



Ed Vela

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for tommy and his
"summer of the living ed!"

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expedient family was originally produced by Mimi Holloways at Theatre Southwest, Houston, TX: Trevor B. Cone, director.

TRIP: John Smith

DOGG: Tommy Waas

DEX: Kurt Bauer

MRS. BONAVENTURE: Roberta C. Giachini

MILLE: Tina Samuelson

A.J.: Anaka Kohnitz



Clockwise from top left: Roberta C. Giachini, Kurt Bauer, Tina Samuelson. Ananka Kohnitz, Tommy Waas, and John Smith.

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FARCE. When Dex's boss, A.J., invites herself over to his house to meet his wife and daughter, Dex has just one small problem—he has no wife or daughter! Afraid he will be fired for lying on his employment application, the blissful bachelor has just hours to transform himself into a family man. With time running out, Dex elicits the help of a male substitute teacher to pose as his “wife” and a junior high drama student to play his “daughter.” But when Dex’s “wife” begins flirting with his boss and Dex’s ex-girlfriend shows up, the evening takes a few unexpected turns!

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

characters

(3 M, 3 F)

DEXTER "DEX" REDDING: 40, irresponsible but successful stressed-out engineer.

WALTRIP "TRIP" RIDGEWAY: 30s, substitute teacher, who can be a leech and a cheapskate but is not such a bad guy once you get to know him.

DOGWOOD "DOGG" KOPECKNI: Lonely, smart-alecky junior high school drama student.

MILLIE KOPECKNI: 30s, Dogg's mother and Dex's ex-girlfriend.

A. J. MAXFIELD: Corporate executive type; attractive with an air of authority; female.

MRS. BONAVENTURE: The always-wanting-something neighbor from down the hall.

set

Dex's living room. The décor resembles that of a sports bar. There is a living room set, bar, and oriental rugs on the floor.

synopsis of scenes

Scene 1: Late afternoon.

Scene 2: Later that night.

props

Martini shaker
Martini glass
Asthma inhaler
Bottles of liquor, assorted
Document
Measuring cup
Credit card
Bra, pantyhose, panties, high heels, dress, wig, for Trip
Preppy shirt and tie, for Dogg
Fur wrap, for A.J.
Tissue paper
Keys
Purse, for Millie

sound effects

Doorbell

“at this point,
i think he'd like a wife
who didn't look like a promo
for 'ambush makeover.'”

—dogg

scene 1

(AT RISE: Trip and Dogg sit on a large couch looking out toward the audience as though they are watching TV.)

TRIP: Quit hogging the remote, loser.

DOGG: Well, if you'd ever stop watching "SportsCenter"!

TRIP: I like ESPN, and it beats the hell out of [MTV2]. *[Or insert the name of another cable channel.]*

DOGG: Trip, I think you need to be reminded from time to time that this is not your plasma screen. And, therefore, this is not your remote, either.

TRIP: Well, Dogwood—

DOGG: Dogg! I go by Dogg now, and you know it...Waltrip!

TRIP: Look, pup...

DOGG: Dogg!

TRIP: Whatever. When Dexter's not here, I am in charge of the condo, the plasma screen, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

DOGG: Thank you, King of Siam. I don't get why you stake claim to this cushy little paradise Dex has built for himself. I'm at least a neighbor...what are you?

TRIP: I'm...his second cousin, once removed, but at least I'm family.

DOGG: Once removed. Hey, I just have to cross the hall to get here—you drive in from the Heights.

TRIP: My apartment is 450 square feet with a Murphy Bed! You don't think I'd rather hang here? Even if it means having to deal with your adolescent ass! You have no more right to be here than that old lush from down the hall.

DOGG: Mrs. Bonaventure? The one who always smells like a Tom Collins?

TRIP: That's the one! She's a pain in the ass, and so are you. I don't know why Dex lets you come over here every lousy afternoon.

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DOGG: C'mon, you know why. Never date someone who lives across from you in the same building. When Dex broke my mother's heart two years ago, it was an easy twist of the guilt arm to get him to let me come here every day after school. Ah, the joys of being a latchkey kid.

(Dex enters, visibly upset.)

DEX: Oh, crap. I am so unbelievably screwed. Dogg, mix me a martini. Very dry, just think about the vermouth.

TRIP: What the hell's the matter? You look like somebody just pissed in your ice cream.

DEX: Worse...guys...I could lose my job.

(Dogg begins mixing a martini for Dex.)

DOGG: Fired?! Forget the vermouth. *(Dogg takes out an asthma inhaler, takes a puff, then continues mixing drink.)*

TRIP: Wait a minute, Dex. I don't know much about engineering, but weren't you one of their best? Didn't you win some kind of award for best...bridge, or something?

DEX: Yes, Trip, unlike you, I'm good at my job.

TRIP: Hey, I'm a substitute teacher. I don't have to be good at anything.

DOGG: *(Sarcastic.)* And I wonder why my mom is so worried about my generation, if we're being taught by the Oracle of Couch Potatoes!

TRIP: Hey! *(To Dex.)* Then if you're good at your job, why would you be getting fired? Are they downsizing?

DEX: No.

TRIP: Are they reorganizing?

DEX: No.

DOGG: Are they going under, like [Enron]? *[Or insert the name of another company.]*

DEX: No. It's not anything like that, it's just, that...that...I lied.

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TRIP: To who?

DOGG: "Whom."

TRIP: About what? Or is that "what-m?"

DEX: Remember when I moved in here five years ago I had just gotten the job, right?

TRIP: Right.

DOGG: Yeah.

DEX: Well, for an executive position like I was trying for...company policy stated that the prospect would have to be a "family man."

TRIP: You mean, like married?

DOGG: With kids?

(Both Dogg and Trip find this quite amusing and burst out laughing.)

TRIP: God, c'mon.

DOGG: That's so not you.

DEX: I know, but I wanted the job. Anyway, my boss, A.J. Maxfield himself, sorta invited himself to dinner tonight, and now I have two hours to come up with a wife and child. You've heard of "Immediate Family?" Well, this is "Expedient Family!" You don't suppose there's a section for that in the Yellow Pages, do you?

(Dogg crosses to Dex and hands him the martini.)

DOGG: Here ya go, Dex. Shaken, not stirred.

(Trip intercepts the martini, and drinks it down in one gulp.)

TRIP: Yuck, needs some vermouth, and where's the olive? *(Trip hands Dogg back the empty glass. Dogg is ticked off. To Dex.)* And if you don't have a wife and child to show tonight?

DEX: My company can terminate me for any non-factual statement that was made on the original employment information, and...well, this is what I gave them back five years ago. I made a copy of it from my employee file...

(Dex hands Trip a copy of a document. Trip reads it.)

TRIP: Your wife's name is Jane?

DEX: I was working under pressure.

TRIP: *(Reading.)* Let's see, your kid was five, add five to that...

DOGG: What about his kid? I could be his kid. I've been in junior high school drama for two years now.

TRIP: *(Amused, he reads.)* "I live with my beautiful wife, Jane, and my bright..."

DOGG: I can do bright.

TRIP: "...imaginative..."

DOGG: I can do imaginative.

TRIP: "...10 year old..."

DOGG: I can do 10.

TRIP: "...daughter!"

(Pause.)

DOGG: I can do 10. Dex, what did you have to make all this stuff up for?!

DEX: Because! When I first started with the company, I was 35 years old. Now, five years later, I'm 40. And, do you know what they call a 40-year-old man who is unmarried at my company?

DOGG: Gay?

DEX: No, irresponsible! They feel only married men with families should be execs.

TRIP: What a crock to say that just because you don't have the wife and 2-point-8 kids that you're some irresponsible asshole!

DEX: Yeah, I know. Dogg, mix me a Harvey Wallbanger—
make it a double shot.

DOGG: One Harvey Wallbanger, heavy on the bang, comin'
up.

DEX: They even frown on the fact that I live in a high-rise,
instead of a nice 3-car garage job in outer-suburbia. Oh, God
I am soooooo screwed come tonight.

TRIP: No, you're not. General Jackass, here... (*Indicates
Dogg.*) ...said he'd be your daughter.

DOGG: I didn't exactly say that, Lieutenant Leech.

TRIP: Just tell him they made a mistake on his age...*her* age.

DOGG: Screw the age. Tell them you made a mistake on the
sex. Do you know what I'm gonna look like in a halter-top?

DEX: How can I tell them that, after all these years?

TRIP: Look, do you ever mention your phantom wife and
daughter?

DEX: No, not really. Less to have to remember later.

TRIP: And do you have pictures of said wife and daughter on
your desk?

DEX: Of course not. Although, the first year I had a picture
on my desk of woman and a kid. It came with the frame.

DOGG: Did the girl look like a girl.

DEX: Come to think of it...I couldn't tell. It was either a short-
haired girl or a long-haired boy. But the kid was supposed
to be five at the time. When they're five who can tell?

TRIP: Exactly. And that picture hasn't been seen in years,
right?

DEX: Yeah.

TRIP: And what did you name the kid?

DEX: Kelly.

TRIP: Perfect!

(Dogg crosses to Dex with the drink.)

DOGG: Yeah, Kelly can be a boy, a girl—
TRIP: An Irishman. *(Intercepts drink, and drinks it down.)*

DEX: Yeah, but both the age and the sex being off?

TRIP: Yeah, you're right. It might be too much. *(To Dogg.)*

Okay, pick your poison, slick. It's either a normal-sized girl, or a gargantuan boy.

DOGG: I'll take the boy with the gland condition over having to squeeze my gonads into pantyhose any day of the week.

TRIP: So, okay, it's settled. We got you a kid.

DEX: What about my wife?

TRIP: What about her?

DOGG: Yeah, she's away on business.

DEX: The company frowns on that, too. I had to say she's a stay-at-home-wife-slash-mother.

TRIP: Then you're cracked-slash-nuts! Who the hell does that anymore?! What are you? A caveman? Not letting your wife work? And even with what they pay you, a two-paycheck household is—

DOGG: Hey, Trip, get off the space shuttle, the bitch ain't real.

DEX: Hey, that's my wife you're talking about.

TRIP: Yeah, have a little more respect for the lady. *(Points at Dex.)* After all, look what she got stuck with!

DEX: Stuck, huh? I just had an epiphany. Waltrip Alan Ridgeway, you may have been my mother's sister's something or other, but all you've done for me is watch my satellite, make a dent in my sofa, and deplete my always well-stocked refrigerator.

TRIP: And your point is...?

DEX: It's payback time...*wifey*.

TRIP: Hey, c'mon... *(Indicates Dogg.)* ...you think he'd look bad in a halter-top.

DOGG: Trip! This is like our home away from home. Hell, it's your home, period! Dex can't afford this place on unemployment. Think of the plasma screen, the surround sound, NBA League Pass, and NFL Sunday Ticket!

DEX: Why couldn't I have real friends?

DOGG: Trip, c'mon, it's time to take one for the team.

TRIP: Yeah, and I know just where I'm gonna take it, too.

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DEX: The [Knicks] are playing the [Lakers] Friday from the [Staples Center], and this Sunday the only way to see the [Packers] is in this living room or a sports bar that'll charge you a cover. *[Or insert the names of other teams.]*

(Silence.)

TRIP: Okay, but this is a one-time-only event! I don't want you dragging me out of mothballs for the company picnic or the office Christmas party. This is the only time Jane serves hors d'oeuvres to your fat ass boss!

DEX: Did I tell you I was planning on putting in a Jacuzzi on the terrace?

TRIP: Darling!

DOGG: Daddy!

(Blackout.)

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: There is a knock on the front door.)

MRS. BONAVENTURE: (Offstage.) Mr. Redding? Mr. Redding? Are you in there, Mr. Redding? Mr. Ridgeway, I know you're in there... Dogwood? Hello?!

(Mrs. Bonaventure slides a credit card through the latch on the door. She enters, carrying a measuring cup. She looks around, crosses to the bar, and takes a deep swig from one of the liquor bottles as Dex enters.)

DEX: Mrs. Bonaventure?

(Spit take from Mrs. Bonaventure as she turns to Dex.)

MRS. BONAVENTURE: Oh, there you are, Mr. Redding.

DEX: How did you get in here? You don't have a passkey now, do you?

MRS. BONAVENTURE: Who needs a passkey when I've got my Costco card, and your latch is pretty pathetic.

DEX: Mrs. Bonaventure, what is it I can do for you?

MRS. BONAVENTURE: I need my oil changed.

DEX: Mrs. Bonaventure, for five years you've been coming over here trying to get me to do stuff for you that I don't even do for myself. I'm not mechanically inclined, and I—

MRS. BONAVENTURE: Oh, I see. When the Mister passed, back in the 80s...

DEX: (Holds his head.) Oh, God, here we go again.

MRS. BONAVENTURE: In that horrible disco accident—mirror ball fell on him. I was worried that without him no one would be around to help me, but he said, "Mother...he always called me 'Mother'..."

DEX: (Under his breath.) So do I.

MRS. BONAVENTURE: "Mother," he said, "don't worry, everybody helps the widow." I guess he meant everybody...*but you.*

DEX: *(Defeated.)* Do you already have the oil?

MRS. BONAVENTURE: No, but I can go buy a case. *(She holds up the measuring cup.)* Oh, and as long as I'm here, I was wondering if I could borrow a cup.

DEX: Of sugar?

MRS. BONAVENTURE: No, gin. That nice imported kind, if you got it.

(Front doorbell rings. Dex crosses to the door.)

DEX: Tell ya what, why don't I bring that over when I come to do the oil change? This is probably the catered dinner I ordered. *(Dex opens the front door. Millie is standing in the doorway.)* Millie! Uh...I mean, Millie, sweetie, how are you? Come on in.

MRS. BONAVENTURE: Ms. Kopeckni, I'm surprised to see you here...after the way Mr. Redding dumped you a couple of years ago...kicked you to the curb...gave you your walking papers...

DEX: *(Ushering her out.)* Mrs. Bonaventure! Shouldn't you be off to get that oil?

MRS. BONAVENTURE: Well, I could stay a little lon—

(Dex pushes her out the door, slamming it behind her, then turns his attention to Millie.)

DEX: So, Mil, how the hell are ya?

MILLIE: Where's Dogwood?

DEX: Dogwood?

MILLIE: My son. He's not at our apartment.

DEX: Really?

(Dogg enters, wearing a shirt and tie, a far cry from the outfit he was wearing in the first scene.)

DOGG: Crap, I hate looking prep.

DEX: *(To Millie, grudgingly.)* That's because he's here.

DOGG: Mom?!

MILLIE: Dogwood?

DOGG: Mom, please, just "Dogg"! How many times do I have to tell you?

(Millie circles Dogg, taking in his new preppy look.)

MILLIE: Uh...Dogg. What are you wearing?

DOGG: Uh, a shirt and tie?

MILLIE: But, you never –

DOGG: Uh...Dex...uh...is taking me...to...church! Dex is taking me to church. Right, Dex?

DEX: Huh? *(Snaps to it.)* I mean, right!

MILLIE: On a Friday night?

DEX: Uh, I'm Catholic. Uh...reconstituted.

DOGG: What are you doing home right now, Mom?

MILLIE: I took an extra long lunch break so I could check up on you. I must say, I'm relieved. Last time I stopped by unannounced, I caught you behind that bar mixing drinks like you did it all the time.

(Dex and Dogg stare at each other a moment, then begin a forced laughter that rings so hollow it almost echoes.)

DOGG: That's a laugh. I was just playacting. You know, like in school.

MILLIE: Oh, yes. Did Dogg tell you he got the role of George in "Virginia Woolf"?

DEX: Uh...sure he did, and we've had him mixing fake drinks ever since.

MILLIE: Well, I could use one right now. The dinner rush tonight is going to be horrible. The Shriners are in town.

DOGG: Aw, poor Mom. How 'bout a Screwdriver, we've got some fresh OJ and an unopened bottle of Smirnoff.

(Dex reacts badly behind Millie's back.)

MILLIE: Maybe it might be good if you tried to not get into character too much in these school plays.

DEX: A wise idea.

MILLIE: Hmm...there's something missing around here. Oh, I know. Where's Trip? *(Trip enters behind Millie, wearing a bra, hose, panties, high heels, and a wig. Dex keeps Millie's attention by giving her a big passionate kiss on the lips as he waves for Dogg to take care of Trip. Dogg blocks Trip from crossing to the bar. Trip silently motions for Dogg to move out of the way and then pushes past him. Dogg grabs Trip by the bra pulling him away from the bar. Trip turns and opens his mouth as though to start talking. Dogg slaps his hand over Trip's mouth and silently points to Millie. As Trip tries to flee the room, he trips on his high heels and falls. Dogg gives him a kick in the rear end to usher his final exit. Dex then comes up from his kiss. Millie is bewildered.)* What was that all about?

DEX: *(Points up.)* Mistletoe...at least that's where it was last Christmas.

MILLIE: Okay...what was I saying? Oh, yeah. Where's Trip?

DEX: Trip? Gee, I don't know where that man is.

DOGG: Or what he is.

DEX: *(Genuinely noticing her.)* Millie, is that a new outfit?

MILLIE: Uh, not really.

DEX: Well, the color sure looks good on you.

MILLIE: That's funny, the girls at the restaurant say it makes me look like a blood clot.

DOGG: But, an attractive blood clot. At least, that's what I think Dex is saying.

DEX: *(Under his breath.)* Don't help me, Dogg.

DOGG: Isn't it time for you to be getting back, Mom?

MILLIE: *(Bewildered.)* I guess... Church? No, Tripp? Are you guys sure everything's okay?

DEX: Great.

DOGG: Never better.

MILLIE: Well, okay. *(She straightens Dogg's tie.)* Dogg, try not to bother Dex too much tonight. I mean...after...you get back...from church?

(Millie exits. Dex and Dogg speak to each other in a more somber tone.)

DOGG: I hate lying to her, Dex. She tries really hard, ya know?

DEX: I know you never knew your dad, kiddo. But, you got one heck of a mom.

DOGG: I know. If he had died or something that would be one thing, but knocking up my mom and then leaving her hanging, that sucks. *(Pause.)* She hasn't dated anyone, you know, for two years since you guys broke it off. I know when you laid the big wet one on her just then, it was just to cover for Trip, but...seeing the way you looked at her just then, kinda made me think of...you know...back then.

DEX: Dogg, I'm sorry about the way things worked out between your mom and me, but a couple years ago she was in her nesting phase, and I wasn't ready to settle down. Have a wife—

DOGG: *(Hurt.)* Have a kid? *(Pause.)* I think I could use a drink right now.

DEX: *(Cutting him off from the bar.)* C'mon, buddy, you know better than that. At least you'd better.

DOGG: *(Angrily.)* Hey, you can't come on like my father when you just made it pretty clear that's not what you ever wanted to be!

DEX: That's not true!

(Dogg folds his arms in front of him.)

DOGG: *(Sarcastic.)* Yeah, and we all know how honest you are, Dex.

DEX: That's enough!

(Pause.)

DOGG: I'm sorry, Dex. I didn't mean to...it's just that...being your friend is great, but being your so— *(Pause.)* And don't worry about the booze. I mean, even Tripp goes into "adult mode" whenever I try to even take a sip of beer.

DEX: And for once you should listen to Trip, but just this once.

DOGG: You mean unlike the time he tried to help me with my geography homework?

DEX: *(Rubs his temples.)* Oh, yeah, I remember that one.

DOGG: I was the only kid in seventh grade who thought Belgium...was in Africa!

DEX: The frightening thing is, he was actually trying to help you that night. *(Pause.)* Look, Dogg, I know you hate lying, and not just to your mom. I feel like such a schmuck for getting you stuck in all this.

DOGG: It's okay, Dex. I'm glad to do it. You know I got your back. Like always.

(They exchange a high-five, then Dex playfully puts Dogg in a headlock and rubs his head with his knuckles. Trip enters.)

TRIP: Is the coast clear?

DEX: Yes, but I wouldn't storm Normandy in that outfit.

(Trip looks like an ad for a world tour as his outfit combines a lot of fashion faux pas.)

DOGG: (*Indicates Trip's clothes.*) Oh, crap on a stick, where did you get that...that...whatever that is.

DEX: Didn't I give you money to go to Foley's?

TRIP: Yeah, but I picked this up at Value Village for like one-tenth of what you gave me. Neat, huh?

DEX: And what did you do with the rest of the money?

TRIP: Well, I've been putting off getting my teeth cleaned. You wouldn't want a wife who didn't have a dazzling smile, would you?

DOGG: At this point, I think he'd like a wife who didn't look like a promo for "Ambush Makeover."

(*Doorbell rings.*)

DEX: Well, it's too late to do anything about the clothes now.

TRIP: What is so wrong with this outfit?

DOGG: Where do I begin? Maybe you can tell your boss that your wife is colorblind.

(*Doorbell rings.*)

DEX: Okay, guys, get ready, I can't keep A.J. Maxfield waiting.

DOGG: (*Looks at Trip.*) Oh, he can wait to see this.

TRIP: Keep it up, Dogg. It's not too late to have you fixed.

DEX: Shhhh! Both of you. (*Dex opens the door. A.J. Maxfield is standing in the doorway.*) Oh, what a relief. Can I help you, ma'am?

A.J.: You could invite me in, Mr. Redding.

DEX: Well, I don't know what you're selling, but I really don't have time for you right now. My boss is on his way over.

A.J.: My, I'd imagine I should come down into the trenches more often, so the grunts can see me. My office did call you to set up this impromptu dinner, didn't they?

DEX: *Your* office? You mean you...you're...I mean, I just never thought—

A.J.: What, Mr. Redding? That Alice Joyce Maxfield could be a woman.

TRIP: *(Lustfully.)* And, oh, what a woman.

DOGG: *(Elbows Trip.)* What my mom means is that you remind her of her mother...uh...my grandmother. Isn't that right, Mom?

TRIP: *(Voice comes up an octave.)* Yes, that's right. Dear Grammy...

DOGG: *(Under his breath.)* Mummy.

TRIP: Mummy. Although the kids called her Grammy, didn't you...uh...

DOGG: K...uh...

DEX: Kelly!

TRIP/DOGG: *(In unison.)* That's it!

DEX: Let's not keep Ms. Maxfield out in the hallway. *(To Dogg.)* Why don't you take her wrap?

DOGG: Hey, I'm not taking the rap for anybody.

TRIP: He means her mink, sweetkins.

DOGG: Right, Mommy Dearest.

DEX: *(Points to mink.)* Dogg, fur.

A.J.: *(Insulted.)* I should say not, this is ermine!

DOGG: Oh! Sure thing, Dex...uh...Dad!

(Dogg takes A.J.'s fur and throws it offstage while the others aren't looking. A.J. crosses into the room and looks around.)

A.J.: Nice little place you have here, Redding. Ordinarily, I don't approve of these high-rise horrors, but I know how some people hate commuting in from the burbs.

DOGG: Yeah, Mommykins used to have to commute in from the Heights.

A.J.: Why would she have to do that?

TRIP: Uh...I used to have a...studio out there. I'm a...sculptor.

(A.J. grabs Trip's hands.)

A.J.: Ah, that explains your hands. So large, so strong, so—
DOGG: Hairy?

(Dex gives Dogg an unseen swat. A.J. seems oblivious.)

A.J.: So...capable. I can tell you're a woman who really works
with her hands.

TRIP: *(Leers at A.J.)* Ooooh, what I could do with these
hands...

(Dex coughs the word "idiot" to snap Trip out of it.)

A.J.: Tell me, Jane...can I call you Jane?

TRIP: *(Lecherous.)* Oh, you can call me anything you want...
(Dex gives Trip an unseen nudge. Voice high again.) I mean...of
course you can call me Jane. Because that's my name. *(To
Dex.)* Plain as it is.

A.J.: Well, you've been a bad girl, Jane.

TRIP: *(Lecherous.)* Are you a bad girl, Alice? *(Snaps out of it.)*
Uh...I mean...uh...whatever do you mean, Ms. Maxfield?

A.J.: Looking around the place...well, at first glance, I can see
you've let your husband and son do most of the decorating
in here. This living room has the all the ambiance of a sports
bar.

DEX/TRIP/DOGG: Thanks!

[END OF FREEVIEW]