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MARTIAL ARTS, INC.

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
in
Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts
by
Andrew Blumenthal

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University of California, Riverside
MARTIAL ARTS, INC.

by
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WE HEAR a radio turn on. Then scrolling through stations — music, news, commercials. Hold on an oldie, THE BIG HURT by Toni Fischer.

FADE UP

EXT. THE BRONX, NEW YORK - MORNING

An upscale modern bustling downtown. Title card: The Bronx.

O.S. an ELDERLY MAN joins in singing along. The song is a downer but he belts it with positive gusto and joy.

CAMERA MOVES OUT, through districts showing decay, boarded brownstones, prehistoric homes, landing on a ghosted ex main street — Jerome Avenue, South Bronx.


At the blocks end is a two story tear-down with a huge neon marquee on the roof. Someone’s up there, swinging a long pole — a pool leaf skimmer.

SOL GOLDSSTEIN, 73, wearing a karate gi, is drowning out the song on his boom box. He hooks a sagging telephone wire out over the alley, pulls it in close, lays it into an electrical junction box and throws the switch. The huge sign blinks to life, eight letters.

GOLDStein’s GYM.

On the street, the Barber Shop door opens. DON ANTONELLI, 70’s, drags trash bags out to the curb. He sees Sol.

Sol sees Don, stops singing and cups both hands to his mouth.

SOL
Great day in the morning, Don!

Don paints a smile and meekly raises his hand to wave. Then retreats back inside.

SOL
See you!
He resumes singing, takes his ghetto blaster and starts down the fire escape.

INT. GYM - MAIN ROOM

Deflated speed bags, stitched punching bags, dented practice dummies – a padded floor with squares missing, a boxing ring with only three sides roped. At the rear are two change rooms – ‘his’ & ‘hers’.

Sol steps through the fire escape window. Crossing the main room, he stops at a punching bag that’s leaked. He duct tapes the hole and pours in kitty litter to fill it.

He reaches a window facing the alley and opens it. Running up the wall outside is the city water main. And a spigot that’s been jury-rig welded into place. Sol lifts a hose laying at his feet, screws in the nozzle and turns the knob.

INT. WINDOW LINED OFFICE

Clutter overflows the desk. A Murphy bed tucked into a wall, sheets spill through. The cabinet holds compact appliances – large hot plate, pump style sink, mini-bar fridge. The closet is a mound of clothing, half covering a toy chest. It’s special – stickers, young hand outlines, photos of two boys.

Sol enters, fills the tea kettle and plugs in the hot plate. He pulls out a salami, puts it on a cutting board. Then takes a frying pan and gets it warming.

Muscle memory karate ekes into Sol’s actions – a hand thrusts, when reaching for the butter; a forearm blocks, to close a drawer; a foot kicks, to slide a chair.

He removes a Samurai Sword from it’s sheath, picks up a kitchen steel and starts sharpening the blade.

He holds the salami and carefully slices off pieces to cook. Done, he begins to wipe the sword clean. Then takes pause. He’s looking at a photo on the window sill.

Four best friends in Karate gis, in their 20’s, stand arm in arm, holding trophies. At the bottom it reads ‘Champs, 64’.

PUSH past the photo, through the window, out over the street which now is magically active – FLASHBACK 50 years to stores open, people strolling, cars bustling.
The sign on the gym reads **GOLDSTEIN & SONS**.

**INT. GYM**

The place is packed. There’s a competition. Judges watch in different areas as young fighters battle.

**BILLY THE QUAKE**, 6’3”, is focused, squeezing his fists. He’s with a group, gripping eggs. One by one they’re eliminated by a burst of gooey albumen. **FREEZE FRAME - CARD: Billy ‘The Quake’. Future Marine Colonel. UNFREEZE.** A bell dings. He opens his hands and cracks the eggs over a bowl - they’ve become hardboiled! The audience cheers!

**MILTON SLUTZKY**, stands in the ring, scared. His adversary is twice the athlete. **FREEZE FRAME - CARD: Milton Slutzky. Future Gynecologist. UNFREEZE.** The bell sounds. His opponent rushes. Milton retreats, all the while flicking quick blurring karate chops. The opponent stops. His gi peels away to the floor, shredded. He stands in his jock strap. The referee raises Milton’s arm. The crowd explodes!

**RAOUL BEBEDOR**, surly, waits his turn, holding a Samurai sword. Others take shots at a practice dummy, a bulls eye on its chest. **FREEZE FRAME - CARD: Raoul ‘El Sangre’ Bebedor. Future inmate. UNFREEZE.** Raoul’s turn. Instead of the dummy he charges the lunch table, methodically slashing down, rattling plates, cups, sandwiches. Done, he sheaths the sword. The judges rush over. Three loaves of bread are now cut in slices. Winner!

**SOL GOLDSTEIN**, joyful, faces his opponent on the main padded floor. The referee signals ‘start’. They grab and tussle and tumble, shouting chi power grunts. Sol’s rival accidently steps on his foot. Sol erupts in a high pitched vibrato wail! **FREEZE FRAME - CARD: Sol Goldstein. Future Cantor. UNFREEZE.** The blistering sound wave pitches his opponent back, filling his cheeks, blinding his eyes. Sol sees, keeps it up, steps in and cold cocks him. Winner!

Sol goes to the office window and raps. His brother **SHELDON GOLDSTEIN** looks up from the desk. He’s in street clothes, elbow deep in paperwork. Downtrodden, he picks up the camera and comes out. **FREEZE FRAME - CARD: Sheldon Goldstein. Future real estate magnate. UNFREEZE.** Sol hugs him and leads him to the other winners. They group up for a picture, lift their trophies. **FLASH!**
EXT. JEROME AVENUE GYM ENTRANCE - MORNING

Sol comes down the stairs and out the front, lugging a sandwich board. He heads for Don.

The trash pile has turned into a mound. Don schleps another load when he sees Sol and works faster.

SOL
Spring cleaning?

DON
I don’t want any grief, Sol.

SOL
Because you’re cleaning?

A moving van pulls up. Two MOVERS get out. They nod to Don and go into the shop.

SOL
Noooo Don. You’re making this out way worse than it is.

DON
How worse should I wait for? Eleven months, no customers. I’m putting the chairs in storage. Leaving the hot towels and shaving cream.

SOL
The block is our... nut. Our investment. When the stock market dips you’re supposed to stay in.

DON
Why? Till you lose everything, or just before?

SOL
I think so that you don’t buy it back again?

DON
Call me when it swings our way.
SOL
A parable. “When one looks upon an open grave,

DON
Don’t jump in.

SOL
“When one looks upon an open grave it can be scary, or, be a mulch pit.” We are the earth making fuel. We have aged and rotted to just the right proportions for growth.

DON
My son just had me sized for a walker. My daughter set up a cot on her porch. Come visit.

SOL
You’d rather eat regularly, eat well, and sleep in peace versus what we have here?

DON
Sol. The hands of time are around our throats.

SOL
Which, though disagreeable, is tolerable. We’ve gotten by before. Let’s cover each other till the fix arrives.

DON
I need heads of hair, not manna from heaven. We all bought that. Time for the tourniquet old buddy.

SOL
Are we cobwebs? Lost in space? Or virile elder men with occasional involuntary flatulence?

Don goes inside. Sol mutters aloud.

SOL
I’m it then. The last of the Mohicans without the loin cloth, or feathers, or the tan. (calling to Don) You will return!
Sol lifts the sandwich board overhead. It reads:

MARTIAL ARTS  BOXING  MUCH NACHAS  WHY DO THERAPY
Goldstein’s Gym  212-275-6942

He walks, exiting the street, heading towards the Bruckner Expressway overpass.

EXT. BRUCKNER BOULEVARD

There’s only the on-ramp to the freeway – traffic is nil. Sol arrives and stands at the entrance, slightly blocking it to make sure the sign is seen.

A limo approaches. Sol prepares. The car doesn’t enter the ramp, but instead pulls over. The back window rolls down.

Sol kicks into sell mode and approaches.

SOL
Ready to work out? We have the best gym, and I might add the oldest in the Tri State area. It has historical preservation status.

SHELDON GOLSTEIN sticks his head out the window. He flashes a forced smile.

SHELDON
Hi Sol.

Sol stops. Then rallies through the bad vibes to smile back.

SOL
Sheldon. Bro, give it up.

Sol dives in to hug, putting his arms through the window, banging the sandwich board against the door.

INT. LIMO

Three burly THUGS are there. They intercept Sol’s hands and prevent any touching. Sol makes like they’re shaking hands.

SOL
Pleased to make your acquaintance.
New friends?
SHELDON
Work associates. What say we meet at the gym?

SOL
Sounds serious. Who died?

SHELDON
Nobody. Yet. I have an idea to sell. See you there.

The thugs let go. Sol starts to wiggle out.

EXT. LIMO

He rocks backwards, gets his balance. The limo goes. Sol follows, tense.

INT. GYM – MAIN ROOM

Sheldon comes up the stairs and enters. He’s a fit 74, coiffed head to toe. He stops in the center, eyeing coolly.

Sol can be heard lumbering up, huffing. He tops the stairs and undoes the sandwich board.

SOL
If it’s about the new late payment, I called the bank to say I might lease out the first floor. There’s a haberdasher in Queens--

SHELDON
I already got it. I picked it up. I get the notices too. Who did you speak with?

SOL
Well it was after hours, so I left a message.

Sheldon blinks.

SOL
I owe ya. I’ve got your tab running. Now about this guy. He needs a big space.
SHELDON
Hmm, don’t think so.

SOL
You haven’t heard. He’s got a warehouse full of genuine imitation fake Hawaiian T shirt copies.

SHELDON
Here’s what I’m thinking. Since Don split this morning, I’ll just take title of the gym and do some remodeling.

Sol isn’t sure he heard right. Sheldon begins strolling the gym, eyeing the structure. Sol trails.

SOL
Umm, care to talk some more? Shouldn’t we agree? Don’t I have to approve because, you know, I own the gym? How’d you know about Don?

Sheldon comes to the heavy bag, puts it in Sol’s hands, then begins taking pot shots.

SHELDON
I’ve been following the property flight. Public records. Each shut down is flagged by Con Ed for meter reading. Since I’m named on your loan, and with the bank holding the last soon-to-default property, they were happy to elevate me to executor. This morning, I petitioned the court to grant me receivership. So in 60 days I take title, unless you can produce 50K. It’s what the bank needs to offset foreclosure. Maybe we save these walls for the aesthetic look.

Sol is about gut shot.

SOL
The look? For what?

SHELDON
The parking garage. For the mall.
Sheldon steps into the ring. Sol follows. There are gloves on stools. They put them on and face off, circling, growing closer.

SOL
Can we hold our horses a sec?

SHELDON
Nah. I’ve waited plenty.

SOL
Since mom and dad passed there’s been this edge. And we hardly see each other. Okay.

SHELDON
The word is ‘died’. And our silence started years earlier. Okay?

SOL
Yes.

SHELDON
You’ve been all about preservation. So sweeping shit under the rug only made it fester.

SOL
I agree. Let’s get rid of the shit. It has to do with the gym?

SHELDON
To start with. Which you inherited instead of me.

Sol lights up relaxed.

SOL
There then! We kaput this. We’ll go fifty-fifty. For us, and for what this place means to mankind.

SHELDON
As in all people of Earth?

SOL
Exactly. Why a mall when we can bring the human touch. Rejuvenate the whole block. Keeping history has meaning. A way-station for the soul.

(MORE)
SOL (cont’d)
That’s why we keep the environment happy, and rely on ecoterrorists to crack dams and sabotage strip mining. Nature, like the gym, rekindles our connection to healthier times.

SHELDON
That’s a lot of responsibility.
I’ll just think small.

SOL
I got the gym, but you got the free ride through Harvard. Mister high finance ta dah!

SHELDON
That’s what you thought? You were there but didn’t see. On graduation day--

FLASHBACK:
Sheldon, 24, is beaming proud in his cap and gown. MOM and POP Goldstein pose for pictures.

Sol clicks, then moves off with Mom to take other pictures.

Pop pulls Sheldon aside and presents him with a print out of all the charges. Sheldon becomes dazed. Pop pats him on the back.

PRESENT:

SHELDON
I got it. Old school. We owe the prior generation. But at least warn what’s hereditary.

SOL
Why don’t we find some light here. Which for the record, malls do badly - bad lighting, air, food.

SHELDON
You’re right. A mall isn’t original. A mega mall!

SOL
You got crossed. Revenge will be yours. We can do that together.

(MORE)
We renovate the block back to its heydays. Restoration, baby. Our part of the Bronx can make a comeback!

The circling lands face to face. Sheldon considers the idea, then heads to the office.

SOL
Bitchen right? Every shop in a mall is a shop we’ll have better, out in the sun. Everybody close knit. One whiff and look out. Yumpin Yiminy!

INT. OFFICE
Sheldon enters and goes behind the desk. Sol appears at the door.

SHELDON
I gotta say that’s pretty enticing. No. I have investors. They don’t do remodeling. They want a cash cow to milk for generations. Know any malls that have closed down?

SOL
Why? Why come here to tell me this?

Sheldon tries to remove the gloves. Has difficulty. Pulls off one, punching himself in the face. Sol comes over to help with the other. It pops off, also punching Sheldon in the face. Sheldon produces an envelope and places it on the desk.

SHELDON
Legally required. Called ‘a waiting period’. To give enough time to pack, relocate. You want a job, like in the ticket booth?

Sheldon starts to exit. Sol blocks him.

SOL
I’ll tell you why. It may be hard for you to say but in the depth of us is us.
SHELDON
You wanna get real? Did you think
that laying low, skimming for
crumbs would make an aura, calling
people to return? Takes more than
the power of positive delusions.

Sol is flush, stunned by some truth. He sees something out
the window.

The thugs are greeting a SURVEYOR who sets up his tripod.
Don’s van pulls away.

Sheldon pushes past. Sol turns, hustles to catch him.

INT. GYM - MAIN ROOM

SOL
Malls are handy. We sure need more.

SHELDON
Planning Sol. An alien concept.

SOL
What I’m about to ask is not meant
as a negative.

Sol reaches and grabs Sheldon’s shoulder, turning him around.
The glove is heavy and rips the buttons on Sheldon’s shirt.

SOL
Did a piano drop on your head?

SHELDON
Years of service to the tribe.
Working on other peoples dreams.

SOL
Money doesn’t buy peace of mind.

SHELDON
But it gets me the full cable
package, plus streaming.

Sheldon starts tying his shirt in a knot to close it.

SOL
It is better to give than to
receive... a drone strike.
SHELDON
You’re either on the bus or off, eating hand to mouth.

SOL
No man is an island. The one-way conversations will kill you.

SHELDON
Beware of what you wish for ‘cause now you got it.

SOL
Can’t take it with you.

Sheldon looks confused.

SOL
To the after life. Only what you can carry. How you gonna lift an entire mall?

SHELDON
The day of friggin days. You’ll land fine. Beats fighting me tooth and nail.

SOL
Sure, you eat well, you still have your tooth and nails.

Sheldon goes to the stairs and exits. Sol begins humming the GODFATHER THEME.

INT. SWANKY MARBLED MENS BATHROOM - DAY

Sol enters holding a piece of paper. He stops, looks, smiles.

Billy, using karate flair, whips out a towel for a MAN finishing washing. Then selects him a mint from a tray.

The man is unaccustomed to pampering, takes the mint and hurries out. Billy sees Sol.

BILLY
Sol? Hooyah. Front and center.

He spreads his arms and bear hugs Sol.
SOL
Ha-ha Colonel Billy, leading the charge. Even the mints.

BILLY
I like to assume that war is eminent somewhere. These grunts don’t know about camouflage. Keep your guard up and your mints close. How’d you find me? The grandson?

SOL
Where I saw the lovely room they’ve walled off for you on the porch. Next to the washer and dryer.

BILLY
That’s in case I soil myself... Where are you?

SOL
Same roof.

BILLY
Nobody to take you in? Damn let’s fix that. I know people high up the chain. A few. One, maybe. Actually I’m of no help.

SOL
I’m fine. I live like a king. ‘Cept for this one thing. The gym needs some money. There’s a move to remodel it, from the ground up. I need to pay up the bank. Think I could borrow a little?

BILLY
What are we talking? I can spot you a sawbuck. (reaching for wallet) One bill or two fives, or a five and five ones?

SOL
Little more. Fifty thousand ones.

Billy stops moving or blinking. Then he blinks.

BILLY
Now Sol that’s pretty ridiculous.
SOL
Bad idea. Wrong of me to ask.

BILLY
Business is slow?

SOL
Slow would be welcomed.

BILLY
What you need is to KP the barracks. We call it a GI Party. Top to down spit and polish. That recruits clients and the moolah.

Sol straightens up, starts sizing the idea.

SOL
That could work. We’d have to hurry. Could do it in sixty days.

BILLY
Whoa. Stand down, possum on a gum bush. I’ve no shame saying that tieing my shoes hurts.

SOL
Understood, and handled. My next stop was to the others. We can do this working together.

BILLY
It means quitting here. That’s a firing squad by family.

SOL
How about your other family? Look, I’d never try to guilt trip. (beat) Have you forgotten that the gym took you in after your demotion? And your discharge? You taught three generations of talent.

FLASHBACK: Billy in his 40’s, in his gi, with students, demonstrates a headlock. The student volunteer begins passing out, and goes limp. Billy realizes and starts fanning him.

PRESENT: Billy feels boxed in.
BILLY
Got me three squares a day. Get my tubes cleaned. When the Bronx took the dive we sounded the retreat, evasive action, fall back.

SOL
To live and fight another day. Rearm. Counter-attack. Shore up the line! The gym is the line.

BILLY
The gym is the line.

SOL
We’ll do only what’s needed, one battle at a time. Ah-ha!

Billy pops a mint.

BILLY
Reinforcements.

Sol steps forward towards...

INT. COSTCO - DAY

...Raoul, who puts out his hand stopping Sol and Billy. He’s wearing a blue vest that reads ‘How May I Help You?’ Tatoos peek at his neck and wrists, studs in ears, Zappa goatee.

RAOUL
Blow me. I’m immune to Hebrew kryptonite. Colonel. How they hanging?

BILLY
Raoul. Honestly I’d have to look. We’ll sequester back to that. Let’s hear your beef, hup to.

RAOUL
You need fifty K? Burn it for the insurance.

Sol hangs a look what insurance?

RAOUL
Great. Who’s lined up to steal it?
SOL
My brother.

RAOUL
How do you roll with him?

SOL
As in family, flesh and blood, childhood best friend?

RAOUL
Blood sucker? I could amputate his chest? Ever see what a food processor does to toes?

SOL
Forget guilt. How about it holds our memories. And continues to hold most of our smells. You found yourself there. Reformed. Your students loved you. They got lessons that can’t be imagined!

FLASHBACK: Raoul in his 40’s, in his gi, blindfolded, holding a knife. He nods his head. His students scatter. Only ONE is wearing a chest protector - scared to death. There’s mayhem trying to avoid him. Raoul throws. All freeze. The One looks at his chest, sees the knife, sighs, then faints.

PRESENT: Raoul acknowledges, proud.

SOL
The gym provided and is asking back.

RAOUL
I’m a big hit here.

On cue a harried MOTHER pushing a stroller butts in.

MOTHER
Baby supplies? Diapers?

Raoul assumes a karate stance and points.

RAOUL
Aisle fourteen, past automotive--

The woman speeds off without thanking.
RAOUL
--and the douche bags.

SOL
Can’t unload when you get dissed?

RAOUL
Frowned upon.

SOL
Ah the days of feeling fingers meeting jaw bones...

RAOUL
It’s called three strikes.

SOL
Ah the days feeling good about doing good for goodness sake. Talking a couple of coats of paint.

RAOUL
Cleaning it so people can work out... Why not offer classes? Teach? Mas dinero.

Sol looks at Billy. They brighten.

BILLY
Hooah!

SOL
Of course. That’s what we’ll do.

RAOUL
Have fun.

SOL
That's the spirt! We all will. I’ll talk to your boss.

RAOUL
The state of New York, parole placement. Burro chingao.

Sol steps forward towards...
INT. BRADBURY BUILDING - DAY

...Milton, who operates an elevator. He wears a bell hop uniform. Sol, Raoul and Billy squeeze in.

SOL
I will not use guilt. I’m using my eyes. This is your kids, Milton, wanting you vital and engaged.

MILTON
Which floor may I select?

BILLY
Tried that, Milton. The avoiding tactic.

SOL
Please press button number nine.

Milton closes the outer gate, then the inner gate, then pushes the button. They rise.

MILTON
Sol. Please. This may be mundane. But I believe the other term is ‘aged out’. Even we wouldn’t hire us. And I’m calm. See?

RAOUL
Tried that too. No you’re not.

MILTON
Can I ask, is this an intervention? Am I being de-programmed?

SOL
Teaching would make you happy. Why spend your days clocking time? By the way, is there a fertility issue going up and down all day?

BILLY
You thinking of starting a family?

MILTON
Um, a thought. It’s not only staying active. It’s counting on something to do everyday.
SOL
Like when you practiced medicine.
Until they revoked your license.
After which you became a practiced
teacher, revered, trusted.

FLASHBACK: Milton in his 40’s, in his gi, with a class. Two
students attempt to mug him. Milton, fast, pinches pressure
points. The two freeze. Milton lets go. Frozen, they start
tipping, bonk heads, knock each other out and drop to the
floor.

PRESENT: Milton shies from celebrating. He reverts.

MILTON
I can trust this elevator. It’s
reliable. It helps with my
condition. Besides, who are you
gonna teach? It’s all seniors now.

Sol suddenly realizes this. He looks to Billy and Raoul.

SOL
Alter kocker that’s right. The
youth bailed for high rises. It’s a
new market. Who?

MILTON
We’re the market. Elders. You’ll
have to re-tweak the lessons a bit.
Start each hour with aerobics.
You’ll need a nurse on staff to
handle expected injuries. Oxygen
tent, anesthesia.

SOL
Yes! You’ll direct all that.

Milton’s eyes cross at the pressure. The elevator stops, he
opens the gates. A MADISON AVENUE man steps in. He’s
impatient.

MILTON
Which floor may I select?

MADISON AVE.

One.
SOL
This could be what turns it around.
Honest engine I won’t string you out.

MILTON
I have a world of joy here. Fine music, a seat they provide, and on occasion women come in who are shorter than me.

Milton closes the first gate. Madison Avenue sighs, restless.

SOL
Aha. How’s the turrets?

MILTON
We don’t talk of the condition.
It’s never been better. Not a peep.

SOL
Terrific. Even knowing your job here has been eliminated. This is all for show.

Milton won’t acknowledge Sol. He grows edgy. He closes the second gate.

SOL
In fact it’s become voice actuated.

Madison Avenue makes an uptight ‘humph’ sound.

RAOUL
I crushed a man’s testicles once.

BILLY
Is there a sound?

RAOUL
He made a ‘humph’ before hurling.

Madison Avenue stirs.

MILTON
You’re asking at our age to reset. What about short term memory loss SCUM. Or needing ten pairs of reading glasses DICK. (MORE)
Or the arguments about hearing cause everyone else mumbles TWAT. Not to mention the peeing.

SOL
I’ll set a limit. If we have zilch after a week, we’ll fold. Fun?

Madison Avenue has had it. He reaches to push the floor button. Milton swiftly intercepts his wrist and holds it.

MILTON
PIDDLETITMONSPUBIS!

INT. GYM - DAY

Billy, Raoul and Milton stand, mouths agape. Their confusion becomes vexation. Sol appears with a broom, mop, bucket.

BILLY
Unacceptable. I want names.

RAOUL
Are you dealing drugs?

MILTON
Our jobs are gone now. Maybe your brother could give us work?

SOL
Ha funny, right you are. Broad shoulders. Some sprucing up, some fixes. ‘Let the sun shine, let the sunshine in’...

AQUARIUS plays.

MONTAGE BEGINS:

The boys sweep, mop, dust, dump trash. They do telltale martial arts maneuvers while working.

Sol is on his knees, cutting and fitting the missing sections of padded flooring. He uses the sword.

Billy blows air into a speed bag, then ties it shut. He gives it a push. It bounces. He takes a formal swipe – it remains firm. He holds both fists and slams the bag! It breaks free, sailing, hitting Milton who’s perched on a ladder replacing bulbs, knocking him ass over tea kettle.
Billy sees. Then looks to the chain that was holding the bag. 

On the empty ladder. A hand appears.

   MILTON (O.S.)

Raoul is hanging equipment on wall pegs - gloves, head gear, 
jump ropes. He takes a rope and tries his old form. He snags 
his feet, then again, and again. Irritation explodes into a 
tantrum. He slashes at the air, then lets the rope go.

Sol pushes the last padded floor section in place. The rope 
flies by.

It wraps around Milton’s neck, who’s back on the ladder, 
sending him down.

Billy moves along the stretch barre, tightening screws. Not 
looking he knocks into the ladder. A neon light drops on his 
head, shattering. Milton descends the ladder and walks away. 
Billy picks pieces of glass off his head.

Milton returns with a broom and dustpan, hands them to Billy. 

Milton, Sol and Billy stand at the corner post of the ring, 
pulling the fourth rope into place. Raoul is inside the ring, 
tightening the turnbuckle.

   RAOUl
   Pull harder.

They pull harder.

   RAOUl
   Harder!

The pull harder. Raoul quick cinches the locking bolt.

   RAOUl
   Okay let go.

They do, flying off the edge, landing in a heap. Raoul tests 
the ropes - firm and straight.

MONTAGE OVER.

The four face the gym. It’s ship shape. The sun shines in, 
lighting it nicely.
SOL
Now let’s lead the horses to water.
Say, why don’t we wear the gear?

MILTON
You saved them?

SOL
Storage. The whole first floor is a mausoleum of gym supplies.

RAOUL
We’ve shrunk.

Billy slaps the sides of his stomach.

BILLY
Spare tires men. They’ll take up the slack. Also a source of protein. I’ve known men to eat their spare tires rather than leave their post.

RAOUL
And the pants?

EXT. JEROME AVENUE - DAY

SLOW MOTION - the four stride/glide down the block in their white gi’s, black cotton kung fu shoes and black belts, each in turn tripping over their pant legs, stopping to cuff them.

At the end they turn into the neighborhood.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

A door slams in Sol’s face.
A door slams in Milton’s face.
The group is fanned out going house to house.

EXT. HOUSE

Raoul knocks on a door. It has a spy hole. The cover slides.

NADINE
What do you want?
RAOUL
I teach at Goldstein’s Gym on Jerome Avenue. We’re offering--

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Who the hell is it?

NADINE
It’s a gang member.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Tell him we already gave.

NADINE
You hear that?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)
Tell him if he wants something he can take you.

NADINE
Would you like to take me?

EXT. HOUSE

Billy stands on the porch. The door port hole opens. All Billy sees is a ball of white hair.

WOMAN
Yes?

BILLY
Mrs. Gardella? Hi. This is Billy. Remember me? I taught your son John, at the gym. I was nick-named ‘the Quake’? We’d buy bread from--

A silver .357 Magnum rises into view and levels at Billy.

BILLY
Your shop.

Billy scrambles away. The gun lowers from sight.

EXT. HOUSE

Sol is talking to a WOMAN silhouetted behind a screen.
I could make the first month our introductory offer. Think of it as a signing bonus, deflected payment. We can structure a layaway plan, direct deposit, even charge to your-

The woman lets out a blood curdling scream.

Sol is shaken.

Are you alright? What do you need?

The woman shrills even louder!

(shouting)
I can make the signing bonus two months and throw in home visits!

The scream turns psychotic crazed!

Sol, flustered, screams back berserk. She stops, overwhelmed, and passes out. Sol steps inside and lifts her head and starts fanning her. She wakes and they resume screaming.

Milton is talking to a door with bars and razor wire.

He says it’s to pay off the bank, but I think it’s cause he’s all alone. He’s known to have bad b o.

The sound of a shotgun ratcheting a shell. Milton takes a step back. Sounds of metal, bolts sliding. WE REALIZE locks are being undone. The door opens. An old man, MR. GUSTINE, looks at Milton, fretful.

Raoul sits rocking with Don.

Buy one lesson. Or I’ll hurt you.
DON
We missed you to Raoul. Alright. I need exercising. But everyone’s tight, especially those stuck with stores. Sol is like the Second coming of poverty, and here we are helping him kill off a sale.

RAOUL
You’ll learn things. How to use a butter knife in a nursing home riot.

EXT. STREET
A black SUV. A tinted window rolls down. The head thug, BRUNO, talks on his cell.

BRUNO
Three days of cleaning. Now they’re out in the neighborhood going door to door.

INT. MANHATTAN HIGH RISE - OFFICE
Sheldon sits behind a grand oak desk in a plush office with a towering view. He’s on speaker phone.

SHELDON
Oh for crying out loud. Any takers?

BRUNO
One, maybe.

SHELDON
Tell me. The other three, is one rather big, and one rather small, and one who looks dangerous?

BRUNO
Yes.

SHELDON
Jesus H. Christ. Fine. Another run at a lost cause. He’ll need a line out the friggin door.

Sheldon punches off. He stands and faces the window.
SHELDON
Nice, getting the boys on board. No matter. I’ve got your halo this time. Like the ionosphere, full of perforations. (he feigns hearing something) Huh? If he cleans it, they will come? Well so can come my carbon foot, print. I revoke the offer of ticket taker!

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Sol is on a ladder that’s steadied by the boys. He’s head first in a dumpster, pulling out pieces of paper.

EXT. STREETS

The boys staple scotch-taped hand written fliers to telephone poles: Goldstein’s Gym Now Open. Geriatric Self-Defense. Feel Safe Again.

EXT. BUS STOP

The four sit crammed on a bus bench. Billy looks around, then nods all clear. They stand, reveal children’s paint pallets and paint ‘Goldstein’s Gym’ to the bench back.

EXT. FREEWAY ENTRANCE

The four crisscross the on-ramp wearing sandwich boards advertising the Gym. Each time they turn we see their wearing saggy ass Jockey briefs.

EXT. BUSINESS DISTRICT

Milton leans against a building, walkie talkie in hand.

On top of the building is a billboard, 10 feet by 22 feet. Billy stands on the cat walk, scanning through binoculars. Sol and Raoul use long poles to lather glue across the billboard facade. Billy lifts his walkie talkie.

BILLY
Big dog to puppy one. Come in.
Over.

28
MILTON
Puppy one to big dog. I’m here. I want to say something. I’m not happy with that name. I never agreed to puppy one. Over.

BILLY
Big dog to puppy one. Roger that. Suggestion to change? Over.

MILTON
Actually I was-

BILLY
Big dog to puppy one - the protocol.

MILTON
Puppy one to big dog. Why can’t I be called Big Dog? Over.

BILLY
Big dog to puppy one. (pause) Fine.

Sol and Raoul climb opposite ladders lifting a sheet advertising the gym. They press it flat. Air pockets show. They try to flatten them. Glue gets on their hands and elbows. Sol loses balance and falls into the billboard, sticking fast. Then Raoul falls in, spread eagle upside down stuck.

SOL
Billy?

RAOUL
Quake!

Billy turns to look.

BILLY
Puppy one to big dog. Come in.

MILTON
Big dog here. All’s good. Over.

BILLY
Big dog get up here. Bring the crow bar. Double time. Rouse. Andalay! Macht schnell!
EXT. JEROME AVENUE - DAY

The roof sign is lit with all the letters. A banner stretches across the building - Grand Re-Opening!

Sol sits at a card table by the entrance ready to sign people up. The boys stand behind, uptight. The block is dead.

Then... rounding the corner, pecking along, is Mrs. Gardella. She arrives at the table. Sol beams.

SOL

She lifts her change purse. Billy braces for the gun.

MRS. GARDELLA
Alright Sol. What’ll it be?

SOL
We have a three tier program. How about we put you at level one to start. One hundred fifty. Cash, check, charge or lira.

She begins pulling bills out one at a time.

MRS. GARDELLA
I would like to learn karate.

SOL
Dr. Milton is our best hand man.

MRS. GARDELLA
I have wondered how to break someone’s nose. At night I think ‘how easy does that bone snap?’

SOL
Haven’t we all. I’ll add you to our weapons class, taught by Raoul.

Sol writes. The boys see something and tap him. Sol looks up.

Trickling out from between buildings, around corners... a WOMAN; then a MAN; then a COUPLE; a GROUP. All elders.

The boys eye each other, then walk out to greet the new students.
The block begins filling.

INT. SUV
Bruno, dumbfounded, lifts up his cell phone.

INT. SHELDON’S OFFICE
Sheldon slams down the phone!

SHELDON
In a pigs eye!

He springs up and marches to the door. Thug TWO and THREE are lounging on the sofa.

SHELDON
Do you see I’m moving fast? Do you see I’m angry? Get the fucking car! Try acting intelligent, it might rub off.

They scramble behind him.

INT. GYM - DAY
The place is hopping. Elders being measured for uniforms; trying on gloves; doing impromptu stretching.

There’s a lesson in progress, Raoul with a group standing next to a practice dummy. On a table are spears, swords and knives.

RAOUL
Who here has sliced into human flesh, not their own?

Blank stares. Raoul agrees.

RAOUL
That’s right. Way cool. Let’s refresh with what you can hold without hyperventilating. Strike points.

Raoul takes the knife and stabs the dummy in the arm pit. The elders are wide-eyed, smiling. They move closer.
INT. OFFICE

Sol sits at the desk adding numbers. Milton walks in.

MILTON
We ran out of uniforms. Those who
don’t have one are jealous of the
ones that do.

SOL
Tell them it’s a three day wait
period. Tell them to improvise –
aprons, bed sheets. Milton. At this
rate, with minimal loss to heart
attacks, we’ll get up to 30K.

MILTON
Well. I guess that’s it. We tried.
I’ll pack.

SOL
The opposite! It shows we’re
capable of the rest. The bank will
take heart and take the money
because they’ll see the bigger
picture. To be on the side of
saviors!

Milton makes an aggrieved squeal sound, then goes. Sol stands
and stares out to the street.

SOL
Sheldon? You inspired this. I
reserve the right to feel cool
about you. I half want to hug you.
Just waiting for the other half to
get the money.

EXT. JEROME AVENUE

Sheldon’s SUV pulls up next to Bruno’s.

POV – a line of elders out the door. Billy sits at the card
table, taking money.
INT. SUV

SHELDON
Oh Sol. Just when our roles were
defined. I feed you. You eat. You
succumb.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Sol is asleep on the Murphy bed. Outside WE HEAR engines draw
near, turn off. Doors open, close. Sol stirs.

Through the windows are silhouetted objects, flying, closer.

Rocks bash through the windows! Glass shatters, wood
splinters, shelves break!

Sol bolts awake. The bed is triggered and he’s flipped
backwards into the wall.

More rocks sailing into the gym. They rip the hanging bags;
sheer away the neon lights; slam the boxing ring punching
holes in the middle.

The attack stops. Dust rises.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GYM - SIDEWALK - MORNING

The sign on the roof is pummeled, letters smashed. Only four
remain: G i s m.

Sol and the boys stand wasted. Along with the wreckage, the
gym walls have been spray painted.

The boys study the graffiti.

BILLY
“Kep otter ear”. Kep otter ear.
They had otter ears? But don’t
anymore? Why? To eat?

RAOUl
“Orr Hooo”. Hooo is “hood”. They’re
numbskulls.
MILTON
Let’s give the benefit of doubt. It was dark and they were rushing. Like when an inspiration hits at night and you hurry to scribble it down?

BILLY
“Watt mare?”. Mare means ocean.

MILTON
Or a female horse.

BILLY
Watt is electrical. A horse isn’t. Eels are. They’re sailors. Navy.

RAOUL
“Watt mare?” means ‘we’re coming back’.

Sol stares up at his sign.

SOL
Out to sea alright. Funny how the local gangs have left me alone ‘cept now. Funny how the confluence of events confluced so flucely, Sheldon. The fixes will eat into what we’re making.

RAOUL
A shit sandwich.

BILLY
I think it’s safe to say classes are canceled.

SOL
Or at least moved.

MILTON
The sidewalk?

RAOUL
Alley.

SOL
Good, the alley. Get the feeling of a real location where trouble happens.
MILTON
For how long, Sol? Some of them, and us, will want to sit. And often relieve our bladders hermetically.

BILLY
We’ll requisition colostomy bags.

RAOUL
There’s a fire hydrant.

SOL
I have lawn chairs piled about the ground floor, along with...

Sol remembers..., lites up, wheels turning.

SOL
No one is going to help us next time. We’re on our own to protect ourselves when ‘watt mare’ comes.

BILLY
As in we mount a defense? Hmm, tricky. Not impossible.

SOL
Nothing big. Don’t want them madder. Only enough to safeguard.

MILTON
I would like to vote we hold our sphincters briefly. We didn’t sign up for a fight. There happens to be age issues, like bone density. Our cataracts have cataracts.

BILLY
We could take the sting out. Create a series of blocking maneuvers. I’ll need stuff.

RAOUL
An Uzi blocks.

SOL
It sure as heck does Raoul! We’ll keep the thought when we go lethal. Milton. I like breathing same as you.

(MORE)
Students begin approaching. Sol’s wheels start again.

SOL
We’re teaching some of the store owners. Billy, what kind of stuff is it you need?

Billy arches back, growing a grin.

The students arrive, shocked seeing the damage.

SOL
Ladies and gentlemen. We’ve suffered a set back. Mending will be forthcoming... soon. Meantime classes will continue in the alley. You can head over there now. I’d like a word with Mrs. Gardella, Don, Mr. Gustine, Herb, Lloyd, and Mr. Lanier.

The group isn’t budging.

SOL
Okay?

DORIS FELDHORN squeezes forward.

SOL
Hello Doris.

DORIS
You have a broom. We can tape cardboard to the windows. We can patch up the big issues until repairmen come.

She looks to the others. They nod and start entering the gym. Sol is touched. The owners cluster around him.

SOL
I was wondering about the items left in your shops, and could we borrow a few things, to be returned?

Ambivalence ripples between them.
MR. LANIER
You know we welcome coming, in
spite of the fact that it pushes
any buy out further away.

SOL
I under--

LLOYD
We had offers in hand,

HERB
But listened to you. Now you want--

MRS. GARDELLA
And shall have. We will help.
Because this was wrong. Matthew
25:45, what you do to the least of
me, you do to all.

HERB
25:40.

DON
Both wrong. It’s Matthew 25:46.

MR. GUSTINE
Corinthians 8:12.

MR. LANIER
Sure?

SOL
I’ll take it. And thank you. Billy,
Raoul, take a look-see. I have a
chore to run.

The group heads down the block. Milton goes into the gym.

Billy leads the pack.

Two streets intersect midway into Jerome Avenue.

BILLY
Let’s barricade this and the one
near us. Get them entering from the
far end only.

RAOUL
On it.
Continuing on, Billy looks up at the street lamps.

BILLY
Can we turn those off? Loosen the bulbs?

RAOUl
On the ladder, using the pool pole.

Pushing further, Billy stops at a manhole cover.

BILLY
Hmm. Thinking what I’m thinking?

RAOUl
Lloyd. Your meat locker. Anything that thaws fast?

INT. GYM - MORNING

Milton enters the ground floor to find piles of garage-sale furniture, appliances, hand-me-downs. He navigates to the far right corner.

Scrap pieces for combat: spears, shields, shoulder pads, iron masks, chainmail.

He fishes about and unearths a group of brightly painted helmets and chest plates, intricately designed with ornamental flares.

Milton is impressed.

EXT. DOWNTOWN BRONX - DAY

A bus pulls up and Sol gets off. He walks cautiously, checking for anyone looking. He reaches a store front with a neon sign: SONIA FREE MOON JUNE - SAGE SAYER.

INT. SAGE SAYER - RECEPTION

He enters a cliche of East meets West - Buddha incense burner, bean bags, yin yang new age tao Zen Maya posters.

A female VOICE booms from above.

SONIA (O.S.)
Sol Goldstein!
Sol jump-squeals, looks around.

SOL
Sonia? How’d you know it was me?

SONIA (O.S.)
I’m a clairvoyant ya nut. And the peep hole in the third eye.

Sol sees the poster. SONIA enters through beaded curtains. She’s slightly younger, beautiful beneath flamboyant hair and clothing (playing the guru swami mystic hippie).

SONIA
How are you Sol?

SOL
Oh okay. The usual muddle.

SONIA
How romantic. I usually don’t take walk ins but you bring out the oracle in me.

She turns and leads into the seance room.

SOL
Ah, I didn’t come for a vision thing. More to get your opinion.

SONIA
Ethical or legal?

SOL
Probably both.

SONIA
Still, that’s a full session, love.

SEANCE ROOM
A converted closet. Mood lighting, tie dye tapestries.

They circle a table and sit opposite. In the middle is a mound with a dish towel over it.

She gestures for his hands. He puts them out. She studies his palms, with some fondling.
SONIA
Shall I tell you what gives me shpilkes?

SOL
Oh, that’s okay.

SONIA
Sometimes I writhe in bed, wanting for--

She stops on a particular crease – traces it.

SONIA
This is good. A rash of good happenings. The other rash isn’t covered by insurance.

SOL
Yes. We have new students.

SONIA
And...

SOL
And it’s helping. Which brings me-

SONIA
What’s your question? Spit it out.

SOL
Well there is-

SONIA
I got it. Something is squeezing you. It’s serious. And there’s no sense me saying “let it go”, this must be resolved. By the way, why so much time between visits? What are you afraid of? Has playing the part of widower become cemented? It’s been fifteen years since Estelle-- Ah oh.

She reaches for the Tarot deck and deals them like five card draw. Sol lifts his hand, moves cards around like poker.

SONIA
Cut it out. Hit me one by one.

He places them face up.
SONIA
Nine of wands. Eight of swords.
Three of pentacles. Queen of cups.
(big pause) Justice. As I figured.

She looks at Sol hard. He’s worried.

SONIA
You’re spooked about taking action.

SOL
Yes!

SONIA
And the meaning it will mean.

SOL
If we take arms against an oppressor, because the police will never won’t come, will we be--

SONIA
Arrested? I don’t do vindication.

SOL
How ‘bout a hint. Isn’t there an oath you take where you have to tell me?

SONIA
What does your gut tell you?

SOL
Take a Tums. Cross my fingers. Stop as much damage as we can.

SONIA
A defense of hoping they’ll go away? The Justice card is a warning. Every action has an effect that returns to you. Karma is sewn from what you reap. Honey, we don’t get what we expect or want, only what we deserve. A reminder to feel guilty about actions not taken.

Sol tips back, totally confused.

She slides away the towel revealing a crystal ball. She puts both hands on it. A CLICK sounds. Images begin stirring.
SOL
Sonia? We go back. Is it safe?

SONIA
Was Khrushchev bar mitzvahed?
Something about yourself frightens you. Your reliance on just getting by.

SOL
Beneath the fear that they’re bound to be bigger and stronger? I could get someone hurt.

SONIA
That happens when you cross your fingers to fanatics. Pisha, you’ve only your life to lose. My loss. You know I’m still single. Do you know what that means?

SOL
No.

SONIA
Look closer at the ball.

They lean in. She shows much cleavage.

SOL
I’m seeing triple.

SONIA
Sheldon?

SOL
You can see him? Let me see.

Sol turns the ball towards him. It goes cloudy. She grabs it back.

SONIA
‘Cause you touched it. What’s his part in all this?

SOL
Dear Sheldon--

SONIA
Is up to no good. Here we go – a street scene. A road block, crane.
SOL
A police road block? Where? When?

SONIA
This isn’t a calendar.

SOL
Well what’s it supposed to do? Where’s the warranty?

He grabs the ball and shakes it like a globe, then looks underneath for a message. She wrestles hold of it.

SONIA
You’re gonna--

They both let go. It flies, shattering against the wall. They’re stunned. She composes, reaches under the table and pulls out another.

With a scolding look she sets it down and resumes.

A picture materializes – it’s an ad for the ball maker.

SOL
This is a much better future.

An egg timer clangs. Sonia covers the ball.

SONIA
You’re in luck. Today is barter day. You pay by taking me out, same time next week.

SOL
Yes.

EXT. SIDE STREET - INTERSECTS JEROME AVENUE - NIGHT

Bruno’s SUV appears. But it can’t enter Jerome, stopped by a barricade of dumpsters, lounge chairs, shopping carts, six man canoe, a teepee, a blow up punching clown, razor wire.

INT. CAR

BRUNO
Trash collectors on strike?

He backs the car up and continues to the next cross street.
EXT. JEROME AVENUE

The SUV turns onto Jerome, drives a ways then stops. The thugs get out, pop the trunk and lift heavy sacks that clunk.

Bruno looks up. Something’s wrong. It’s dark. The street lights are all out. The three walk towards the gym.

Recessed in the gaps between stores stand the boys, dressed in full Samurai armor regalia. They lift their visors. On the left is Billy, a milk crate at his feet. On the right is Raoul, holding a large burlap sack.

The thugs pass them. Bruno suddenly stops. He looks down. The manhole cover flaps in the evening breeze. Odd. It’s a paper mache painting. Bruno tests it with his foot and his leg crushes through, toppling him. His men catch him and lift him up.

BRUNO
What the fuck ever! That’s a hazard. What shit-for-brain would do that?

They continue, passing Sol on the left who stands in front of the card table. On the right is Milton, nervous, manning a shopping cart.

Sol steps aside and picks two flour bags off the table. He takes a breath then comes out in the open. He winds up and chucks one, then the other.

They burst on the heads of thugs one and two. They’re stunned, covered in white powder.

Milton lifts old shoes from the cart and flings them rapid-fire, smacking Bruno.

Sol slingshots bowls of shaving cream, blinding the thugs.

Bruno looks around mad. He sees, pauses, troubled. Dreamlike figures in decorative headdress and thick body gear.

Milton lights cigars and tosses them. They bounce off Bruno.

Sol lets fly a pizza dough already wheeled. It lands across Bruno’s face.

The cigars, dough, cream and shoes keep pelting. The thugs backpedal.
Bruno makes eyeholes in the dough. He looks and sees the car. He grabs the thugs and leads.

Thug three drops through the manhole. The others have to stop and haul him up.

Raoul begins lobbing slabs of beef and balls of ground round.

Billy takes a paint can from the crate. He tries prying the lid with screwdriver but it’s dark and can’t find the edge.

The thugs fend their way back towards the car.

Billy tries a fix – he puts the can down on it’s side and stomps the middle. The lid pops. He karate kicks it spinning into the street.

The thugs slip, fall, and slosh in paint.

Sol takes note of what Billy did. He lifts a walkie talkie.

    SOL
    Cease fire.

The boys stop.

    BILLY
    Roger that.

    SOL
    Now they should leave.

The thugs reach the car, heaped in goo. A pregnant pause.
They open their sacks, grab bricks and rocks and wind up.

Our guys retreat behind their walls.

    BILLY
    They’re not leaving.

    SOL
    Back to firing.

    BILLY
    You supposed to say ‘Fire at will’.

    SOL
    Yes!

WE HEAR glass crashing. The guys look.
The thugs are attacking the stores!

The four re-emerge and hurl everything. The thugs keep throwing beneath falling entrails, flat loaves and baguettes, paint swatches, cigarettes, dress shoes, sandals, slippers and hot face-towels.

SOL
Break out the hoses.

They produce garden hoses attached to spigots and turn them on.

The thugs have difficulty seeing.

Bruno goes to the trunk, gets a Molotov cocktail, lights it and throws it at the barbershop. It erupts.

SOL
Everyone, save the shop!

They turn their water on the storefront.

MILTON
FUCKSHITHARDONWANKERPUTANA.

The thugs let the old guys scramble. Satisfied, icky, they climb into the car and go.

EXT. JEROME AVENUE - MORNING

The six owners look at the damage and what’s left of the barber shop. Don is crushed.

HERB
Sol stopped those guys alright.

LLOYD
Redirected them.

MR. LANIER
Bound to happen, being unoccupied.

MR. GUSTINE
Who’s gonna repair our places?

MRS. GARDELLA
Gentle men. Get with it. We’d have to do more than a fix-up if buyers return.

(MORE)
We'd have to make the shops over, new. New but lived in cozy. Either way it's time to nuke.

INT. GYM - OFFICE

Sol sees them from out the window. He's displeased. He gives up and joins the boys in the main room.

SOL
Billy. You did something last night with the paint cans. A snap thrust followed by a spin kick.

BILLY
No other choice. A Marines mantra: 'Improvise, adapt, overcome.' Why?

SOL
Something... If we can still do that we could do other things.

RAOUL
Like kill Sheldon.

MILTON
Ah dat dat. I share the feeling Raoul but dissent less we lose our humanity. If humanity were not to be in question, pills are recommended. No cleaning up.

RAOUL
Not entirely.

MILTON
Did that happen in prison?

RAOUL
White foam from the mouth and nose. We could lay down a tarp.

BILLY
Men? Sol, help. We're in this pickle, fair and square.

MILTON
Point of order. It is the bail out that's not fair.
RAOUL
It’s a push off a cliff.

SOL
Seems so. The tubes are out and the
I V is getting warm. Ideas. What
else can we try?

BILLY
That which we used to do, compete.

RAOUL
‘Cept we got decrepit.

MILTON
If we could just enter a non
contact, seniors only, geriatric
strike force contest, on oxygen.

All laugh, except for Sol.

SOL
What’s that? Say again? No wait.
Maybe. Hmm.

BILLY
Yes?

SOL
An elders competition. Sure, we
can’t do a roundhouse kick and
can’t flip opponents, but can
painfully almost do some of that.
What other things can ex-martial
artists barely do? Remind me your
day jobs? Hobbies?

Milton goes into thought.

FLASHBACK:

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM. Milton, 14, walks on stage for
the talent show. Ten hand-bells wait on a table. He proceeds
to ring I WANT TO HOLD YOUR HAND, off key, wrong notes.

MILTON (V.O.)
I played bells. I placed second-to-
last in my ninth grade talent
contest.

(MORE)
MILTON (V.O.) (cont'd)
I tried forming a rock band but no one wanted a trio of glockenspiel, triangle and Jew’s harp.

PRESENT:

SOL
Musical instruments. Some how there’s something there. Raoul?

Raoul winds up to gloat.

FLASHBACK:

AUTO SHOP. Raoul in his teens, wearing goggles, welding the handle on a car door. He stands and walks, accidently searing off the aerial. He stops to look back, and burns a hole in hood. He looks down at the hole, and fries the mirror.

RAOUL (V.O.)
I did auto body repairs. A natural. But after some douche complaints I had to stop. Can still bring it. I can straighten a bumper faster than Lola Falana gets a scout troop stiff.

PRESENT:

SOL
We’ll put the artist in you to work. A slam dunk! Continue.

Billy straightens up.

BILLY
Men. Coming through the ranks means taking a few knocks.

FLASHBACK:

WAR. Billy, a young Lieutenant, directs cannon artillery fire. BOOM! They move to reload - out of ammo. Billy muses over a tough decision. Then slings his rifle, hoists onto the cannon and squeezes down the muzzle. His men are confounded. He flags them to fire. They’re nervous, arguing and shoving. The lever is accidently flipped, BOOM! The smoke clears to reveal Billy singed, scorched. He aims his rifle and fires.
BILLY (V.O.)
I had to be tough. Rough and tough like a turkey on Thanksgiving what’s been left in the oven while the Buckeyes play Notre Dame. Leave no prisoners. For that I paid with every bone in my body. And the section 8 discharge.

PRESENT:

SOL
Certainly worlds to explore, Billy. Great options! I was a Cantor. That means a Rabbi who sings. As good as I was, I got excommunicated.

FLASHBACK:

TEMPLE. Sol, 24, is leading the congregation in song, soulful, melodic. To finish he blasts his opera voice as if on stage at the Met. A chalice breaks. The Torah falls over. PEOPLE dive under pews.

DRUGSTORE. Sol in line to pay. A MAN pulls a gun to rob everyone. Sol, frightened, cries HELP!!!!!!! in full vibrato. The Man covers his ears and runs away.

SOL (V.O.)
My voice is bad ass. An instrument to die for. But unchecked became a liability. I finally discovered the gift that it was. Go where your talents lead.

PRESENT:

SOL
We’ll all get some singing in.

MILTON
What are you getting at?

SOL
Marketing our expertise. Shop what we know - those skills. Get the word out, distribute leaflets.

RAOUL
Come again?
SOL
Hand outs. Staple them to poles.
Run it in the yellow pages.

BILLY
Sol. Even I smell ‘dork’. We need a computer.

MILTON
To design it. We create a web site.
That way the ad will link anyone searching the subject. My nephew showed me how it works.

SOL
Is that the kind of cliental who’ll want us? Computer people?

RAOUL
They’re like everyone - rage filled, into dislocating.

MILTON
After the web site we can start a blog. Is it A blog or TO blog?

BILLY
It feels tiring, blogging. “Honey, I’m home and I’m all blogged out.”

RAOUL
“Damn, you look bloggy dear. Sit down.”

MILTON
“The bloggers were violent today. They pushed me. I might contract blogadekaphobia”

BILLY
“I know that feeling, so full of blogadocia.”

RAOUL
“But I want to have sex, dear.”

MILTON
“Honey. I can’t love you when my insides ache like stale blog-o-filet.”
SOL
Maybe ‘to blog’ is an exercise we’ll offer. How ‘bout it, we on?

RAOUL
Fuckin’ A.

BILLY
Wag it and shag it.

MILTON
Proceed.

SOL
Who has a computer?

EXT. OFFICE DEPOT – MANHATTAN – DAY
A city bus pulls up. The four get off and file into the store.

INT. STORE
They’re huddled ‘round a computer. Milton sits at the keyboard, hands busy.

BILLY
Why don’t we list our names? Is it mine? What in tarnation’s bad about saying ‘The Quake’?

MILTON
Nothing. That will be a plus. But not here on the face page. It goes on your bio in the Staff menu.

RAOUL
I’m not Staff. I’m Faculty.

SOL
A teacher, yes. Many teachers are a staff. A staff of ‘highly trained professionals’? (to Milton) ‘Service Specialists’?

MILTON
That’s better. Changing it.

Milton types. Billy leans in.
BILLY
Why is Jean-Claude Killy there?

RAOUL
Fuck who Killy?

SOL
You don’t recall the skier? I’m trying to tap into (a) the older crowd. He was from the 70s. And (b) we need to advertise our speed. He was very fast.

BILLY
But we’re not fast. Even a child can see we’re no faster than turtles. We will be sued.

MILTON
I’m fast Billy. Look how fast I’m typing.

SOL
See? There. If one of us is fast than it’s not a lie. You misspelled chutzfah. There’s no ‘f’. It’s c-h-u-t-z-p-a-h.

RAOUL
What is that? A Jewish thing. A gland?

SOL
I guess you can secret it. No, it’s universal. We all have it.

BILLY
Any risk of cancer from an enlarged chutzpah?

MILTON
I’ll check into it. I think a person in Spain developed a huge one but it didn’t kill him.

Milton starts typing.

MILTON
If we promise it, we’ll provide early detection screenings. I’ll do that at no extra charge.
SOL

Thank you Doctor. Let it be known that any out-sized chutzpahs will not be tolerated. We develop the inner kind, in moderation.

Milton moves aside. They all lean closer.

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ON THE BOYS

They’re smiling.

SOL
So now what? When does it start?

MILTON
When I press this button.

Eyes on Sol. He nods ‘go’. Milton strikes the key, a chime chimes, the site launches.

MILTON
It’s up. Now we wait.

SOL
Wait... for the people.

MILTON
Yup.

BILLY
To call.

MILTON
Ah huh.

RAOUL
Our number.

MILTON
Yes?

BILLY
Which connects to Sol’s phone.

MILTON
Hmm...

SOL
That’s in the office. ACROSS TOWN!

EXT. STORE

The four run out screaming, just as a bus pulls away. They pound on it howling pathetically ‘till it stops.
INT. GYM - OFFICE - EVENING

They are curled up in chairs and on the floor. The phone is centered on the desk.

    MILTON
    Should we check again?

    BILLY
    Sol?

    SOL
    Sure.

Sol reaches and quickly picks up the receiver, listens, then hangs up fast.

    SOL
    Dial tone is good.

The boys trade looks. They’re defeated. Sol decides to buck them up. He hums Day O, overly happy.

The phone rings. The men come to life. Sol utter/splurts a primal squeal. Then he composes. Then picks it up.

    SOL
    Martial Arts, Inc. Sol Goldstein here. (pause) Well our job is to make that go away. Tell me more. (he waves for a pen - the boys scramble). Uh uh, we are certified and bonded. (he’s handed a pen) That happens to be our specialty. When would you like it done? (pause) 10 am works. And your address? (writing) Very well Mrs. Doyle. See you tomorrow. Goodbye.

Sol hangs up.

    SOL
    We got one!

    BOYS
    YEAH!!!!!

Power fists and high-fives. Sol, beaming, turns to Raoul.
SOL
It’s a Toyota Camary. 2008. The front fender has a dent.

Raoul cools fast, registers, then nods ‘got it handled’.

SOL
Good. No pressure. Because some men might choke with everything riding on the first job in that without a reference we’d die in gutters.

Raoul flashes a smirk smile, thumbs up.

EXT. MRS. DOYLE’S DRIVEWAY - DAY

Raoul inspects intensity, gliding along the Camary, hands on the car, feeling, moving across the trunk, then along the wheel well, up to the rear window.

REVEAL the three men bunched behind, trailing.

Raoul suddenly stops at the rear door panel. The men bowl into each other.

Raoul puts his face to the metal and pauses.

The guys lean in.

False alarm - Raoul stands and moves on. He arrives at the front fender and the dent. He stops to trace the outline with his hands.

Sol looks up to the house and smiles at MRS. DOYLE.

EXT. HOUSE

Mrs. Doyle, 84, looks out from the living room window, frightened.

THE DRIVEWAY

Raoul is moving, across the hood, passing the passenger door, then does a double take and backs up. He stops at a spot below the door handle.

RAOUL

Found it.
He puts out his hands a la pre surgery. Milton produces two work gloves and slips them on.

The boys give him space. Raoul assumes his martial arts ready stance - breaths in - then cries his attack yell “Kahlieeee” and punches the door!

He relaxes, then looks in close. Not a mark.

He puts up his hands. Milton removes the gloves. Raoul leads back to the front fender and stands.

Sol grows worried - the moment of truth.

A vibration begins. Then KLLLLLLLLLLLUNK it pops out! Exactly shaped to it’s old contour!

The boys WHO-AH and touch fists! Milton produces sand paper, Billy with the touch up paint and brush. Raoul recedes, his work done. Sol hugs him - Raoul freezes.

Mrs. Doyle cries tears of joy.

INT. GYM OFFICE

Sol on the phone, taking an order. He looks to Milton.

EXT. BELL TOWER - DAY

Ten stories high, eight huge bells dangle beneath the dome. The 4 men stand in a semi circle wearing fight gloves and thick headphones (a la airport workers).

Milton checks his watch. He raises his hand. The boys get into their ‘ready’ stance. Milton flags them!

They begin punching the bells to THIS OLD MAN (with a knick-knack paddywhack). Their timing is shaky, the rhythm funky, but we get it.

Finished, Milton steps up to punch in the time of day - 4 slow whack/gongs for four o’clock.

EXT. JEROME AVENUE - DAY

The block is cordoned off. A banner reads: AARP CAGED HEAT SENIOR STRIKE FORCE. In the street is a large CROWD standing around a makeshift boxing ring made of trash cans and ropes.
Billy is in one corner coaching a 75 year old MAN in a walker.

Milton and Raoul are across the ring coaching an elder MAN on two canes.

Sol, the referee, holds up the round bell and looks to both.

    SOL
    Ready? Ready?

The fighters nod. Sol hits the bell!

The fighters hobble out. They stop in the middle to catch their breath. Done, they start swinging and thrusting, missing, lame.

The corner men get worked up shouting instructions.

The canes and walker get tangled and lock. Sol steps in to break up the clinch. The man in the walker, happy to have a reachable target, punches Sol. The other man frees his cane and clobbers Sol. Sol goes down.

The Seniors pour it on, attacking. Sol is getting weak. He finds the round bell and bangs it. The fighters stop and return to their corners. Sol lays there, rests.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Sol is singing a hymn while depositing checks at the ATM. As the last goes in the slot, he spreads his arms and bellows “Aaaaaahhhhhmmmeennnnnn”.

He takes the receipt and leaves, passing the next man in line. Bruno. He watches Sol go. Something is halibut. He pulls out his smart phone to call.

INT. MOTOR VEHICLE TESTING FACILITY - DAY

Sol, Milton and Raoul stand next to a car. They’re dressed in crash dummy suits - white jumpers, nuclear icon vectors.

Billy arrives suited too, and wearing a football helmet, knee pads, elbow pads, a catchers chest protector and a neck brace. He inserts a mouth guard. He turns to the boys, salutes them, then steps into the car. TECHNICIANS wire him up.
The boys share looks - not so sure about this.
The door slams and the car roars off!
Billy is screaming

    BILLY
    CHARGE!

A concrete wall looms.

IMPACT! The front end crumbles, air bags discharge, the doors buckle, windshield shatters, roof caves, Billy’s helmet and neck brace spring up.

Everyone runs to the car. He’s smothered in the heap.

POP! An air bag deflates. Billy’s hand breaks through holding a safety pin. Then his head - he gasps for air. He gives a thumbs up.

INT. GYM - DAY

Sol leads ten WOMEN in aerobics using martial arts moves. They’re singing L-O-V-E by Nat King Cole.

The song hits a brief peak at each letter. On each, the women belt the vocals followed by a punch.

Sol stops the class.

    SOL
    Ladies. Good, but remember. It’s ‘Note, Hold, Punch, Release’. The hold is for a count of 2, thrust twice, then continue. Once again...

They start the routine. A peak comes. The ladies nail it, a brief shrieking choir, then a fierce punch. Sol applauds.

EXT. STREET

The black SUV is parked across the street.

INT. SUV

Bruno and the thugs watch them through binoculars. Bruno lifts his cell.
BRUNO
Yes, it’s different. Not a lesson. They’re exercising. From this angle looks like eight or ten.

SHELDON (O.S.)
Are they enjoying themselves?

BRUNO
Yes. It looks like fun. I mean, they’re having fun.

SHELDON (O.S.)
Oh Criminy.

INT. SHELDON’S OFFICE

SHELDON
Alright. Holler if they hit the Powerball.

He hangs up, then fishes through papers on his desk. As he talks, the looking becomes frustrating, becomes a tantrum.

SHELDON
What fiddle faddle now Sol? What bone head backward 4th century blinders on cockamamy jerk off dead end waste of time are you fucking me with this time. Ass wipe!

He finds the slip of paper.

EXT. LOADING DOCK - FURNITURE STORE

The boys circle a dining table large enough to seat ten. They have duct tape wrapped around their wrists and ankles. WE SEE implements protruding: a screw driver, pipe wrench, car jack, hammer, pliers, toilet plunger, bayonet.

Waiting for the inspirational cue, they distress the wood delivering karate/kung fu strikes, then brushing away the wood shavings. Then circle till feeling happens again.

EXT. HUNTS POINT DINER - DAY

Sheldon’s limo is parked out front.
LOU TROTSKY strolls up and enters.

INT. DINER

He looks and finds Sheldon, heads to his booth. He’s in khaki pants with a Velcro fastener, wearing a button-down short sleeve shirt.

Sheldon makes a weak smile as he sits.

SHELDON
Lou. Thanks for making time. Pick something, it’s on the house.

The waitress arrives, ready to write. Lou takes the menu.

LOU
Let’s see...

SHELDON
Why ‘let’s see’? You know it by heart. Pick it up.

LOU
I don’t like to be rushed.

Sheldon eyes the waitress. Waits a beat.

SHELDON
Hurry you ignorant knave pissant.

LOU
I would like the corned beef on sour rye. Double the cole slaw. A side of thousand island. A side of sour kraut. A side of roast beef.

SHELDON
A side of roast beef?

LOU
I’m hungry. I slosh it around in the dressing, then pick up what cole slaw has fallen out of the sandwich. It’s a fork combo.

Sheldon trades a pained nod to the waitress. She leaves.
SHELDON
I have a new property for you. I’ll need you to do it next week.

Lou pulls out a small black book - his day planner. It has an official city seal stamped across it.

LOU
I can spring an inspector on Tuesday. Is this to pass, or to stiff?

SHELDON
Stiff. Make it impossible.

LOU
How tough is the site?

SHELDON
Oh that’s easy. It’s the people. They’ll try and milk your guy. I need someone emotionally tough.

LOU
I have someone.

Sheldon removes an envelope and slips it under the table, passing it.

Lou reaches underneath to receive it.

Their hands bump. The envelope drops.

Both dip forward reaching for it and bonk heads across the table.

Both recover, then try to find it with their feet. Kicking starts. Sheldon enjoys this.

LOU
Ow. Hey, let me.

Lou leans out of the booth and peers under the table. He sees it and retrieves it. Sheldon kicks him.

INT. SHELDON’S OFFICE - DAY

A hand thuds down on the desk! It lifts revealing a check.
The men of Martial Arts, Inc. stand smiling. The thugs are by the door.

Sheldon sits back.

SHELDON
Money.

SOL
Eight thousand smack-a-roons. More on the way.

SHELDON
It’s a miracle.

SOL
A new business Shel. We’re back doing martial arts and it’s taking off. The phone is ringing!

SHELDON
Mysterious how the world works in light of your troubles. I heard about that gang thing. Shucks.

SOL
This first installment... it’s a good faith payment. So you’re free. You can sign off as the receiver guy.

SHELDON
I could. Are we to be brothers again?

SOL
Sort of the idea. It’s you’re incentive that’ll get the block on it’s feet, ‘join the 21st century’.

SHELDON
On the wave of the gym a tsunami of customers seeding growth. Help me, because I’ve found you need more. A hit restaurant or a tech store that people can’t resist.

SOL
That’s our plan. To become a high tech gym with a restaurant inside!
SHELDON
Then yes. I can step aside. As soon as the city assessor finishes. I scheduled Building and Safety for tomorrow. You have to meet the codes. Or spend money and time upgrading - plumbing, wiring, earthquake. Will this wrinkle your plan? And just over a month left.

Sol is bitten by this news. The boys start heating up.

SOL
This check says we’re viable. We can go to the bank.

SHELDON
I was just there. You have to be solvent enough for the upkeep. They want their money protected. You can borrow stuff from my garage, like gloves.

Sol sees the handwriting. Raoul slowly circles Sheldon’s desk, examining it.

SHELDON
What? I’m being pretty magnanimous.

BILLY
Magin-namurmous?

RAOUL
Magama-manofus.

MILTON
It means to be generous.

BILLY
How do you become a word like that, so large?

MILTON
By stealing from others.

SHELDON
I’m speaking facts. Unlike the Reuben incident. Right Sol?

Sol is pinged.
SHELDON
Do they know? Ah, see, there’s a ‘meat correctness’ rule in our clan. One weekend 60 years ago I was tasked with making Reubens.

FLASHBACK:

Twelve year old Sheldon enters a Delicatessen. He takes a number. He walks along the glass case, stopping at the corned beef, cut in strips.

The owner calls the next number. As Sheldon is about to answer, he sees a tray of ham, sliced thin. A sign says ‘On Sale Today’. Sheldon looks between the ham and the corned beef, back and forth. He raises his number.

At the Goldstein home Sheldon is being yelled at for buying the ham. His parents don’t know what to do with him, or the meat. His father tries poking it and chopping it to look grainy, holds it up, shrugs and walks off a failure.

From the stairs WE SEE ten year old Sol, watching. Sheldon, in tears, looks and sees him.

PRESENT: Sheldon is standing with both hands on the desk.

SHELDON
You knew I was thinking right, but didn’t speak up.

SOL
I did after a few days. I said that after the swiss cheese, sauerkraut and Russian dressing no one could tell which meat it was.

Raoul circles back, checking the desk top and legs.

SHELDON
Still keeping all things Kosher.

SOL
Fine. More. Let’s clear the air.

SHELDON
I don’t have to even the score. I’m healed. I party with ham every New Years eve, guilt free. Come try some. Hey, we’ll celebrate the ground breaking.
Raoul stops at a corner. He touches it.

**SHELDON**
Everyone, you’re invited to my Island on December 31st.

**RAOUL**
You have an island?

**SHELDON**
I’m not bragging. You can see it from here. Trousdale Haven.

**MILTON**
Ringo has an island. But that’s because he’s a Beatle.

**SHELDON**
They’ll be women. What special form of female is attractive to you?

The boys are caught off guard, can’t believe their ears. No one wants to speak first. Billy mans up.

**BILLY**
Tall, lean, about 50. With the body of a 45 year old. Ex-Dallas cheerleader?

**RAOUL**
Who owns a car with a large back seat. Lincoln or Oldsmobile.

**MILTON**
Umm, and, blind.

**BILLY**
With no teeth. Or, with dentures that can be removed.

**RAOUL**
Was playmate-of-the-month. Or, currently.

**MILTON**
Flexible?

**BILLY**
Mute is good.
RAOUL
For you. I like sounds.

MILTON
Oh we’re not sharing? These are our own individual--

RAOUL
Yodelling.

MILTON
Then can you make mine who can do break dancing, with all of the above.

SOL
Boys. The sirens, the rocks, remember Odysseus.

They snap out of it and resume hating Sheldon. Raoul quietly assumes his attack stance.

SOL
Goodbye Sheldon.

Sol leads the exit. Raoul let’s out his “Kahlieeeeee” and smacks the corner of the desk! Then goes.

Sheldon walks to the spot and looks, confused.

INT. HALLWAY.

The elevator doors open and the men enter. As the door closes WE HEAR the table splinter, crack, implode!

INT. ELEVATOR.

SOL
The horizon is coming to view.
Fixes on fixes.

BILLY
Foobar. We’ve a clear fix on where this goes.

MILTON
The lobby.
RAOUL
We don’t run he runs.

SOL
We’ll tackle this code stuff and we’ll get him to see. He’ll come around.

MILTON
What Billy is hinting is we make existence better while he cares nothing of global warming. I’d like to see how he does standing on a melting ice cap.

The doors open and SIX PEOPLE enter. The doors close.

RAOUL
Say we did eliminate him, violently.

SOL
Cherish the... I mean perish the thought. But if so, were back to the bank who wants the work done.

RAOUL

BILLY
The Red Brigade did a thing called ‘knee capping’. At first I thought it was a dance but it’s actually the very opposite.

People, listening, begin hitting buttons for floors.

MILTON
The problem is you leave him able to talk. There is a new, powerful steroid that jump starts Alzheimer's disease.

BILLY
You can’t write prescriptions. I can get a bucket of Agent Orange.

RAOUL
Trample him with a horse. Nobody’s right after that.
BILLY
There again, the horse needs to be trained to sever vocal cords. It would have to cripple his hands so he can’t point.

MILTON
You forgot his feet, he can point with those.

RAOUL
Not if he’s bleeding out.

The doors open and five people push/scramble out. An ELDER WOMAN remains.

ELDER WOMAN
Electrocution. That’s how I did Walter. A big jolt to both ears cauterized the wounds.

The boys nod in approval. Sol is stressing.

SOL
He puts his pants on one leg at a time.

RAOUL
How else?

BILLY
Velcro, closing up along the seams.

MILTON
Permanently sewed on?

ELDER WOMAN
Dear boys. It has to do with being above others. Magically descending into your trousers feet first. Is he a god?

SOL
In own his mind. It might be on us to free him from himself. A pinch of genuine friendly reminding.
EXT. STARLIGHT PARK - BRONX - DAY

Grass, foot trails, a creek flows through it. Sonia and Sol stroll along. She laces her hand into his. He stiffens.

SONIA
Is that being too forward? Here, let’s just sit.

She steers him to a bench. He sits. She climbs onto his lap. He rocks back and braces himself.

SONIA
Sol? Best we go all out to break the ice. The sun could set any minute.

SOL
I’ve... I’ve held back for-

SONIA
Honorable reasons? Okay. Works for a while. But now it’s unreasonably long. Let’s break it down from the most base place. Our animal crux. Our feelings.

She puts her arms around his neck and slowly leans in. He looks like just before the proctologist begins. Her face caresses his cheek, her voice purring.

SONIA
How is this feeling so far? I find it thrilling. Don’t you want your body to be thrilled? Is celibacy fun? Priests become warped psychos denying their bodies. Now don’t come unglued at what I say next. I’m going to speak for Estelle. She loved you. You love her. But she would want you to move on. Onward and upward. Just as you, a man of heart, would want that for her, things being switched. The forever-chaste mourner makes her look bad. She’d say “Suffer your urges for a front place in Heavens food court line when you get here.”

She adjusts her tush, squinshing deeper into his crotch.
SONIA

Holding to a higher calling, the order of the sin free, gets you missing things right in front of you. It gets you membership in a cult while the real world has other plans. Being too devout can devour you. Pious schmyous, instead fuck your brains out.

Sol goes bugged. She moves her lips closer to his.

SONIA

A part of us swirls with ideals. Roughly four percent. That’s the ‘one mate, one love’ vow. Meanwhile the here-and-now poon hound is hunting. Yes, it’s a different love. It lives to fuel life’s passion. It understands its limits, like in five minutes this now will be the past. Lost. There are precious few of these five minutes. The now love lives to ground us to our core bliss. It frees the poon hound in us all.

Her tongue enters his mouth. He closes his eyes, and his arms close around her.

INT. GYM - STAIRS - DAY

Walking up are female feet in stilettos, connected to perfectly slim model-made legs, stopping at a mini-suit covering a flawless posterior that connects to a train wreck, ice berg woman. MONA LAMOTT, the building inspector.

INT. MAIN ROOM

Classes are in progress. Some students are doing repairs - the ring floor, ceiling panels.

She enters and stops.

Everyone stops.

She approaches Sol and holds out her card. He reaches for it not looking and drops it. Raoul and Billy scramble to pick it up. Milton develops eye ticks.
I’m Mona. Ready?

She begins a circumference walk-through, talking her notes into her phone, occasionally addressing Sol.

Pipes to go copper. Check fittings for hydro seals. Is your voltage 220?

Sol doesn’t know but winds up like he does.

I’ll check.

She stops at the electrical box and lifts the cover. She disdains at discovering old style fuses.

Nope. From here to the city juncture, rewire for 220. You getting this?

Raoul is. He has a photogenic memory.

The group continues.

What’s behind the drywall?

Brick. More brick.

Interior shell for non-asbestos insulation.

Got that, Raoul?

Retrofit the I beam with U joints. Place fire extinguishers in the front and rear. Central heating?
SOL
Forced air space heaters.

MONA
Temperature control unit. Install vents and air ducts. Water pressure?

Sol opens the door to the change rooms and runs the faucet. It spurts and belches up to speed, a teeny stream.

She leads out.

MONA
Snake and flush main line to the city saddle. When was your last termite fumigation?

Sol thinks.

Mona reaches the office.

MONA
I have the authority to red tag this building. Can you make these upgrades in a week?

SOL
Eeeeyup. Is a red tag good?

MONA
Mr. Goldstein. If this is unrealistic then save the city the effort of checking back.

SOL
We have money coming in. What we can’t do ourselves we’ll hire out.

MONA
You’ll need a licensed contractor.

BILLY
I have a drivers license from ’85.

RAOUL
I had a warrant, for my arrest.
SOL
Ha! We have cross over skills.
Raoul with automobiles, Billy in deforestation.

MILTON
I had a medical license.

MONA
In what?

MILTON
Gynecology.


The boys follow this back-and-forth.

MONA
I will return in two days to weigh your progress. And examine, areas.

She exits.

SOL
Yes ma'am! (to Milton) Is that how it starts? They fall at your feet?

MILTON
I’m usually standing at their feet.

RAOUL
You quit that to teach?

BILLY
Which always rang dense. How about you fall in check your six.

MILTON
I have a touch. Things would get out of hand, while in hand. The excitement would bring on my condition. My staff got concerned. The husbands insisted on being in the room. I was named as grounds for divorce. Malpractice lawsuits. I had to quit.
RAOUL
Burrow chingao.

BILLY
If I ever had any doubts about you... we’re square.

Sol is spinning his own.

SOL
This list. It’s impossible.

RAOUL
Requires a full crew, sixteen hour days.

MILTON
We would have to augment the new business. Can we get a corporate sponsor?

SOL
We can expand one of the venues. Music. Singing. Our theater talent.

BILLY
Who has theater talent?

SOL
Teaching is performing. You’re irresistible.

RAOUL
I want my own cable series.

SOL
You got it.

MILTON
Um. In junior high I knew no fear. Please don’t put me in front of people now.

SOL
Baby steps. We’ll dive in and see. There’s nothing on the books today. Let’s huddle after class.

The boys disperse.
SOL
Milton? The reality of performing for an audience is probably not in the celestial charts. Breathe easy. However. There may be something for which, on a whim, in conjunction, you could do that is a form of performance. Know that first and foremost, here at the gym, the idea of your doctor skills have always been for emergency purposes. And were the situation to arise to call on them... an emergency suddenly presenting itself in say a unique way, that could help rescue our financial predicament which currently is lacking blood flow, threatening asphyxiation, and requires relieving, or, a Pap smear, can we ask your help?

EXT. USED TRUCK LOT - DAY

The three boys are escorted by a SALESMAN. He stops to present a pickup sport truck.

BILLY
No. Bigger. And enclosed.

They walk on.

SALESMAN
Got family? Right over here I have a nice Econoline. Plenty of windows for sunlight. Seats eight.

MILTON
No seats please. And no windows, also.

SALESMAN
Panels. Ah, for hauling.

RAOUL
Yeah. Equipment.

The boys trade looks.

SALESMAN
Gotcha. What kind of load is it?
MILTON
Oh we’re pretty sure it will be hefty. Gosh I’d love to tell you more but it’s our first time doing this. I can safely speak for all that we’re stepping into the unknown.

The Salesman gets a little weirded. Billy moves to divert.

BILLY
Milton. At ease. We’re not driving into battle.

SALESMAN
Would you like the walls with tie hooks inside or just bare.

BILLY
Bare is fine.

The Salesman stops at a grey nondescript paneled van. Billy opens the rear and inspects inside. Raoul pops the hood and studies the engine.

RAOUL
Where’s Sol?

BILLY
He took a call to be a Reenactor. Says he could use it to loosen his voice. Said to meet him at 6:00 pm for our music lesson.

MILTON
I don’t understand his thinking. We can’t sing or dance. Why torment us?

RAOUL
Not excited? Wanna return to measly jobs? Sol’s brother is right. The gym can’t swing a come-back alone. Think big.

MILTON
Big like more than ten people? Broadway? The White House?
RAOUL
Hello world! The taste for pain is back.

EXT. VIRGINIA FIELD - DAY

Sol is dressed as a Union soldier. He marches alongside others, towards the Confederates.

As the ranks converge the soldiers do mock battle with rubber bayonets, firing blanks.

Sol lowers his rifle, takes a karate stance and unloads a Pavarotti High C! Hats blow off, uniforms pop open, men scatter.

Sol sustains the note, turning and spraying the area like Godzilla clearing a swathe.

INT. GYM - EVENING

The Elder Man on two canes from Caged Heat is teaching. He’s transformed, a theater director - fedora, scarf, turtle neck, trench coat. He punches on the boom box - a techno dance version of HAPPY BIRTHDAY. He beats time with his canes.

ELDER MAN
Five, six, seven, eight...

Our boys are dressed in tights, leg warmers and tank tops.

Milton and Billy are hating it, sloughing. Raoul and Sol are working the routine.

ELDER MAN
Step, spin, backpedal dip. Stop.

He turns off the music. He hobbles forward. He uses his canes, whacking the men on their legs and arms.

ELDER MAN
Feet pointed forward. Knee, higher. Elbows up. Fingers extended. Arch your back, Billy. Oh, and it would help if you tried to doing this. Milton, give over to the flow or I’ll keep you here all night. Five, six, seven, eight...
He punches on the boom box.

INT. STOCK BROKER OFFICES - DAY

The techno beat begins. The four bop past cubicles in their white gis, towing balloons. Sol eyes a piece of paper in his hand, the boom box in the other. A crowd of people follow.

They land on a shocked MARY CRUZ as the lyrics would start.

BOYS
Happy Birthday, Mary Cruz. Happy Birthday, Mary Cruz. Happy Birthday from Martial Arts, Inc. Mary Cruz. Happy Birthday, Mary Cruz.

The boys spread out, then launch into a pastiche of dances flowing one to the other – square dance to the can can to a Charleston to the hula.

They move rough and funky. People are laughing and clapping because they’re not great. Raoul punches at the balloons, popping a few. Billy and Milton are having fun.

INT. BUILDERS EMPORIUM - DAY


SOL
It was something like sex, admit it. Awkward the first time. But even when bad it’s still good.

MILTON
Will we ever get better? Some men never catch on.

BILLY
I’m converted. Next assault.

SOL
It’s on the web site.

RAOUL
Call Hollywood.
MILTON
You have a tempting idea. Hollywood might want us and not know it.

Raoul takes a chain saw, puts it on the cart. Milton sees a nail gun and takes it. Billy grabs ammo, cartridge belts of 20,000 nails.

SOL
On it. Cause if the sky won’t rain rhubarb we can fall back on being discovered. Hollywood could start by calling Sheldon direct to say ‘save the gym’.

RAOUL
Or else.

BILLY
Affirmative. Men break when they see the light. Of a blowtorch.

MILTON
Everyone has a soul. It’s the light within. It requires charging, and other metaphors. His is temporarily unplugged.

Billy loads a battery and jumper cables. He smiles to Milton.

The loading climaxes: a hand ax, crow bar, caulking gun, gloves, trash bags, rope, a tree scythe, shovel, plastic sheeting, hard hats, yellow vests.

Sol eyes it all, wistful.

INT. GYM - MORNING

Classes are on hold for upgrading. Student geriatrics wear work belts - hammers, pliers, measuring tape. The other OLD MAN from Caged Heat, in his walker, a retired contractor, is directing work - walls exposed, wires pulled, pipes being replaced, retrofit braces being bolted to old beams.

Mona enters and stops. All the work stops. She looks for Milton - sees him - glides over, making no pretense to inspect.
They meet - more long looks. Then Milton leads her to the ladies change room. She enters. Milton waits, trying to act invisible, then backs in, closing the door behind.

Sol blinks hopeful. Raoul and Billy are jealous. So is everyone else.


    MONA
    That’s it.
    MILTON
    Ditwad.
    MONA
    Yes!
    MILTON
    Asshair!
    MONA
    Harder!
    MILTON
    Scuzball!
    MONA
    Faster!
    MILTON
    Scuzscuzscuzscuzscuz!
    MONA
    Yes!
    MILTON
    FUCK!
    MONA
    YES!
    MILTON
    FUCKFACE!
    MONA
    HIT IT!
    MILTON
    FUCK-A-DUCK!

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EXT. SHELDON’S BUILDING – SIDEWALK – DAY

Throngs of passersby. Sheldon and his thugs emerge out the front, walk to the limo.

Two workmen appear carrying a crowd control barricade. They’re in yellow vests, hard-hats and false moustaches. They step amongst the group, dissecting them. Sheldon gets separated.

The thugs try to re-connect. The workmen (Billy & Milton) shuttle left, then right, circling, blocking. This, while herding Sheldon to the sidewalk.

The grey paneled van roars up – doors open – hands reach out with a pillowcase and cover Sheldon’s head, yank him inside.

Billy & Milton tip the barrier onto the thugs. They catch it falling backwards.

Billy & Milton climb in the van. It speeds away.

INT. VAN

Sol drives. Billy sits on top of Sheldon. Raoul and Milton tie his hands and feet.

SHELDON
Please. Please don’t hurt me. I can pay. What do you want?

BILLY
Grrraaaahhhhh!

SHELDON
You want grah? Okay. What is that?

BILLY
GRRRAAAHHHHH!
SHELDO
Alright I’m sure I can find some!

INT. AUTO CHOP-SHOP - DAY

A grungy work site strewn with car seats, engines, mufflers. The doors burst open. Sheldon is lead through, spread eagle against a wall, tied to four hooks.

Center is the pile of hardware from Builders Emporium.

The boys don market bags from Stop-N-Shop with holes at the eyes and mouth.

Sheldon’s hood is removed. He squints to get focus. Then recognizes everyone.

SHELDON
Oh Christ. Jesus H. fucking Christ!

SOL
(German accent)
Ja wohl. Und he cannot help youz now, dummkopf.

SHELDON
Huh? Please tell me you’re kidding. Guys, you can get into actual life trouble for this.

MILTON
(Virginia drawl)
If you would please start saying your prayers, bubba.

RAOUL
(Irish accent)
Aye laddie. We got you, pussy.

SHELDON
I see you. I see who you are. For the love of Mike. Sol?

The four look at each other and shrug ‘huh?, wha?’.

BILLY
(French accent)
Who is Sol? We know no Sol person, you mound of rotten foie gras.
SHELDON
Very nice Billy. Doctor, I’m impressed, that’s stepping out. You too Raoul. Now take me back.

Sol nods to Milton. He spreads the plastic sheeting at Sheldon’s feet. Sheldon watches unfazed.

Billy wheels up the battery and cables. He connects one clamp to a post, then brushes the other end, sparking it. Sheldon registers concern.

SHELDON
Before you have an accident, where is this going? Getting me off the gym, right?

Raoul shoves a tongue depressor into Sheldon’s mouth and holds his head. Billy raises the clamp, poising to strike, then spears it into the wall past Sheldon’s ear! The brick crumbles and smokes. Sheldon is bugged!

Milton produces two hand drills with oversized bits. He fires them to full speed and aims at Sheldon’s crotch, chewing the wall beneath his groin.

Sheldon squeals. He spits out the tongue depressor!

SHELDON
That’s too damn close! This game is-

SOL
Getting dangerous mein helsing?

RAOUL
Blimey, accidents happen.

BILLY
Testicles a wee bit braised? Bon appetit.

Raoul has the nail gun and fires along Sheldon’s clothing, flattening him to the wall. Then holds the gun to Sheldon’s earlobe and pulls the trigger CLICK.

SHELDON
TALK! Let’s talk. You’re supposed to talk before the torture.
Milton stuffs a rag in his mouth and lights it. Sheldon freaks, shakes frantically, finally spits it out. Billy raises up the Jaws-Of-Life.

SHELDON

What!?

Billy moves along Sheldon’s right arm, stops. Sheldon can’t look. CRUNCH!

REVEAL Milton holding a butchers shank bone.

Sol lifts the Jackhammer, holds it inches to Sheldon’s chest.

Billy pull-starts the chain saw, comes forward, slashing the air like a sword.

Raoul ignites a blowtorch, lowers his mask and approaches.

SOL

Nein. Vie can’t hold much longer.
Your brother sends a message.
Achtung!

Milton produces the scythe. It’s unwieldy. He swings it, losing control, slicing up the work bench, car-seat, hoist chains, air hoses, oil pans.

The three back up, worried for their safety.

Milton lets it go. The blade impales around Sheldon’s neck!

SHELDON

Sol. Alright. What’s the message?

SOL

(now Swedish)
Who Sol? You keep with that name?
He says that you and he are what matters, da. And he vants you to have the gym. Please to keep it, preserved, like he and you would then be. Oookay.

SHELDON

Tell him that using a chain saw makes for a different message. Tell him I’d like my arms back.
SOL
Ya sure. He adds to say that the past should be bye bye. Und if you thought that mom and dad liked him best, he says his world revolved around you in the early on. He say ‘Wow, how about that?’

SHELDON
Can I be un-nailed, please?

SOL
He says they gave him the gym because he liked going there. So to therefore keep heritage.

SHELDON
Pass on to Sol that I, being the older brother, is what should have mattered. Heritage and property are different things.

SOL
Not to them. He said to say that. Not to them. But he wants to re-name the gym Sheldon’s Gym! You like?

SHELDON
It has possibilities.

SOL
And... is it over about Estelle?

SHELDON
Don’t.

SOL
(accent fading)
He wants to say, he did not ever approach her nor initiate the intention she would-

SHELDON
Fall for the uniform? The singing? Or that you couldn’t help flaunt them?

FLASHBACK:
Sol is in the ring, teaching a class.
Sheldon enters the gym with ESTELLE, to show her the family biz.

He introduces her to Sol. She locks eyes, attracted. Sheldon starts walking her around. She steals peeks back to Sol.

Sol’s hormones turn on. He instructs a little grander than before. He decides to show how he can disarm by singing and blasts away his vibrato, hurricane force knocking equipment over.

Estelle is wowed.

PRESENT:

SOL
(no accent)
I was uncool, Shel. But I swear it was her to me.

SHELDON
I said I’m done harping the bad stuff. And with you about out of time you’ll have to start on me fresh. Try, during the construction.

Sol is played. And fears this could be their end.

Raoul steps up holding four axes.

SHELDON
Let’s be done. No sense going back to prison. Anybody?

Billy leans over to Raoul.

BILLY
Have you done this?

RAOUL
Not on a live target. Or any.

BILLY
Okay.

Raoul throws the first one – it goes high, shattering the sky light. Debris showers Sheldon. His lips begin quivering.

SHELDON
SOL! You don’t want my blood.
SOL
Not in the river sense, that you go kayaking on.

Raoul to throw, but lets it go on the windup. They turn ’round to see, HEAR multiple crashing and breakage.

SHELDON
We’re talking about human life.

SOL
Please. This is a learning curve.
He’ll get it.

Raoul takes great aim. He throws and it lands below Sheldon’s armpit.

SHELDON
DOG DICK! You made your point!

Raoul’s confidence grows. Now the others get worried.

RAOUL
One more. Milton. Did you bring stuff?

MILTON
To sew him up? Yes.

RAOUL
Sheldon. Any skin tags to remove?

BILLY
A manicure?

MILTON
Is he circumcised?

BILLY
Are you circumcised?

SHELDON
STOP!

RAOUL
Look ma! I’m a mohel!

Raoul lets it fly whoosh whoosh whoosh SLAM!
The boys pull off their bags to peer. Sheldon passes out.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. SHELDON’S BUILDING – SIDEWALK – DAY

Sheldon is sprawled out unconscious on a car backseat that’s been placed at the curb. A sign on his chest reads ‘I am a CEO’. The ax is lodged in his belt buckle, handle upright like an erection.

EXT. GYM ROOF – EVENING

Sol stands below the sign looking out over the edge, over the block and out to sea.

WE HEAR drills and a power saw and hammering going on below. The power saw stops.

SOL
You feeling it Sheldon? This getting real feeling. We’re stepping into something, and who wants that? I could show you this place, it could be a fun zone. I believe. Or sheesh, is my head up my touchess? I need a sign.

He looks up at his.

Billy appears at the fire escape.

BILLY
The saw crapped out. We need something to break two-by-fours into one foot block supports.

SOL
I’ll rummage below.

INT. GYM

Sol steps in off the fire escape.

Mona enters and crosses to the ladies change room.
All work suspends.

Milton stops what he’s doing. He tries being invisible, meandering nonchalantly over to the door, then pauses. It opens, she grabs him and yanks him in.

Sol heads for downstairs.

Work starts up as ecstasy sounds begin.

INT. GROUND FLOOR.

Sol rummages pile to pile. At the far corner of weaponry gear he unearths a forearm iron shield. It’s gnarly, studded.

He puts it on - it’s heavy. He finds a wooden saw horse and readies to deliver a karate chop.

BAM - it snaps in half!

Sol is amazed. And, starts unfolding a thought.

INT. OFFICE DEPOT - DAY

Sol is at a computer typing slowly, scared of messing up.

The ad for Martial Arts, Inc. is on the screen. He’s adding new jobs:

MARTIAL ARTS, INC.

GET IT DONE THE KARATE WAY!

Hands-on. Green friendly. At half the price.

WE PROVIDE:

Auto Body Repair

Songs That Disarm

Enrichment Of The Inner Chutzpah

Glockenspiel Pain Techniques

Competitive Fight Training For Over 65

Impact Drills To Toughen Your Limbs
Civil War Reenactors
Musical Theater Productions
House Demolition

INT. SHELDON’S OFFICE – MORNING

Sheldon enters with his thugs at his heels.

SHELDON
I’m fine. You’re too late to hover. See anyone? Some good you three against seventy year old GEEZERS!

He rounds his desk. The phone intercom buzzes. He answers.

SHELDON
Yes?

ASSISTANT (O.S.)
Package for your signature.

SHELDON
Okay.

A BOY from the delivery service appears at the door.

The thugs turn and pounce on him, slamming him to the carpet.

Sheldon comes around, takes the manila envelope, signs for it. The thugs let him up and go.

Sheldon smiles, relaxes. The return address reads: Offices of Lou Trotsky, Chief Property Controller.

He takes it to his desk. Opens it.

It’s a legal declaration with the city seal: Property Inspection. Mona Lamott, Examiner. 701 Jerome Avenue. PASS.

Sheldon sees red and explodes.

SHELDON
NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!!!

He slams the desk (at the spot that Raoul hit). It splinters, cracks, implodes. The phone starts ringing, continues...
EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - EMPTY HOUSE - DAY

It’s an old Tudor style amongst newly built cape coders. A sign on the lawn says SOLD.

OS the ringing phone picks up.

SOL (O.S.)
Martial Arts, Inc., Sol Goldstein.
(pause) Nice to meet you. (pause) A reality show? Well I’m a survivor. So far. How can we help? (pause) Yes? (pause) You will? You would? (pause) Deal!

Parked nearby is a debris removal truck. The DRIVER stands waiting, dubious.

Behind the truck is a newly waxed Town Car. A 20 something JUNIOR EXECUTIVE stands watching. He waves to the boys.

They’re lined up across the street facing the house. They wear matching overalls emblazoned: Martial Arts, Inc.

They begin putting on goggles, helmets, steel toed boots, wrist guards, shin guards, the forearm iron shields, brass knuckles and the Samurai chest armor.

Sol steps out to face everyone.

SOL
If it feels good do it. This will feel good. But can we do it? I’ll learn you to know that we can breed forgiveness and compassion for the evil in mens hearts, but not now. Later. At hand is a malignancy. This house is sick and we are the chemotherapy!

The boys don’t understand. Sol must explain.

SOL
Man’s myopic quest for short term gratification spreads blight like a canc-

BILLY
Sol.
SOL
Behind me is the ticket. Sheldon, who I still believe in, and will, I know, come to feel our love, as soon as he calms down, can’t be counted on.

RAOUL
Trusted.

SOL
Or that. We have one day left. And on cue the heavens parted. The job of last resort. If we succeed, this company will pay us to do more. Better, they want to advance us money. The 50K is paid and then some.

The boys shake it out, loosen their limbs, stomp feet.

SOL
Hallelujah.

Sol turns to face the house.

SOL
Kahlieeeeee!

ALL
Kahlieeeeee! Kahlieeeeee! Kahlieeeeee!

Sol leads the charge, more like a run/walk across the street.

A path is parted for Billy. He careens into the front door, dislodging it. The others kick and bash it aside and rush in.

INT. HOUSE

Milton and Sol attack the dry walls, busting them out. Raoul and Billy go to work on the studs, kicking pounding punching and ripping.

Sol and Billy team up to body slam an I beam.

Milton picks up a 2x4 and hacks at the staircase. The supports shift and crack.
Raoul props a door jam into the chandelier, then battering rams into a bearing wall.

Baseboards, crown moulding, newel posts are being splintered.

The staircase begins to crumble. The boys stop to watch it fall SPLAT!

The house begins to creak and moan. The boys hurry outside.

EXT. HOUSE

They reach the sidewalk and turn.

The structure lists, the roof caves in, the 2nd story bedrooms collapse, then the walls FOLD IN - BAM BAM BAM BAM!

The boys cheer!

EXT. JEROME AVENUE - DAY

Blue sky. A wrecking ball swooshes past.

It picks up speed, faster, closer,

Swinging into the Gym BOOM! The office and main room are bombed! The ball retracts, then drops, demolishing the ground floor.

EXT. CURB

All of the gym contents are stacked up.

Policemen stand in front of yellow tape, cordoning off the crowd from the crane and dump trucks.

The neighborhood - the elders, students, store owners stand mortified.

Sheldon with his thugs stand watching. He’s all business.


Sol steps through the crowd. Finds himself next to Sheldon. The boys follow up and stand next to the thugs. Sol watches the bulldozer and wrecking ball turn the gym to rubble.
SHELDON
Hi Sol. Good news. You passed inspection. Problem is your new business, Martial Arts, Inc., was never registered with the city. No permit to engage in commerce under the fair trade act. No liability insurance covering employees. No Federal I.D. number. Without a state license mounted in plain view as mandated by law, you were violating other codes. For instance, the gym isn’t zoned for habitat, ergo the bed and kitchen appliances.

Sol remains quiet, absorbing the empty space in place of his life.

SHELDON
As for your business, you best cover yourself. Deposits over $10,000 automatically flag the IRS. See, I couldn’t receive non-taxied income anyway. You wouldn’t want me complicit in a fraudulent criminal act?

SOL
No. Of course.

SHELDON
Exactly. It’s why we cover our asses.

BILLY
I’m gonna cover yours. In a move called ‘the gluteus elactus’. Afterwards you walk like a cowboy.

MILTON
And will be forced to carry a hemorrhoid doughnut.

RAOUL
And will leak.

The thugs don’t like that talk. The boys face them.

MILTON
What do you see Raoul?
RAOUL
Three fools.

MILTON
Uh-huh. And why is that?

RAOUL
They have something to lose.

BILLY
Roger that. They’ve got us by 30 years and 20 pounds, thinking we don’t exist.

MILTON
That is rightly so. For how often do they encounter people so hopelessly wretched in the futile miasma of life’s hollow promise, where no amount of skin or ears or eyes matter?

BILLY
Rome would send eunuchs in the first wave against the Phoenicians. Those guys fought balls out. Literally.

MILTON
That would have the effect of freaking the Phoenicians.

RAOUL
Never mess with the jewels.

MILTON
It’s nauseating. That’s what you’ll become. Forever vomiting.

RAOUL
Vomit people.

BILLY
You won’t be able to face your children for fear of barfing on them. If you have children. Vomit people are closet eunuchs.

RAOUL
Regurgitating non-penis people.
MILTON
When the big chunks puke, like the carrots or steak, they put you in rooms by yourself. The medical term is 'Projectious Vomipitous'.

RAOUL
Spew you right.

BILLY
Hurling in a fox hole is an art. You quickly shut your mouth when the feeling comes. Otherwise the ricochet hits your buddy. If he swallows it, there starts auto-reflex-vomiting, man to man down the line.

RAOUL
Dry heaves.

MILTON
'Deplecioso Eruptorso'. All bile.

The thugs swallow, queasy.

Mona and Sonia arrive. Disappointment in the air. Sonia watches Sol closely.

SOL
Always the safe bet, Shel. Enterprising at no risk. I should talk. Here you were with a chance to star in your own legacy and you fold.

SHELDON

He leads off. The thugs stumble into following.

Trucks start hauling off the ruins.

The crowd closes in on the boys.

MRS. GARDELLA
Sol. I’m putting you up. No arguments. As long as you need.
DON
We’ll keep watch of the stuff. Take shifts.

MR. LANIER
My brother runs Jiffy Self Storage. We’ll start moving it tomorrow.

HERB
What about you three? Need a cot?

MILTON
We’ve been shacking with family. But with the biz taking off we got thinking about our own places.

He eyes Mona. They’re very ready.

MR. GUSTINE
What about that? While you clear all this paper jazz you’ll need a place. I’ve got a back room you can borrow. Computer. No phone.

LLOYD
There’s a phone booth on my corner. I’ll guard it while you use it.

Sol winces up a humble smile, but looks thoroughly doomed, crushed. He scans the area. Then sees it – the half covered toy chest. He caves further.

SOL
Thank you. Martial Arts, Inc. will ride again, probably. And the classes – it’ll sort out. Ha, really, the gym was old wasn’t it? It smelled. I wanted it preserved extra dill, when to make a fresh start means fresh eggs. New omelettes. Egg frittatas. Eggs Benedict Arnold. (to Sonia) Deli style.

Sonia steps close to him.

The three boys retreat. They share looks that say they’re not ready to fold. Almost betrayed.

Sol and Sonia walk away.
INT. SAGE SAYER - SEANCE ROOM - EVENING

Sonia has her hands on Sol’s, both on the crystal ball.

SONIA
By bombing the joint he stirs the biggest fear.

SOL
All the family ties, rolled into one.

SONIA
Separation anxiety. You’ve been insulated by those four walls.

SOL
I hadn’t missed him till he showed up to screw me.

SONIA
My 7:00 pm canceled.

Sol makes the motion of the mouth that brings saliva forward.

SONIA
On this subject, do you need more enlightening? We can be married, just as soon as you kick the habit.

SOL
What--

SONIA
Dependency on someone else’s tomorrow. News flash - the gym is dead. It was when it was standing. You held out for your parents’ rite of passage. theirs, not yours.

SOL
Addicted to a love that comes from memories. Why can’t both exist? Buildings have souls and get historical preservation status and charge tickets.

SONIA
One can feel romantic up to when the black mold gets you hospitalized.
Sonia reacts to the ball, squints at it.

SONIA

SOL
Well yes. That got kicked around.

SONIA
Oops, faded. (looks up) People fade. You have to pick what you want to pine for. Did you know that Earth remakes itself anew every 700,000 years? I looked it up. The core is like a convection oven, spinning magnetic fields. North pole becomes the South pole. The plates move. We’re highly elastic.

SOL
He says I should try eating pork.

SONIA
Know why? Because it tastes good. The old ones would say “You can take the man out of the deli, but you can’t take the deli out of his shorts.”

SOL
Who old ones? Tribal persons? Did they have refrigeration then?

SONIA
It means your heart and soul... warmed by memories, are always in you. That doesn’t change. Your direction changes. Choices expand, soften, harden. You’ll start new traditions. But the you of you is the deli in your shorts, forever.

Sol is sort of getting this. He shifts his rump in the chair. Starts shedding the beaten-down funk, righting himself.

SOL
Have to say, the business with Sheldon isn’t entirely over.

(MORE)
Heck he’s invited us over for New Years. Us, as in I’m sure he won’t mind everyone. We can thank him for this new chapter as we start forging new bygone days. I just realized I’ve nothing to wear for the party. I don’t have time to kick back, and get by. (he stands) I’m push... come to shove.

INT. RECEPTION ROOM

Billy, Raoul and Milton pull their ears back from the curtain and grin, excited.

MONTAGE BEGINS:

INT. TAILOR SHOP – DAY

Sol in front of three mirrors in a new sport coat. It’s conservative. The TAILOR is fussy but feels proud this is a winner.

Sonia is there. She approaches with a tie and starts putting it on Sol. It’s tie dye design, loud and colorful.

The tailor blinks disdainfully. He removes the coat, turns and exits for another.

INT. SMOKE SHOP

Herb is stowing something into a guitar case. It’s a long contraption with what looks like a tank attached.

INT. BUTCHER SHOP

Lloyd is packing endless strings of link sausages into a saxophone carrier. He snaps it shut.

INT. TAILOR SHOP

Billy is being fitted. A nice blue blazer. The tailor is pleased. Billy begins to move and stretch and tries a karate move. The back rips, splitting in half.

The tailor turns around and exits.
EXT. BACKYARD

The Martial Arts, Inc.ers are karate chopping a sea of neglected vines in an overgrown yard. Without implements, their hands and feet make matters worse. They're soon entangled, coiled, wrapped up and trapped.

Raoul frees one hand. From inside his gi he pulls a switchblade. POP. He begins slashing to freedom.

INT. PAINT STORE

Mr. Lanier loads a paintball rifle into a trombone case.

INT. SHOE STORE

Mr. Gustine stuffs a bags pipe bag with riding boots, ski boots, ice skates, snowshoes.

INT. TAILOR SHOP

Milton stands before the mirrors arms spread, unhappy. The tailor is measuring his chest. Milton is not used to such contact. He looks to Mona for help.

She shoots him a dripping sultry lip pursing tranquil look of love.

Milton calms. The tailor tries to lower Milton’s arms. He refuses. There’s a minor struggle. Milton turns a rough gaze on the tailor. He shies away, turns around and exits.

EXT. BACKYARD

Our four stand fully suited for a demo job, like the house.

It is a dog house. Elaborate - two stories, faux chimney and poop deck.

They attack - Kahlieeeee!

INT. BARBER SHOP

Don carefully swaddles his barber pole in bubble wrap. Then puts it inside a conga drum.
INT. BAKER

Mrs. Gardella snaps shut a bass violin case. Two wood handles protrude from the top.

INT. TAILOR SHOP

Raoul in a tee shirt, pointing out his tatoos to cover. The tailor nods, thinks. Exits.

Raoul begins bopping to imaginary music in his head.

The tailor returns. He holds up a mod, Nehru styled, mauve colored vinyl jacket.

Raoul bops even happier. So does the tailor.

INT. CABLE ACCESS TELEVISION STATION

A cheesy one-camera, bad lighting, no curtain monotone stage.

The boys stand in their party clothes - Sol in a seersucker coat, Billy in tartan plaid, Milton in a blue blazer, Raoul in his mauve leather.

The CAMERAMAN cues the boys.

A title fades up on the monitor: Martial Arts, Inc. Presents THE FOUR BLACK BELTS. The music starts - WHOLE LOT OF LOVE.

Sol sings lead, the boys step forward during the backup.

The song peaks as...

EXT. OCEAN - EASTCHESTER BAY - DAY

CAMERA racing on top of the waves. Sheldon’s Island coming into view.

Sol enters FRAME bouncing on a jet ski. He sits on the toy chest, the boom box between his knees. He’s crazed, berserk with fear, hands on the bars in a white knuckle death grip. The seersucker coat whips violently about. He exits FRAME.

Three rubber zodiacs enter FRAME. Milton, Billy and Raoul are racing too. The bow of their boats are longer, dipping into surface. The blow-back spray is swamping them. The exit FRAME.
A giant catamaran on two pontoons and 30 foot sails speeds past the four. On deck are the six owners, wearing life jackets, strapped to the masts by ropes, holding their bags/cases. They whoop and holler having a blast.

EXT. SHELDON’S ISLAND - DUSK

A sprawling three story mansion a la the Hamptons. It’s festooned in lights and crepe paper streamers. The front overlooks a dock where guests are arriving.

The catamaran sails up and ties off.

INT. MANSION - MAIN HALL

It’s colossal - the space of a single home. Two chandeliers, marble pillars, dual grand staircases, a mini stage where the DJ spins. Waiters buzz with trays of food and drink. The thugs stand stiff, eyeing the sea of people in party hats.

Sheldon strolls through with two women at his sides, chatting the guests.

MANSION - ENTERTAINMENT ROOM

Also vast feeling - high ceilings, shelves of books, sofas, bar, pool table and big screen tv.

French doors lead to the acre of backyard, and the bay. Where Sol comes circling into view. He slows the jet ski, pauses, then heads straight for the house, motors out of the water onto the lawn, roaring up to the windows.

EXT. DOCK

The zodiacs arrive. The three step out and walk towards the mansion in their new soaked-ruined clothing.

MANSION FRONT DOOR

The six owners are stopped by a sweet matron PARTY PLANNER holding the invite list.

PARTY PLANNER
Hello. I don’t recall there being an orchestra, along with our DJ.
MRS. GARDELLA
Son of a bitch he didn’t tell you?
Shel, you dufus. You know how he
gets. He can be such a He’s such a
putz. He called all of us. Why else
are we here?

PARTY PLANNER
Um. I... okay...

MRS. GARDELLA
We’ll set up next to DJ.

They move off with their stuff.

Milton, Billy and Raoul slosh up.

PARTY PLANNER
Hello. May I have your towels...
names?

Sheldon appears with babes in arms.

SHELDON
Hello boys. Did you surf here?

The boys say nothing.

SHELDON
Glad to have you. Here are the
women you selected. Billy, this is
MARGARET. Ex Dallas Cowboy
cheerleader, with false teeth,
removable, and mute. Raoul, meet
DESERIE. Playmate of the month
April ’81. Owns a Buick Roadmaster.
Yodels. Milton. I believe you’re
spoken for. How is Mona? Funny, the
fortune of that chance happening.
Ta-ta.

Sheldon moves off. Raoul and Billy have sex-goofy grins.
Milton elbows them out of it, leads them away.

MILTON
Ladies. We will return.
INT. ENTERTAINMENT ROOM

Sol quietly opens the French doors and enters, dragging the toy chest and boom box. His seersucker coat a shredded rag.

INT. MAIN HALL

The six owners stand behind the DJ. He’s a jolly rock ‘n’ roller bopping to his music. The six bop slightly too. Then, all clear, start unpacking: the boots, paintball rifle, barber pole, sausages, pizza paddles and a flamethrower.

The DJ, bopping, sees the stuff, gets excited, bops quicker.

Milton, Billy and Raoul walk up to Bruno and his mates.

   BILLY
   Where did we leave off?
   
   MILTON
   The subject was dry heaving?
   
   RAOUl
   Eunuchs.
   
   BRUNO
   Back off old guys. Why don’t you mingle? You might get lucky. Unless you get a hernia just thinking about it.

He smirks to the others.

   MILTON
   It’s ‘hernias’. Plural. One is supposed to drop the ‘a’, post participle.

Thug Two winds up to shove Milton. Milton intercepts his wrist, holds it. The turrets stirs.

Billy turns to the DJ platform. Don sees him and nods.

   MILTON
   This right here what I’m holding.
   It’s what’s wrong with mankind.
   Power, ego. Would you like the name of a therapist diaperrashfecalface?

Thug Two turns red. Tries to yank free his hand.
BILLY
It flows from the top, down. You could go with your parents and get them straightened too.

RAOUL
A three-way.

Don lifts the flame thrower and uses a barbecue sparker to light the tip. WHOOSH the initial flame rocks him.

People turn and see.

The DJ plays STREET FIGHTING MAN.

Don steadies himself, then fires at the chandelier SWOOSH!

A thirty foot fire ball fries it.

Pandemonium. People run for their lives!

The thugs are shell shocked.

The sprinklers turn on. The DJ unfolds an umbrella.

Don aims for the second chandelier and fires, SWOOSH!

The thugs un-stun and launch to get Don. Billy, Raoul and Milton stick out their legs. The thugs trip on their faces.

Rioting party guests trample the thugs.

Sheldon, panicked, retreats through the doors of the entertainment room and shuts them.

INT. ENTERTAINMENT ROOM

Sheldon turns around. Sol stands across the room.

SHELDON
Ah. Now we’re making sense. You know you could have come in through the entrance. You’re here to wreck the party, just be up-front about it.

SOL
Those guys... they’re a distraction so I can be with you alone. We’ll pay for the damages.
SHELDON
Blow me. You’re here for revenge.

SOL
Shelly, brother, gene connection...
No. I’m here to set the record straight, then leave. If on the off chance I beat the shit out of you in the process, up front let me add that I’m sorry.

Sol removes his tattered coat. Sheldon removes his.

SHELDON
Finally. Close again. I warn you I have a trainer. I can bench press 20 pounds.

Sol steps clear of the toy chest. Sheldon is awed.

SHELDON
Our toy chest. You saved it.

SOL
You know me. I’m into saving things.

Sol opens the lid. He removes a steel object. A yarmulke.

Sheldon takes pause.

INT. MAIN HALL

The sprinklers are off, the chandeliers are out, smoking, dripping.

The thugs rise sopping wet, looking for blood.

The place is empty save for the DJ. He plays IN THE HALL OF THE MOUNTAIN KING.

From behind a staircase the barber pole rolls across the floor. The thugs watch it, dumbfounded.

Milton steps out from a pillar and fires three quick paintballs.

Direct hits to their faces.
BRUNO
Chicken shits. No guts?

From the other staircase, link sausages come flying overhead. The thugs watch them pass.

Raoul steps from another pillar and let’s windmill two ski boots and two snow shoes.

Their crotches are pummeled. The thugs double over. Sparklers and firecrackers land at their feet. They stand straight.

Billy rushes up with a pizza paddle and whacks all three, Stooges style. The paddle breaks. Billy takes refuge. The thugs stagger.

Reload: Mrs. Gardella hands Billy a new paddle. Mr. Gustine gives Raoul ice skates and riding boots. Mr. Lanier puts ammo into the rifle. Lloyd unzips the other knapsack. Don has his pole, ready. Herb lights the fuse on a bottle rocket.

Full assault. Paintballs, sausages, ice skates and riding boots. Rockets stream across their faces. Paddle hits to their asses. The barber pole rolls through.

The thugs teepee into each other, senseless, out on their feet.

INT. ENTERTAINMENT ROOM

Sol punches the ‘play’ button on the boom box. HE AIN’T HEAVY by The Hollies. Then he flings the yarmulke.

Sheldon ducks. The cap rips through stacks of books, then boomerangs back into Sol’s hand.

SHELDON
You schlemiel!

SOL
You’re a shlub.

Sheldon circles away from Sol. Sol follows. And throws. The big screen tv is ripped, splaying Sheldon in debris. The yarmulke returns.

SHELDON
Schmo!
SOL
Schmegegge!

SHELDON
Schnook.

SOL
Schmendrick!

The yarmulke flies, splitting a sofa. Feathers hit Sheldon.

SHELDON
Shvitzer!

SOL
Shyster!

SHELDON
Shmatte!

Pause.

SOL
You’re calling me a rag? Makes no sense. Shtoop hound!

Pause.

SHELDON
What’s wrong with sex? Schnitzel!

Sol throws. The yarmulke splits the pool table. Balls kick up, batting Sheldon.

SOL
Knave.

SHELDON
Pupik!

SOL
Gonif.

SHELDON
Schvantz, why are you doing this?

Sol stops. Holds the yarmulke.
SOL
To get your attention? It’s fun?
(looks at yarmulke) Gotta find a
use for this in the business.

Then throws it.

Sheldon dives behind the bar. The steel cap saws it like
butter, demolishing on top of Sheldon.

INT. MAIN HALL

The DJ plays POSITIVELY 4TH STREET.

Billy, Raoul and Milton approach the thugs and assume karate
attack stances to finish them off.

BILLY
It’s been so long since I’ve lusted
for blood. I used to love
saturation bombing.

MILTON
It should come back, won’t it? Like
riding a bike. Right Raoul?

Raoul, the most ready to hit, softens.

RAOUL
Never goes. To be used when ripe. I
call these guys well done.

Bruno starts coming to.

Raoul lowers his arms.

RAOUL
Apologize.

Bruno thinks to wind up defiant, then sees.

The owners walk up, surly and badass, loving their weapons
(paddle, sausages, paintballs, flamethrower, knee high fur
lined stiletto boots, barber pole).

BRUNO
Sorry. We apologize.

From the entrance Margaret and Deserie applaud. Billy and
Raoul look over, get excited.
RAOUL/BILLY
Be right back. Five minutes.

The three head for the entertainment room. The owners surround the thugs.

INT. ENTERTAINMENT ROOM

Sheldon is on his back, smothered in wreckage, inching backwards away from Sol.

The Hollies song is halfway through.

The boys appear with a chair. They lift Sheldon into it and strap him down. Sol puts the toy chest in front. He removes a Lionel train – the locomotive, with cabs connected. He sets them aside.

SOL
Some facts to lay out before we part. By the way, this loot is half yours.

Sheldon eyes the trains. Blinks.

SOL
You said you were done harping the bad stuff. The kid nails it again. Why hassle over history that we can’t undo. Why kvetch it if we can’t re-make it? In the words of Billy, forward march!

Sol removes two baseball gloves, weathered tan, ties undone, holes in the webbing.

SOL
It’s for the best, hurt though it might, to go our separate ways.

Sheldon tries looking away from the gloves. Tries to affect being stern. The gloves are too strong. He loves seeing them.

SOL
Hell we don’t need a therapist to see which way the angst blows. Dylan said that. He said mom and dad’s shit hangs on us like liverwurst in the sun.
Sol removes a bag and spills out the jacks. He plays, bouncing the red ball, scooping a handful.

Sheldon looks on possessive.

SOL
And like any eight month old liverwurst been in the display case changing colors, it produces a flatulence that clears a cave of hibernating bears. Don’t get me started about my own, dreams of singing at the Met, only to have the same heritage yoke reign down, running the gym.

Sol removes an Indian feathered hat.

Sheldon’s eyes widen. Memories.

SOL
I’ve been secretly choking on that until your FYI came over me. Something you said about the past. By the way do you like that I just used those letters in the hip way?

Sol removes a slinky. He sends it over the edge of the chest. It lands perfectly.

Sheldon knows that it would.

SOL
FYI the history of shit you think is over and done with? Honk. Check please. You’re not fixing for the future, you’re just spinning the folderol that mom and dad schmelted. You’re fixing the wrong thing – caught in the loop that money supplants love. It’s running your life. A mall won’t be the icing on your cake. Just more cake.

Sol removes a Barbie doll, no clothes.

Sheldon looks away.
 Hmm. Instead of off to new enterprises you’ll be pushing that same old hate. I’ll give you this, being first born you got more chinks. With no one ahead to show the way, all the knocks hit you.

Sol removes an egg. He opens it. Silly Putty. He takes it out and presses it to a baseball card. Then holds it up. Stan Musial smiles at them.

Sheldon is breathing deeper, easier.

I’ll learn you to know that the truth comes late, at the very end when we’re secreting discharge from all openings and gasp at that sight in the mirror ‘who’s that, wearing a diaper?’ And it hits - this is it. No afterlife, no virgins, no all-you-can-eat with free take out. Being a big fish means nothing. Means equal. In like the rest of us, here for the ride.

Sol removes the blue blanky.

Sheldon swallows with emotion.

I give you this beautiful idea now before much more time passes.

Sheldon becomes introspective.

I’m feeling mighty free. Free to fail. (to God) What can you do me Mr. Big? Nothing! (to Sheldon) Because I found out I’ve got the deli in my shorts. The better, fresher items. And guess what? Sheldon. SO DO YOU!

The music and lyrics of the song begin swelling.

And the load doesn’t weigh me down at all,
Sol puts down the blanky. He and the boys grab the chair and try to lift Sheldon.

    SOL
    Come on boys.

They struggle, lifting him slightly.

    HOLLIES
    He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother.

    SOL
    Higher. We can do it!

    HOLLIES
    He’s my brother!

    SOL
    Heave! Up!

    HOLLIES
    He ain’t heavy!

    SOL
    That’s it. All the way!

    HOLLIES
    He’s my brother!

    THE BOYS
    YES!

Lifted!

They hold him high. The song does a slow fade out.

Sheldon and Sol connect, though still hesitant.

They put him down and untie him. Sol closes the toy chest. They all walk to the door.

Sol stops there and almost looks back. Then goes.

Sheldon is undone. Harmony is in the air.

    FADE OUT.

    FADE IN:
EXT. JEROME AVENUE - DUSK

The block is spared and reborn! - stores repaired, painted, open, new signs, shoppers strolling.

The gym has been rebuilt and remolded. The bottom is the ring and workout areas; the top is a theater/restaurant.

The sign on the roof reads: GOLDSTEIN BROTHERS.


INT. THEATRE

Intimate. 90 seats. Packed.

Mona and Sonia sit together, next to the six owners.

Margaret and Deserie are there.

Sheldon is smiling. REVEAL he’s sitting with the Party Planner.

Kabuki music starts. The curtain rises to a bar scene. On stage are the three Thugs seated at tables. They’re overacting - jovial, wealthy, obnoxious.

Sol, Billy, Raoul and Milton dance out as Geisha girls, singing a la The Mikado. The song is happy, full of hope finding the right man in a sea of schmucks.

The three boys bear tea and skitter about the thugs, serving, singing the chorus sections while Sol stands off singing lead to the audience.

END CREDITS ROLL

Thug #1 one reaches out and strokes Milton’s forearm. Milton happily karate chops the top of his head. Thug #2 rubs his leg against Billy’s. Billy happily delivers a kick to his groin. Bruno grabs hold of Raoul’s bum. Raoul spins happily, double-fisting Bruno across the face, knocking him out of his chair.

DISSOLVE TO:

Our three are dancing with the thugs, who are wary. The song is angry, about women putting out only to get the shaft.
Sol’s solo rants about justice, and how Geisha’s should come out of the closets. It peaks to a three part crescendo.

At the first peak part, Raoul woefully pounds on Bruno’s chest. Suddenly he can’t breath. At the second peak part, Milton sorrowfully ear-slaps thug #1. At the third peak part, Billy mournfully head butts thug #2.

DISSOLVE TO:

Sol and the boys sing a song of enlightenment – love was right in front of them all along. The thugs sit in chairs, groggy and bloodied. The Geishas sit on their laps, dressing their wounds: Milton secures a neck brace around thug #1. Billy wraps the bump on the forehead of thug #2. Raoul is putting Bruno’s arms in slings.

DISSOLVE TO:

The wedding – the finale song about love lets you trust your identity. As the vows finish, the thugs move in to kiss Milton, Billy and Raoul. The boys step back. They quick strip and reveal themselves to be men.

The thugs are supposed to love them anyway and supposed to move in and kiss them anyway. They suddenly get cold feet.

Sol sees the stall and inches over and tries scooting the thugs into embracing. Nothing doing.

Sol looks to the audience. Everyone feels the glitch.

Billy tries to grab thug #2. He back peddles. Milton gets a hold of thug #1, only for him to escape out of his costume. Raoul tackles Bruno but Bruno crawls free.

Sol keeps singing while the others chase and catch and tumble and grab and lose hold, fighting for kisses.

FADE OUT.

THE END