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# How to Murder Your Wife

By George Axelrod

Greetings, gentlemen.

I assume your wives are not with you,  
as the title of our piece is sufficient  
to strike terror in their hearts  
and cause them to remain at home  
in their kitchens, where they belong.

In any case, gentlemen,  
you have come here tonight to learn.

And so you shall. So you shall.

We will begin by considering  
the case of Mr Stanley Ford.

Unlike you poor souls,  
Mr Ford has had the wisdom never to marry.

He is, therefore,  
a completely happy man.

This is Mr Ford's town.

This is Mr Ford's town house.

This is the terrace  
of Mr Ford's town house.

Look at us - the last stronghold  
of gracious living in a world gone mad.

Mad!

Oh, by the way,  
my name is Charles, Mr Ford's man.

I flatter myself that I am also  
his confidant and friend.

Like everybody else in New York,  
Mr Ford has a tiny bit of construction  
going on net door.

Actually, it's not so bad, really.

We've almost come to like  
the little cries of the workmen  
and the gloppetta-gloppetta noises  
which emanate  
from the gloppetta-gloppetta machine.

Hmm?

Over there.

In any case,  
the interior of the house is soundproof  
and so life goes on.

This is Mr Ford's living room.

Notice if you will the complete absence  
of a so-called woman's touch -  
no gay little chintzes,

no big gunky lamps.  
In fact, everything is masculine.  
And perfect.  
In fact, the sort of place  
you could have had.  
Ah, if only you'd had the sense  
not to get married.  
"Ah," but you say, "poor lonely man.  
How does he spend his evenings?"  
I should imagine the young lady, having, er,  
danced all night,  
literally left here walking on air.  
And this is the nerve centre  
of the entire establishment -  
my quarters.  
If you were fortunate enough  
to have a room such as this,  
your wife would undoubtedly  
have taken it over  
to house her aged  
and disagreeable mother.  
This is Mr Ford's martini glass.  
Should be properly chilled  
by seven o'clock this evening.  
This is Mr Ford's shower.  
Thermostatically controlled  
at Mr Ford's body temperature -  
98.7.  
Now it is time to reveal Mr Ford himself.  
Ol.  
Mr Ford?  
Mr Ford, sir,

**it's 10:**

- Oh...  
- Please, Mr Ford.  
Never try to speak  
until you've had your shower. Upsy-daisy.  
There.  
Oh, very good, very good.  
160, right on the button.  
I don't know how you do it.  
Of course, I do know how you do it.  
Your calories are counted

very carefully.

Do you realise it's six months since an ounce of butter has been used in this house?

- Charles, do you know what day it is?

- I do, sir.

**At exactly 12:**

the Faberg diamond will be ours.

It's been an exciting adventure,  
but I shall be glad when it's over  
so we can move on to the next caper.

Ah!

Wait a minute.

Hold it.

Go!

Ka-chow! Ka-chow!

Splunk!

Come in, Charles.

Pardon me, sir.

Mr Lampson did indeed telephone.

The Port Authority is livid.

The freighter people are furious.

- And Mr Lampson himself is terribly upset.

- He's a lawyer. He's paid to be upset.

At any rate, in one burst of brilliance,  
Bash Brannigan has concluded  
the case of the Faberg Navel.

Ha-ha!

Brilliant, sir. Absolutely brilliant.

I especially care for the "splunk".

And what is to be our net caper, sir?

I've got it all worked out.

It's the story of a man who gets murdered  
while staring at top of  
the Empire State Building.

I think I'll call it the  
"Skyscraper Gaper Caper".

Sounds really exciting, sir.

Oh... But you'll have to shoot most of it  
from the helicopter

and it will involve closing off  
Fifth Avenue from 34th to 59th.

It'd be great to blow up  
one of those glass office buildings!

Ba-room! Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle, tinkle.  
What's the matter, Charles? Don't like it?  
Oh, I love it, sir!  
But I was thinking of Mr Lampson.  
Poor, poor Mr Lampson.  
Stanley, can you stop for just a minute?  
I'm speaking to you now as your friend!  
You're a grown man, and grown men  
cannot go around - repeat - cannot go around  
spreading terror on the New York streets  
at noon accompanied...  
Will you stop just a minute, Stan.  
By naked women!  
She wasn't naked.  
She had a diamond in her navel.  
And those demented butlers  
and criminals with knives!  
You cannot continue comporting yourself  
like an escaped lunatic!  
Bash Brannigan is syndicated  
in 463 newspapers. You know why?  
Sure, I know.  
Because it's hard-core pornography  
softened slightly, ever so slightly,  
by excessive violence and sadism!  
Bash Brannigan is enjoyed by millions  
because it's authentic.  
I'd never ask Bash to do anything  
I hadn't done myself.  
And...  
Stan? Stan? Uh...  
I wanna remind you, lad,  
that you're now 37 years old.  
And, quite frankly,  
it's time that you settled down.  
Edna and I were discussing it last night  
and Edna feels -  
I agree -there's something almost immoral  
about a man of your age who isn't married,  
doesn't go to an office,  
sits around drawing a comic strip  
that appeals only to morons, Stanley!  
Stanley? Stanley, are you listening?  
- H-hey, Stan?

- Hmm?

I happened to mention to the kids that I was gonna be meeting with you this afternoon, and, well, we kind of have a little family argument there that we want you to settle.

The point is that Hal and Tommy both think that the microfilm is hidden in the diamond in the girl's navel.

Of course, I told them they were crazy.

In fact, I went out on a limb.

I told them that I was your lawyer and I knew damn well

that the microfilm wasn't hidden in the diamond in the girl's navel.

By the way, uh...

they were really quite impressed.

I... I must say

I made quite a little character there, being your lawyer and, you know, knowing how the strip was coming out and all.

And, for a moment there,

they were actually...

well...

kind of proud of their old man.

Hey, Stan?

The girl doesn't have the microfilm in the diamond in her navel, does she?

Honest to God, Stan,

you know you ought pull yourself together.

You've lost all touch with reality!

You know what you really should do? And Edna and I were discussing this the other night.

What you should really do is settle down!

Find some nice girl and get married!

- Oh, ho-ho-ho.

- Yeah!

Then you'd know what it's all about!

Charles, you seem upset.

No, not at all, sir.

I'm sorry, sir.

I seem to be overcome

by a sense of foreboding.

- Foreboding?

- A feeling of...

How can I put it?

Impending disaster.

- Wait, I'll do that.

- Thank you.

I'm sure it's nothing.

It's my natural reaction to the unhappy nature of the event you are attending.

To think of it.

A bachelor dinner for poor Mr Rawlins.

Is he really getting married tomorrow, sir?

Yes, I'm afraid so. Poor old Tobey...

You know, I never thought they'd nail him.

- I feel guilty about it, I introduced them.

- Mustn't blame yourself.

- He's a fully-grown man.

- That's true.

- And Miss James is a lovely lady.

- That's true.

Do you think she might need her gold shoes for the wedding journey?

I think not.

Would you be good enough to extend to Mr Rawlins my heartiest congratulations?

Of course. You needn't wait up.

You know how these things are.

I do, sir.

I do, indeed.

Good evening, Judge Blackstone.

This is a somewhat mournful occasion.

Not at all, my boy. Not at all.

Been married 38 years myself and I don't regret one day of it.

The one day of it I don't regret was uh...

August 2, 1936.

She was off visiting her ailing mother at the time.

Gentlemen, your attention, please!

Miss Valerie James...

A wonderful, wonderful girl, by the way.

- Hear! Hear!

- Thank you.

Miss Valerie James

has decided not to marry me after all!

She gave me back the ring.

# Happy days are here again  
# The skies above are clear again  
# Let us sing a song of cheer again  
# Happy days are here again-ain  
# Altogether shout it now  
# There's no-one who can doubt it now  
# So let's tell the world about it now  
# Happy days are here again  
# Your cares and troubles are gone  
# There'll be no more from now on  
# Happy days are here again  
# The skies above are clear again  
# Let us sing a song of cheer again  
# Happy days are here again #

Your Honour...

You better...

You better sit down, Your Honour.

You're smashed!

Smashed? Nonsense, my boy.

I'm as sober as a judge.

Hence the origin of the phrase.

No, no, no, don't do it, sir!

Don't do it!

Good morning, Charles.

Good morning, sir.

Good morning.

Lady in the bedroom.

Oh.

I, uh... don't know  
exactly how to break this to you.

Uh...

I met her last night.

She came out of a cake.

I, uh...

seem to be married to her.

Ch-Charles!

- Oh.

- Oh.

You're awake. Well, that's fine.

Good, good, good, good, good.

Look... Before anything happens...

Before anything else happens,  
we have to have a little talk. No...

No, a serious talk.



Look, very, very serious... talk.  
Now, um... first of all,  
I would like to apologise for last night.  
Quite obviously, a mistake has been made.  
On my part!  
It's nothing that can't be rectified.  
It can be rectified if we keep our heads.  
Uh...  
Let's, uh...  
begin by very calmly  
discussing the facts, huh?  
Last night  
at old Tobey's bachelor dinner, you...  
came out of a cake.  
That's natural. Young ladies  
often come out of cakes at bachelor dinners.  
So far, so good.  
You and I were attracted to each other.  
That's also natural. We happen to be  
two extremely attractive people.  
At any rate,  
I followed you to your dressing room,  
and, on some insane impulse,  
I asked you to marry me...  
while I was intoxicated, quite obviously.  
And, apparently, you accepted.  
I remember we went back to the dining room  
to announce our betrothal,  
which was greeted with enthusiasm  
by my friends. Friends? Huh!  
So, the mayor wakes up the licence clerk  
and waives the blood tests  
and, before I knew what hit me, there's  
Judge Blackstone, two guys holding him up...  
"Now pronouncing you man and wife."  
Anyway, that's where things stand, my dear,  
at the moment.  
As I say, it's nothing  
that can't be rectified quite simply.  
And you'll get a handsome settlement.  
I happen to be very well off.  
Six weeks in Las Vegas. Ooh, boy.  
All there is to it.  
My God, you're Italian.

Vous ne parlez... You don't sp...  
No speaka da English?  
No.  
- Italian?  
- Yes!  
Oh, my God. Excuse me, I'll be right back.  
You, uh... get-um dressed.  
Me go talk-um butler.  
Oh, oh, Stanley?  
Vieni qui.  
Sure.  
Charles?!  
Charles?! Charles?  
Charles.  
You can't do this!  
Sorry, but I do not work  
for married couples.  
You knew that before you entered  
into this curious alliance.  
Now, Charles... Now, please, Charles...  
Will you look at me?!  
Good God, sir, how did it happen?  
It wasn't my fault. I swear!  
You've got to believe me.  
Of course, I believe you, sir.  
- Poor sir.  
- Oh, poor Charles.  
Good heavens. What is to become of us now?  
I don't know. I don't know.  
I don't know.  
"If you can keep your head  
"when all around are losing theirs  
and blaming it on you..."  
In fact, you're right, Charles.  
We have nothing to worry about at all.  
I've already explained  
the situation to the young lady.  
I've told her "I expect you to be on an  
airplane to Las Vegas this afternoon."  
Well, that's absolutely marvellous, sir!  
But what was the young lady's reaction?  
A little difficult to say.  
She doesn't seem to... speak English.  
Charles?

Charles?

Charles?!

Good God!

Doesn't speak English?

Yet, on the other hand,

if one will go around

marrying persons

who pop out of cakes,

it's bound to be, well,

rather catch as catch can, isn't it, sir?

Charles?

Surely you can realise

how ridiculous this whole thing is.

I'll call Harold Lampson, run down, see him

and it'll all be straightened out.

Charles, I promise you by three o'clock

afternoon, she'll be on a plane to Vegas.

Yeah, hi! How are you?

- Really, sir?

- Really.

Now, just go back to your room,

your beautiful room where you've been

so happy with your books and music.

- Hmm?

- Well, uh...

Unpack, Charles.

Nothing has changed. I promise you.

Dinner at the usual time, Charles?

For one?

Please, Charles.

Ah, avanti, avanti!

Oh, there you are, you're all dressed. Good.

You... you, uh... wait outside

while I get dressed, huh, you know?

And then you, me, we, uh...

go talk-um lawyer.

Uh, cinq minutes.

All right?

Oh. Harold, I'm in trouble.

Deep... I don't think it's

anything you can't handle.

I'm in terrible, terrible trouble.

Worse than that, Harold. I'm...

I'm...

married.

- 'Married?!'

- That's right, I'm married.

'Married?!'

All OK.

- OK!

- No!

Not now. There's lots to do.

Lawyer's office. Gotta go there.

Come on. Work out a separation.

Get you a lawyer in Las Vegas.

Hotel reservations...

Oh, good morning, Mr Ford!

Oh, congratulations.

Congratulations!

And buongiorno, Mrs Ford. Mrs Lampson's  
on her way up from the country.

Mr Lampson, they're here!

Well, well, I wanna see the little lady  
that finally nailed old Stan.

You don't mind if I kiss the bride,  
do you?

- No.

- Congratulations, MRS Ford.

- Congratulations.

- Oh, grazie, grazie, grazie tanto.

My God, you're right. She is Italian.

You mean that she doesn't speak

A-N-Y E-N-G-L-I-S-H?

Not one word.

Not a word?

You lucky devil.

Harold, will you please?

We've got one million things to do.

- Get her an airplane!

- You've got to make out a new will.

- Get her a lawyer in Vegas.

- Got to get your physical.

- My what?

- Your physical.

I'm gonna have Doctor...

come and check you out right here.

- Only take a moment.

- What are you talking about?!

I am talking to you about insurance.  
Insurance, Stan. You are...  
That'll be enough, thank you.  
You may go now.  
You're a married man now,  
with responsibilities. Now...  
- What if you were to get hit by a truck?  
- Not gonna get hit by a truck!  
The point is this...  
No matter what happens to you,  
you are going to want to know  
that Mrs Ford...  
Mrs Ford...  
I love the way that sounds, believe me,  
is being cared for.  
All I want to know is that Mrs Ford is  
on an airplane to Las Vegas this afternoon!  
Oh, Stanley, caro, caro, no.  
Oh, please. Will you please?  
An affectionate little thing  
you've got there, lad.  
- Look at them. Aren't they adorable?  
- Never thought I'd live to see the day.  
Edna, my love, this is Stan's wife.  
Oh.  
Italian. Doesn't speak a W-O-R-D of English.  
Oh, Mrs Ford, this MY wife.  
But she speak mucho good Italian,  
go Berlitz, take lessons.  
Learn Italian. \$300 worth.  
\$300 is many, many lira.  
Yeah, shut up, Harold.  
You sound like a feeble-minded Indian.  
- Congratulazioni, mia cara.  
- Oh.  
Harold, it's very simple. I want  
an annulment. I do not like being married.  
How do you know if you haven't tried it?  
I've tried it!  
If you've tried it,  
then it's too late to get an annulment.  
Your wife has a cute sense of humour.  
You know what she said?  
She said that she met you

when she came out of a cake.

That's right. She did.

- Sue her for divorce!

- How?

- Well, reason with her!

- How?

You do sound like a feeble-minded Indian.

Ask her what she was doing

coming out of that cake in the first place.

Oh, s, um...

What she say?

What she... what she say?

She said that... that was the only job she could get because her clothes were stolen.

Oh, the good doctor.

- Harold...

- Stan, you know Dr Bentley.

He's here to give you your physical.

Let me get this straight. Who stole her clothes? Who stole le clothes?

- What she say? - All her clothes were stolen by Miss Lapland, whoever she may be.

All right, Stanley,

if you'll just slip off your jacket.

Who is? Ask her who is...

40 times oughta do it for someone your age.

What is your age?

How old do you have to be to get a divorce?!

Tell this lunatic I don't want insurance, but a divorce.

- Divorce?! Divorce?

- Yes.

Ah, no, no. Italia, no divorce, no.

What did she say?

Can you please find out? Now, come on, ask her where did all of this happen?

Where... Dov'e, dov'e?

Aha! Miss Galay concorso. Galay.

- What did she say?

- Miss Galay contest.

- I think that's what she said.

- Miss Galay contest?

S, s, look! Look.

- Oh.

- Hmm?

What did she say? Hmm?

Uh...

Ah.

Uh, well, uh... Wow.

Uh, she said she would've won the contest except for one thing - that was the talent part.

And her talent was cooking.

She made a, um...

- Lasagne souffl. Delizioso.

- Lasagne souffl.

My God, I've gotta go back to Berlitz.

When she bent down

to take the souffl out of the oven,

all the men in the audience

started jumping -

you know, varoom, varoom, varoom! -

and yelling and screaming

and, whoof, down went the souffl.

Oh, brava, bravissima.

Harold, I'll ask you a few questions now.

- You had the regular children's diseases?

- No, and I haven't been hit by a truck.

How about measles, mumps, chicken pox?

Huh? Yes.

Roll up your sleeve, please.

Why can't you get me a divorce? Other

clients get divorces from their lawyers.

Other clients give their attorneys

grounds to work on to get the divorce.

Now, think about that a little bit.

Ever have dizziness,

fainting spells, headaches, asthma?

No.

What grounds?

Well, grounds like, uh...

adultery, mental cruelty,

desertion, insanity.

How much do you drink?

Not at all? An occasional social cocktail?

Heavily? To excess?

Just once.

You're gonna need one now, boy.

Oh, you're gonna...  
Melancholia? Backaches?  
Liver, kidney, intestinal ailments?  
Crying spells?  
Poor creature.  
Stanley, you know what she told me?  
All she has left is what she's wearing.  
Vieni, cara.  
Oh.  
Stanley, I'm gonna borrow your wife  
for a few hours  
and we're going to buy her everything,  
from lingerie to a mink coat.  
I can't get a reading.  
Oh!  
She's so darling.  
You know what she said? She says she has  
a coat AND she doesn't wear underwear.  
Vieni, cara. Come with me.  
I'll take care of everything.  
Vieni, vieni. Vieni! Vieni!  
You're a member of the club now, lad.  
A full-fledged member.  
- Yes?  
- 'Delivery.'  
Is this the Ford residence?  
Yes, but who are you  
and what do you want?  
Mrs Ford told me  
to put this stuff in the kitchen.  
Yes?  
- 'Delivery.'  
- De...?  
I beg your pardon,  
is this the Ford residence?  
Yes, but, uh...  
Wh-wh-wh-what?  
Mrs Ford suggested we place these things  
directly in her bedroom.  
There must be some, uh... mistake.  
Yes?!  
'Sono la signora Ford.'  
Buonasera.  
One at a time! What the hell is going on?



I'm sorry, sir, but I'm afraid  
this new arrangement isn't going to work.

- Yes, well, you see, I...

- Sir, Mr Ford, this woman is mad.

Stark raving mad!

- She is not only preparing  
a lasagne souffl... - A what?

Lasagne souffl.

But look at the spaghetti sauce!

Green onions

browning in at least a pound of butter!

And eggplant swimming in oil!

Smells good, though, doesn't it?

Sir, I am...

I am not given to issuing ultimata,  
but it's really most simple.

You must take your choice.

Either she goes or I go!

If you won't be so arbitrary...

It's the kid's first day.

It's all right, sir. Say no more.

I quite understand, sir!

I thought it might come to this.

I took the precaution of repacking my bags.

Oh, no, wait. Look, Charles will you stop...

Where would you go? What would you do?

Well, actually, sir,

Mr Rawlins phoned this afternoon.

- What? Old Tobey?

- Yes, sir.

As he has decided not to marry

and you have decided the reverse,

it was his feeling that perhaps

I might feel happier working for him.

- And I could not agree with him more, sir!

- Charles...

- Oh, Charlie is... Charlie is goodbye, no?

- What?

Charles is goodbye, no?

- He's goodbye, yes! If I...

- No, no, no.

Mamma. Mamma mia.

Your mother is coming...

- Yes! Yes!

- Oh, my God.  
No! No cocktail!  
Edna teach me say "no cocktail". Mmm?  
Charles...  
Uh, Charles...  
Cha... Charles?!  
Now, Charles...  
I'll get rid of her, I promise you.  
Look, Charles,  
you won't like working for Tobey. He drinks!  
Dames there all the time.  
Charles, he's a lumpy!  
He leaves wet towels  
lying all around the bathroom.  
Arrivederci.  
Look! Uh-huh?  
Oh!  
Oh, ma...  
Uh!  
Well, look...  
Look, there's no sense getting hysterical.  
Are you all right in there?  
Hey! Are you... are you?  
Ah!  
Oh, God.  
Look, please, will you...  
Hello?! Will you please?  
If there's one thing I cannot stand,  
it is a woman crying.  
I just go all...  
Oh...  
Would you please-a?  
You wanna Kleenex-a? Or?  
Oh! Oh!  
What? Oh...  
Ah. Oh.  
Thank you.  
Oh, no, please...  
Look, I'm... I'm sorry.  
Please, look, I'm sorry.  
I...  
Sorry.  
Stanley, darling.  
Rigatoni, pollo, vino rosso.

- Hmm?  
- Uh...  
Lunch.  
Mangi tutto.  
Stanley? Stanley? Again I am forget.  
The ones with the white hats,  
are they the good guys or the bad guys?  
White hats - good guys.  
Black hats - bad guys, OK?  
Oh, OK. Thank you very much.  
Well, what's the matter with you, boy?  
You look just awful.  
I'm exhausted. That's what's the matter.  
I haven't slept in three weeks.  
Newlyweds.  
It isn't that at all.  
Not entirely that. It's that  
damn television. She has it going all night.  
Oh, I'll bet.  
Well, she does!  
Claims it helps with her English.  
Later.  
Oh, brother!  
Oh, damn.  
Oh, damn.  
I'm a delicate and highly complex mechanism  
and I'm being overwound.  
Just overwound!  
Oh.  
Oh, oh, poor darling.  
Work, work, pressure, pressure,  
the tension mounts  
and before you know it, it strikes.  
What?  
Oh, they talk always about this on TV.  
- Oh.  
- Oh...  
Oh, oh, darling, I have a three-way formula.  
- What?  
- How they say?  
Faster, faster, faster.  
Oh, relief.  
- Oh.  
- Good morning, Signora Ford.

- Oh, ciao. Ciao, Mario.

- Ciao.

Oh, good morning.

- Oh, ciao, ciao.

- Hi, Mrs Ford.

Anybody home?! "Home".

Stanley, the breakfast is almost ready.

Oh, oh, my darling, good morning.

All I want is some dry toast  
and black coffee.

I weigh 182 pounds  
and my clothes don't fit any more.

- Is very good.

- Yeah.

- Is good?

- Uh, yeah.

Oh, Stanley, look, look,  
the light bulb is go down in the pantry.

Well, I get electrician to fi.

No, no. I have light bulbs here.

Just a moment, huh?

Why can't we get an electrician?

Look, they've got a very strong union.

I don't wanna...

The other husbands  
change the bulbs every day.

Is very good for you. Is, uh...  
work with your hands. Is make you to relax.  
OK.

You can get a shock with electricity if you  
don't know what you're doing, and I don't.

At 22, I thought you had to cover the  
outlets or the electricity would leak out.

Cover up all the...

I'll screw it in and...

Ah!

- Oh, mamma mia!

- Oh!

- Oh. Uh...

- Oh.

Oh...

Oh, poor darling. Oh.

Oh.

Oh, Stanley. It's funny.

- It's very funny.
- Yeah, very funny.
- I have a good idea.
- Huh?

The Brannigans have  
the first guests for dinner.

Everything goes wrong. It's funny, no?

- Yeah.
- I invite Edna and Harold.
- I go call them, huh?
- OK.

Uh-oh.

In a little while.

Well, open it!

- Hi, everybody!
- Hi!

Oh, Mrs Ford!

Sorry we're late,  
but it's all Harold's fault, really.

He's ready an hour before leaving,  
then he paces in front of my room.

Makes me so nervous  
it's a wonder I'm even dressed.

Hey, puppy dog!

Well, you're looking  
mighty good in there, lad.

Don't you love those pyjamas?

I picked them myself.

- Green.
- Putting on a little weight too, huh?

Must be the... home cooking.

No, no, no, no!

It is, uh... necessary uh...

you speak English,

uh... me...

because, um... uh, no because...

Uh... No learn. No learn.

You're right. You're absolutely right.

Stanley, you've married yourself a treasure,  
you lucky man.

Oh... oh, look... look at us, permission.

- Oh!
- It's beautiful?

Well, I love it. I love it, love it.

- Harold?

- Yeah?

I checked with Tiffany's and your real present is going to be ready next week.

This is just some nothing I bought.

But it's so cute.

We got one for our bar at home too.

Oh, Stanley, I just love the place now. I really do.

It used to be attractive in a way, but... well, I always thought it was rather cold and austere.

Now it's just marvellous, that's all!

Oh! "Danger! Men... men drinking!"

- It's very droll!

- I know just where it should go too.

"Danger! Men drinking."

Yeah, it's cute, Stan.

I mean, it's... it's pretty cute.

It reminds me of

one of the fellas at the office.

- He has one that reads "Think..."

- "Or Thwim."

- How did you know? - I'm going to be an expert in prefabricated American humour.

Yeah? I see.

- "Danger, men drinking." Huh?

- Live dangerously, ha!

Yeah.

Oh, it's wonderful to see Stanley so happy.

Really, I can't tell you how grateful I am that somebody finally nailed him.

Nailed, um...

- Sposato!

- Sposato, s.

While one's running loose, nobody's safe.

Harold used to come home...

have three drinks

and start talking about his freedom.

- Freedom... Libert?

- Libert.

They're... they're like children, you know?

But I think... they are, hmm...

very... gen... sweet... sweet!

Ah? Oh, I like very much.  
Yes, of course they are,  
but, you see, with us it's different.  
A woman is never really free  
until she IS married.  
She's free to enjoy  
the good things in life -  
she can spend, you know, money,  
have little affairs  
and still be looked after.  
That's why men have to be controlled.  
- Controllare?  
- Controllare.  
Right, right!  
For the good of the home, la casa, huh?  
Actually, it's just a matter  
of keeping them off balance.  
Um... look, I'll show you something.  
- The door is closed, huh?  
- Mm-hm.  
They can't hear us,  
and we can't hear them, right?  
Watch.  
Harold!  
Harold!  
That's right. Uh... yes, dear?  
- I heard that.  
- Heard what, dear?  
You know very well what!  
No, I don't. But if you wanted, uh...  
Look, let's not discuss it  
in front of strangers.  
Yeah, but you... you, uh...  
We'll talk about it when we get home.  
See? They're always  
guilty as hell about something.  
Good!  
Very good, very good.  
So he says, "Sam, you can't."  
"But I, Sam, I can do it."  
"Sam, you're not..." You know?  
Now I do myself.  
Stanley? Stanley?  
- Bring the soup, please.

- Yes, but you must have help because...  
- Uh, Stan, I'll tell you the rest of it.  
- She's Dutch and she's expensive, but...  
Harold!  
You had another drink when we were in  
the kitchen. I can tell by your funny look.  
What's the point of her cooking  
if you're too drunk to enjoy it?  
Yeah, she's right.  
- Harold, this is your place.  
- Over there?  
Hey, Bash!  
Very funny -what a boob!  
- Yeah, yeah.  
- My wife loved it!  
Hi, this is Mr Ford. Would you put  
Harold... Mr Lampson on, please?  
What?  
You do?  
You think it's cute?  
That is so typical.  
You just loved it when he spilt the s?  
Could I remind you  
that you're just an inefficient secretary?  
Not only that, you're a woman! Your opinions  
mean nothing to me. Now, put Mr Lampson on!  
Harold, it's Stan.  
There's gonna be changes.  
I want a full-scale meeting -you, me  
the syndicate guys, the accountants  
- everybody!  
11 o'clock!  
No, not here. I hate here!  
I hate your office! At the club!  
You hear me? At the club!  
Club!  
- Hello?  
- Oh, hi there.  
Sorry to wake you, but this is an emergency.  
What?  
I just called Harold's office,  
and they told me he's in a meeting  
with Stanley at the club.  
I do not see. What is wrong with the club?



You can't keep track of them  
when they're in the club.  
You can't even be sure they're there.  
Of course he is there.  
I will call him on the telephone.  
Go ahead, call him.  
I'll tell you what you'll get.  
You'll get, "Ahem, I'm very sorry,  
"but Mr Ford cannot  
be reached at the moment.  
"He's in the gymnasium."  
Gymnasium! He's probably off  
hand-holding with some movie starlet.  
I think maybe I call him.  
I think maybe I call him right now!  
- Good luck.  
- 'Thank you.'  
Goodbye.  
Hello?  
Mr Stanley Ford, please.  
Sorry, I can't reach Mr Ford at the moment.  
He's in the gymnasium.  
Mm-hm. Thank you very much.  
I'll admit it, Stan. At first,  
at the shop, we thought you were crazy.  
Marrying Bash off - it didn't seem right.  
It wasn't. That's the idea.  
- But I was wrong!  
- We were all wrong.  
Sure, America has taken  
The Brannigans to its heart.  
And for the first time,  
women are reading the strip.  
My wife just loves it now. Spilling  
the soup - she says it reminds her of me.  
Anyway, Stan boy, the thing is,  
we were all wrong.  
No, you weren't all wrong.  
It was a mistake. A tragic mistake.  
That's why I called the meeting.  
I still don't understand. Why do we  
have to have the meeting here, Stan?  
Edna must've called me 15 times  
at the office by now.

See, Edna doesn't like it  
when I'm some place  
she can't reach me by phone, Stan.  
That's the beautiful part about the club.  
They can't reach us.  
It's the one place left that's safe!  
Thank you.  
Just a moment. I'm sorry,  
but no ladies allowed inside the club.  
Well, thank you.  
I'm sorry, I can't reach Mr Edwards  
just now. He's in the gymnasium.  
Stan, the big thing to remember now is  
The Brannigans are a natural for television.  
Sure, we just need a beautiful,  
intelligent girl to play the wife.  
Some drooling,  
feeble-minded idiot to play Bash.  
You've got yourself  
a built-in audience of 80 million.  
And not only that, but merchandise.  
Why, Stan, I think they've come up  
with some sensational tie-ins.  
Get this - official Bash Brannigan,  
his-and-hers matching cooking aprons.  
"The family that sauts together  
stays together."  
I think that's the slogan.  
Oh, good morning.  
Oh, good morning. Good morning.  
Oh, please, stay, stay.  
Oh, it's all right,  
it's all right. It's all right.  
Hmm.  
Oh, oh, darling!  
On that, day and night, Stan...  
Oh, darling! Oh, darling!  
Forgive me for doubting you even one moment.  
Mr Ford!  
In the 123 proud years  
of this club's existence,  
not once, not once  
has a female of any description  
set foot on these premises.

Now, we're an understanding bunch  
here at the club, Mr Ford.  
A fella has one too many at the bar,  
we see to it  
that he gets to his train all right.  
Fella has a little hokey-pokey going  
in the afternoon,  
his wife calls, we say he's in the gym.  
But this, Mr Ford, is too much!  
As chairman of the rules committee,  
I suggest you spare yourself  
the embarrassment of an open hearing,  
and submit your resignation at once!  
Darling, I do something bad?  
I may take this lying down, like that  
drooling, feeble-minded idiot that I am,  
but Bash Brannigan will not,  
I promise on that!  
Charles, she's in love.  
She'll never agree to a divorce.  
So we're left with only one choice.  
Murder.  
- Murder?  
- Murder.  
I say, good show, sir!  
Absolutely bang on!  
Exactly six weeks from today...  
Kachow! Zoom! Boom!  
Mrs Brannigan is gone.  
Bash can get back to being a secret agent.  
What's the matter?  
Well, let me understand, sir.  
It is Mrs Brannigan  
you're going to murder, in the comic strip?  
Yes, why?  
- I see.  
- What is it?  
Oh, nothing, sir.  
Only just for one moment...  
one mad, glorious moment...  
I thought...  
However...  
if Bash Brannigan could murder his wife  
and get away with it...

Well, who knows, sir?

Who knows?

Barman.

The same again, please, and this time,  
see that the glasses are decently chilled.

Mr Ford, this is the most powerful  
single remote control device  
created by the western world.

An excellent tranquilliser, Mr Ford.

Gentle, fast-acting, eliminates tension,  
removes excessive inhibitions,  
and is almost completely without  
harmful side effects. - Almost?

Almost.

Alphadeebenzotherapotazolamide,

as your doctor calls it -

and in this case, as I happen to be  
your doctor - that's what I call it -  
is dangerous only when taken  
in conjunction with alcohol.

Even a sip of alcohol

after taking one of these pills, and...

- brrrrrrrrrrp - right up the wall.

- As you doctors call it.

And then... Blaaap! Right down again.

- Brrrrrrrrrp?

- Blaaap!

Thank you, Dr Bentley.

You're welcome, Mr Ford.

Oh!

Thank you.

- Here.

- Oh, thank you.

Mrs Ford,

may I have the pleasure of this dance?

Oh, yes!

Yep.

- Stanley, I'm really...

- Can I be of any assistance?

Don't be silly, Your Honour. You're smashed.

I'm as sober as a judge.

I did the same thing for Harold

last New Year's Eve so I know exactly...

Oh, she looks so pale!

Put some cold water on her head  
and I'll make some coffee.  
I'll call you in a few minutes, huh?  
Bye-bye, Edna.  
Hi, Stan.  
I've been looking all over for these.  
Uh... Mrs Ford, Miss James.  
Come on, you silly, drunken old bat!  
It's wonderful. She won't remember a thing  
tomorrow. I can say what I want.  
Come on, you silly, drunken,  
meddlesome old bat!  
Yes! "Old bat" is what I said,  
and old bat is what I meant.  
You old bat!  
Hello?  
Dear?  
Anybody home?  
Well, how could she have disappeared?  
Oh.  
Stan, wives don't just suddenly  
up and disappear like that.  
What I mean is it's not that easy, boy.  
I mean, it's not that easy.  
You and I both know  
what women are, Mr Ford.  
They're sensitive little creatures.  
They're masters - or should I say,  
mistresses? - Of the fancied slight.  
Some little teeny thing goes wrong  
and whoosh! -  
off they go, home to Mother.  
And that's probably where  
your wife is now, with her mother.  
Yeah. Somewhere in Italy!  
Thank you.  
Which concludes our report from  
Washington. In a lighter vein,  
readers of 463 newspapers  
from Bangor, Maine, to Honolulu  
are asking this question -  
will Bash Brannigan, hero of America's  
favourite comic strip, The Brannigans,  
really murder his wife?

If the answer is yes, is this a new trend?  
Will Dagwood murder Blondie?  
Will Little Abner knock off Daisy Mae?  
The answer remains a secret  
of cartoonist Stanley Ford  
and Mrs Ford, said to be  
the real-life prototype of Mrs Brannigan,  
is unavailable for comment.  
On the weather picture  
in New York tonight...  
It's perfectly clear what happened.  
She saw the drawings of Brannigan  
murdering his wife, and in a...  
typically idiotic, female way,  
she took it as some kind of a  
personal insult or something,  
I don't know.  
Anyway, the...  
Look, Harold, if we're both gonna pace,  
we gotta work out a traffic pattern.  
You go this way,  
I'll go that way, all right?  
Anyway,  
she just picked up her raincoat,  
and her bathing suit  
and her dog and she left!  
Stan, I'm sure that's exactly  
the way it happened,  
but there is an awful lot of evidence -  
circumstantial, I'll admit -  
but there's a lot of evidence - plenty!  
You can't try anybody for murder, Harold,  
unless you produce a body.  
Well, normally, Stan,  
yes, that would be true.  
But in this case, Stan,  
you see, you and I and Edna and the police  
and 80 million readers  
of 463 newspapers from Maine to Honolulu,  
they all know, and my kids know,  
that you murdered her  
and buried her in the goop  
from the gloppetta-gloppetta machine.  
Now, what I mean

is I'm going to be doing  
my very best for you, Stan.  
But it's only fair to warn you  
that it doesn't look good.  
It does not... look good.  
Murdered his wife,  
fiendishly and in cold blood.  
But even beyond this,  
I ask you to consider the  
arrogance of the man.  
Not content with his crime,  
he then proceeded to publish  
in 463 newspapers  
from Bangor, Maine, to Honolulu  
each shocking detail of his murder plan.  
Yeah, it doesn't look good.  
He regretted his marriage  
from the very beginning  
and made every effort  
to worm his way out of it.  
I object, Your Honour...  
Harold, I've told you not to interrupt me!  
But, dear, this... you...  
- Shut up! You know he killed her!  
- But Dear...  
Let me tell you something else,  
Harold Lampson.  
If you go on defending known murderers,  
you'll wake up one morning  
and find yourself disbarred!  
And it is your opinion that this drug, uh...  
Alphadeebenzotherapotazolamide,  
as your doctor calls it.  
In this case,  
as I don't happen to be your doctor,  
you can just call them goofballs.  
Thank you.  
Anyway, Doctor, it is your opinion  
that these goofballs can,  
under certain conditions,  
be extremely dangerous?  
Ooh, only if taken  
in conjunction with alcohol.  
Otherwise, absolutely harmless.

Oh, you get a little high,  
you have a few laughs,  
an occasional burst into song...  
Would you please describe  
the effect of these... things  
when taken with alcohol?  
Certainly.  
Brrrrrrrp! Right up the wall.  
Then blaaaap! Right down again.  
Brrrrrrrp?  
Blaaaaap!  
And you contend, Mr Firbank,  
that Mr Ford  
was simply conducting a dry run,  
merely testing a murder plan  
for his comic strip?  
Precisely, sir.  
You see,  
Mr Ford would never ask Bash Brannigan  
to do anything  
that he hadn't already done himself.  
Including murder his wife?  
Well...  
Has it occurred to you, Mr Firbank,  
that Mr Ford perhaps wanted you  
to think it was only a dry run?  
The night was dark, was it not?  
Yes, sir. But, uh...  
By your own admission,  
you photographed the operation  
from a hotel window  
no closer than a block away?  
Quite, sir. But...  
Then, for all you know,  
it was Mrs Ford's body  
he buried in the wet cement.  
Impo...  
Oh, I say,  
you don't... actually mean...  
But of course! You're absolutely right!  
What a silly, silly ninny I was  
not to have seen through it!  
Of course he did it! Oh!  
Congratulations, sir.



Brilliant. Absolutely brilliant!  
Don't you know  
you had me completely fooled?  
I thought it was a dummy! Even I!  
Oh, dear,  
that makes me a bit of a dummy.  
I can't tell you how happy I am!  
I'll give Mr Rawlins my notice  
and return early next week.  
The prosecution rests.  
No, I don't think  
there's one chance in 10  
that they'll actually  
send you to the chair, Stan.  
Well, maybe one.  
But I think it'll be somewhere between  
20 years and life,  
which isn't so terribly bad,  
when you come right down to it.  
I mean, you always liked simple food  
and a regulated, well-ordered life.  
And looking at it from my point of view,  
well, if I had gotten you off,  
Edna would have been just furious.  
She wouldn't have spoken to me for months.  
When she gets into one of those things,  
she makes my life a living hell.  
No kidding, Stan.  
Losing this case tomorrow  
may be a little tough on you,  
but it's one of the best things  
that's happened to my home life in years.  
Hearye, hearye, the Court  
of General Sessions is now in session.  
If it please the court, may I...  
Your Honour,  
I would like to dispense with counsel  
and conduct my own defence.  
What are you talking about...  
For my first and only witness, I call my  
friend and former attorney, Harold Lampson.  
Will you please approach the bench,  
gentlemen?  
Wait a minute.

Wait a minute. Stan, you...

Let me understand this, Mr Ford.

You're serving as your own counsel  
and calling Mr Lampson as a witness?

- Yes, Your Honour.

- I don't know what to say.

How about, "This is most irregular,  
but he may take the stand"?

Oh, thank you.

This is most irregular,  
but he may take the stand.

Now, wait a minute, Stan.

This is ridiculous!

You don't even know how to conduct...

I could have got you off

from 20 years to life,

but this way you're gonna

wind up in the electric chair!

Raise your right hand, please.

Do you swear to tell the truth,

the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

- I do.

- Be seated.

- State your full name, please.

- Harold Lampson.

- Are you married, Harold?

- You know damn well I'm...

Yes, yes.

How many years have you been married?

Well, let's see, Hal Junior is ten.

We were living on

West 11th Street at the time,

so that would make it, uh... uh...

in the neighbourhood of...

11 years, you idiot!

Uh, 11 glorious, wonderful years.

Yeah, that's right.

11 glorious, wonderful years.

Your Honour, I fail to see...

- I'm merely trying to establish  
the witness's qualifications. - As what?

As a typical example

of a happily married American male.

That's what you are, isn't it Harold,

a happily married American male?

Yes, I suppose so.

Stan, look, you're doing this all wrong.

- You have two lovely children?

- Yes.

House in Scarsdale,

a late-model station wagon, a Great Dane?

Yes.

I submit that the witness is  
eminently qualified.

Harold, I'm going to ask you a question.

Think it over very carefully  
and answer me

as honestly as you possibly can.

Yeah.

- Do you believe in marriage?

- What?

Marriage.

As an institution, do you believe in it?

Well, sure, of course I believe in it.

I mean, what kind of a question  
is that anyway, Stan?

From where I sit, which as you pointed out  
is quite likely to be an electric chair,  
it's rather a central one, I'd say.

However, let me put it to you  
a slightly different way.

Let us assume for a moment  
that this dot I have just drawn...  
is a button.

- A button?

- Mm-hm. A button.

All right, it's a button.

Let's further assume  
that if you were to push that button,  
your wife, Edna, to whom you have  
been married for 11 glorious years,  
would suddenly and magically disappear.

- Disappear?

- As in vanish.

Not be here. No longer exist.

- I object!

- Overruled.

That's right. Overruled.

And will you please shut up?

This is beginning to get interesting.

- Oh.

- Thank you, Your Honour.

Let me add two important things.

Her disappearance would be harmless.

But what's more important,

no-one - repeat, no-one -would ever know  
that it was you who pushed that button.

- No-one would ever know?

- No-one would ever know.

No-one would ever know?

No-one would ever know.

- How old are you, hmm?

- 52.

I don't believe it.

You don't look a day over 40.

You wouldn't look over 40 if you  
lost a little weight, sat up straight.

Here you are, in the prime of life,

a handsome figure of a man,

successful in business,

adored by one and all.

In fact, it could be said that

you had it made except for the one thing!

- I'm a lousy lawyer.

- No, you're married.

Yeah, but being married

is the normal way to live, isn't it?

Who says so?

Edna.

Oh, Harold,

I think you've been brainwashed.

You're missing a very important point.

Marriage is not a basic fact of nature.

It's an invention.

It's like the infield fly rule.

It exists only because

the women say so.

And, like idiots,

we just go following right along.

No, no, no, Stan.

I... No, I don't know

what I would do without Edna.

She, uh... she...

Well, she... she plans the meals,  
sends my shirts to the laundry.

Harold, you're making another  
basic common masculine mistake.  
You're confusing love and laundry.  
Let me tell you something.

For years now,  
a very nice gentleman, who operates,  
for reasons I shall never understand,  
under the name of Madame Renee,  
has been picking up  
my shirts every Monday  
and bringing them back  
beautifully done, every Thursday.  
And not once, in all those years,  
have I felt the slightest urge to marry him.  
Yeah. Well...

How much money do you make, hmm?  
Between 70,000 and 80,000 a year.  
How much of that 70,000 or 80,000  
do you get to spend on yourself?

Well, uh, that, you know,  
of course, with Edna and the kids  
and the payments on the house in Scarsdale  
and then, of course,  
I do carry a lot of life insurance.

Yeah, I understand.

Stop for one moment  
and think what life could be like if...  
Gentlemen of the jury, this concerns  
you too. Think what your life could be like  
if you'd had the common sense  
not to marry... Josephine  
or Hilda or Mary  
or Peggy or Rochelle.

- Or Edna?

- Edna.

Just think what you could be doing  
with that money right now.

Yeah.

Have a little Chris-Craft, maybe.  
Get rid of that broken-down  
money pit of a house in Scarsdale!

- Oh...

- It's very easy, Harold.  
All you've got to do is poke the button.

- Could I grow a moustache?

- Of course.  
Put wax on the ends?  
Who could stop ya?  
I wore one before I was married.  
I remember. You cut a dashing figure.

- You think so?

- Push the button.  
Uh... well, it was always  
a little sparse on the left side.  
A barber could trim that so you'd never  
even notice it once you push the button.  
I never could afford a good barber then...  
Yeah, but you could now.  
Uh, yeah. But I could now.  
When's the last time  
you started thinking about girls?  
Uh... girls?  
Think of a whole world full of girls.  
Just think on that.  
A world pulsating with girls.

- Models?

- Mm-hm.

- Actresses?

- You know it.  
My insurance man's new secretary.  
Oh!  
Tall girls, thin girls,  
small girls, round girls.  
Pin-up girls?  
Well they don't pin-up anymore,  
they fold up, but you're getting the idea.  
Instead of that broken-down  
money pit of a house in Scarsdale,  
you get a town house all for yourself.  
With a butler?  
Push the button.  
Like Charles?  
Push the button.  
To have the martini glasses  
chilling when I come home?

Right. Exactly. All you have to do  
is just push the button.  
Whoosh! And she just disappears.  
Nobody will ever know, Harold.  
Just one little push and she's gone.  
Just push the button.  
No-one will ever know?  
Harold!  
If you think I've made your life hell,  
you'll soon learn the meaning of "suffer"!  
Shut up, you old bat!  
Besides, you won't feel a thing.  
Oh, no!  
I'm free!  
I'm free! I did it!  
Harold!  
I did it! I did it!  
All right, quiet, everybody.  
Just calm down.  
Bailiffs, you'd better,  
uh, remove this woman here.  
Good idea. Throw her out!  
I mean, remove her.  
Oh, Harold.  
Harold? Harold?  
What... what time  
will you be home for dinner, Harold?  
I'll be home whatever time it pleases me.  
Of course, I may stop at the club...  
Oh.  
For a couple of quickies on the way.  
That's all, woman. You may go.  
Take her out.  
Put her in the tank if necessary.  
All right.  
Gentlemen...  
Gentlemen...  
I address you not as judge and jury...  
but as a fellow American male.  
The crime that you have just seen  
Harold Lampson commit  
in his imagination,  
I have been accused  
of committing in reality.

Too long has the American man  
allowed himself to be bullied,  
coddled and mothered and tyrannised  
and meant to feel like a feeble-minded idiot  
by the female of the species!

Do you realise  
the power that you have  
in your hand here today?  
If one man -just one man -  
can stick his wife in the goop  
from the gloppetta-gloppetta machine  
and get away with it,  
oh, boy, we have got it made, all of us!  
Hear, hear.

Gentlemen, I did it.

I killed her.

I murdered my wife.

Every charge the District Attorney  
has levelled against me is true!

Indeed, I did slip her a mickey.

Brrrrrrrp! Blaaaap!

I cold-bloodedly then  
fed her into a tomb of goop  
from the gloppetta-gloppetta machine!

I ask you to acquit me!

Acquit me

on the grounds of justifiable homicide!

And not for my sake.

For yours.

If we do let him off,  
it'll scare the hell out of old Shirley.

I'd go around the world on a tramp steamer.

I could buy a motorcycle.

Gentlemen of the jury,  
have you reached a verdict?

Not guilty! Not guilty!

Not guilty! Not guilty!

Ah, thank you.

Well, congratulations, sir.

It will be just like old times again.

Charles, I hope you don't get upset.

I have a confession to make.

I didn't do it.

You didn't do it, sir?



No, no.  
Well, if you didn't murder her,  
where is she now?  
I don't know.  
Probably with her mother in Italy.  
But, sir,  
that means that some fine day,  
she may come back here again.  
I hope so.  
It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter!  
Sir, under American law,  
you cannot be tried  
for the same crime twice.  
They've already acquitted you. If she did  
come back, you could legally kill her again.  
It would be open season.  
One peep out of her and kachow! -  
right between the eyes.  
It's so good to be home again.  
I'll have the whole place  
back to normal in a few days.  
Goodbye, big gunky lamps.  
Farewell, gay little chintzes.  
And I'll have you tipping  
the scale at 160 pounds...  
in no time.  
She's in there.  
Good God, sir, she's in there.  
There you are, sir. Here's your chance.  
Go in there and finish her off.  
Oh, well, I suppose  
if he can put up with her, I can.  
Buona sera.  
Sono la mamma della Signora Ford.