START button on the microwave, then goes to answer the back door. The camera follows.

(CONTINUED)

THE KRELBOYNES - STEVIE, LLOYD, DABNEY, and ERASERHEAD - are in view. STEVIE has an enormous contraption balanced precariously in front of him on his wheelchair - you can barely see him behind all the junk that goes to make up the FartAlyzer. A large gas cylinder is strapped to the back of his chair.

MALCOLM
 (to the group)
 Hey. Wassup?

EVERYONE
 Hey, Malcolm.

ERASERHEAD pulls into view someone who is very short and was hidden behind the group. It's THE CHEESE. ERASERHEAD introduces him to MALCOLM.

ERASERHEAD
 Malcolm - The Cheese. The Cheese -
 Malcolm.

As MALCOLM and THE CHEESE nod to each other in greeting there is a slight but unmistakable sound.

SFX: A SMALL FARTING NOISE.

LLOYD
 (to THE CHEESE)
 Not yet! Not yet! We're not set
 up!

DABNEY
 (to MALCOLM)
 Do you have an external tap for a
 garden hose? We need a source of
 water to create the vacuum so the
 control sample can be sucked in.

MALCOLM is sidetracked. He pulls the burger filled pan off the hotplate and heads out into the garden with the KRELBOYNES, forgetting the buns in the microwave.

MALCOLM
 Yes, it's just around the side
 here.

The camera moves towards the buns in the microwave. They are already beginning to smoke.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

EXT. MALCOLM'S BACK GARDEN - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

The KRELBOYNES connect the behemoth to the garden hose. As THE CHEESE provides a generous sample into the funnel attached to the input line, MALCOLM sees a piece of string attached to the side of the contraption.

MALCOLM

(curiously, as he yanks on the string)
What's this for?

The Fartalyzer works by sucking in some gaseous material and burning it in a mixture of oxyacetylene gas and air to produce a colored flame, through which light from a lamp shines onto a detector and a meter indicates the concentration of the material.

By pulling on the string MALCOLM has suddenly increased the flow of oxyacetylene gas dramatically, producing a huge ball of flame and igniting THE CHEESE's trousers in the process. The oxyacetylene cylinder hose disconnects as the pile of junk nearly blows up. STEVIE, a prisoner behind the machine as it sits on his wheelchair, is wide-eyed with uncertainty.

STEVIE

(with mounting concern)
Ow...ow...ow...ow...

MALCOLM, with some presence of mind, pulls free the hose connected to the water tap and turns the spray on the group, effectively putting out the flames on THE CHEESE's trousers and drenching everyone. The group look menacingly at MALCOLM and he backs away with an uncertain smile on his face, disappearing around the side of the house.

CUT TO:

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Receiving no food, DEWEY and REESE come back into the kitchen to find out why. REESE notices the smoke in the microwave, which is beginning to work its way out into the kitchen. Out of curiosity, he opens the microwave door.

The smoke and fumes rush out from the microwave, instantly engulfing both of them, and the camera follows the pair as they run back towards the living room just as HAL and LOIS - now fully cross-dressed - enter the living room from the hallway.

(CONTINUED)

They too are immediately affected by the toxic smoke and fumes, and they dash with the two boys through the front door outside to the front yard, where they all cough and splutter, their eyes streaming with tears. The camera follows them outside as smoke begins to pour out of the open front door.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE HOUSE OF A NEIGHBOR OPPOSITE - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

We see the POV of the NEIGHBOR as they look out through their living room window and they make the call to 911 - as they have so many times before.

NEIGHBOR
(on the phone)
It's the usual.

(BEAT)

Yes, the same family.

(BEAT)

Yes, lots of smoke but no flames yet.

(BEAT)

Better send two - just in case.

The NEIGHBOR walks out into their front yard to stand and watch the spectacle as it unfolds.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SIDE OF MALCOLM'S HOUSE - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

MALCOLM walks quickly - hands in pockets - around the side of the house and into the front yard, having totally forgotten about the food and the Krelboynes, since he sees the fire engines drawing up and he's curious.

MALCOLM
(to camera)
There's no way the FartAlyzer triggered a call to the fire station. I wonder what's going on?

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SIDE OF MALCOLM'S HOUSE - DAY - THE SAME MOMENT

The wet and unhappy looking KRELBOYNES trudging towards the front yard are scattered by two firemen rushing past them with a hose. STEVIE's wheelchair is caught up by the hose and he is suddenly dragged backwards.

STEVIE

(in alarm)

Hey! Hold on...a minute...
where's... the fire?

TIME CUT TO:

EXT. MALCOLM'S FRONT YARD - DAY (LATE AFTERNOON, CONTINUING FROM THE OPENING SCENE)

FIREMAN #6 is tending to the family group, squirting water from a washbottle into their eyes. FIREMAN #1 wearing breathing apparatus emerges from the front door of the house (where water is gushing out of the open door) carrying a microwave cooker, the door ajar, from which gray smoke is still pouring. He walks up to his captain, who is standing hands on hips, overseeing the operation.

FIREMAN #1

(voice muffled by apparatus)

This is what caused it. There was no real fire. Someone put sesame seed buns in here, left it on too long and the oil in the seeds caught fire. That's like Mace, that is.

He turns to HAL and LOIS, who by now are recovering and are able to see better.

FIREMAN #1

(admonishingly to HAL and LOIS)

You want to be more careful. Smoldering sesame seeds are like tear gas. You don't want to leave sesame seed buns in the microwave unattended. That's asking for trouble.

He looks at the house, then back to HAL and LOIS.

(CONTINUED)

FIREMAN #1

It'll take about six hours for the smoke to clear before you can go back in there. It'll take several days for the smell to go away. But you were lucky.

LOIS snaps FIREMAN #6's arm away.

LOIS

(shouting angrily)

Excuse me?! Lucky?! You call this lucky?! We're nearly gassed to death, you've just drenched my home with water when there was no fire and you're telling me we're lucky?!

FIREMAN #1, the captain (FIREMAN #5) and FIREMAN #6 all back away uncertainly. LOIS – who knows the firemen weren't the cause of it all – swings around, peering through watery eyes, looking for the obvious culprit.

LOIS

(in a growling voice)

Malcolm? Where's Malcolm?

The remaining firemen are already rolling up the hoses, preparing to leave. FIREMAN #7 cautiously approaches LOIS. He wants to retrieve his ax from the car door.

FIREMAN #7

(nervously to LOIS)

Er... May I go get my ax back, please?

LOIS:

NO! I need it...

She strides towards the car door, HAL following her, attempting to calm her down.

HAL:

(stammering)

Er...Honey? Sweetie? These things happen. Er...You wouldn't do anything rash, would you?

LOIS wrenches the ax out of the car door and then looks around with a slightly crazed look in her eyes. She doesn't really want to hurt MALCOM, just scare him a little, and teach him a lesson.

(CONTINUED)

LOIS:
(in a slightly menacing tone)
Malcolm? Oh, Malcolm? Where are
you, Malcolm? I want to have a
word with you...

CUT TO:

THE CAMERA GOES OVERHEAD

We see MALCOLM, hightailing it out of the garden and up the street, as the camera rises into the air, looking down on a chain of people as they run up the street: MALCOLM at the head, followed a good way behind by LOIS carrying the ax, HAL stumbling in high heels, REESE, DEWEY and FIREMAN #7:

FIREMAN #7:
(wailing)
Please let me have it back. They'll
make me pay for it if I don't get
it back.

(BEAT)

And please don't get any blood on
it...

FADE OUT

THE END