

THE OUTLAWS

A TWO ACT COMEDY

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THE OUTLAWS

AT RISE

The Living room of the THOMASES (Henry and Beth).

Henry and Beth are sitting in lounge chairs.

Henry is listening to “his” music with earphones, eyes closed.

Beth is reading.

PHONE

Beth answers the landline phone.

BETH

Hello.

(listens)

Hi, sweetheart. How are...?

(interrupted; listens)

You mean now?

(listens)

Sure. We’re not doing anything important.

(listens)

Okay.

(hangs up; nudges Henry)

Henry, are you asleep? Wake up. Jill’s coming over.

Beth gets up; nudges Henry harder.

BETH

Did you hear me? Jill's coming over with her friend.

HENRY

(opens one eye)

Now?

BETH

Yes, now.

DOORBELL

Henry gives a disgusted sigh.

Beth goes to the door.

JILL and MICHAEL are at the door.

BETH

Well, hello. What a nice surprise.

JILL

Grandma, this is Michael Conn.

MICHAEL

It's great to meet you, Mrs. Thomas.

JILL

Grandpa!

Jill walks into the den.

JILL (cont'd.)

There you are. Grandpa, this is Michael Conn.

HENRY

Ah. A Con man. Nice to get it out up front.

Henry Thomas. I also have a third first name
if you're interested.

MICHAEL

Good evening, Mr. Thomas. Jill's talked so
much about you.

HENRY

Where were you when you phoned, in the driveway!

JILL

Actually, yes.

BETH

Sit down.

JILL

I wanted to come by this afternoon, but I know better than to visit you two love birds in the afternoon.

(whispers to Michael)

They call it a nap.

HENRY

Beth calls it making love. I call it...

BETH

(stops him from going on)

Making love is good, Henry.

HENRY

We used to make babies, but that's over. Thank God. What're you two up to? Not making babies, I hope.

JILL

Not yet. But soon. That's what we wanted to tell you. Michael and I are engaged.

Jill shows her grandparents her ring.

BETH

Oh, Jill! Give me a hug.

The ladies hug.

JILL

I wanted you to hear it from me, not mom.

BETH

That was sweet. Wasn't that sweet, Henry?

HENRY

Sweet.

(looks at Michael)

I suppose you want a hug, too.

MICHAEL

I can pass on that.

HENRY

Good. Let's crack open that bottle of champagne that we've been saving for the last five years for a good reason. I have cheaper bottles for no good reason.

JILL

Michael doesn't drink, grandpa.

HENRY

(looks Michael over)

AA?

MICHAEL

No, sir. I just never got started. My family doesn't drink.

HENRY

You go to college?

MICHAEL

Yes, sir. Pepperdine. They don't allow drinking.

HENRY

Well, of course, they don't *allow* drinking. But
there are bars in Malibu.

BETH

Henry, he doesn't drink. That's a good thing.

HENRY

You honestly believe that? The second best pastime
in life?

JILL

Grandpa, Michael is getting his degree in Theology.

HENRY

Ah. Theology. Is there a lot of work out there for theologians?

JILL

Michael's going to be a Minister.

HENRY

Oh, well, we haven't had one of those in the family yet.
You don't object to us having a toast, do you, Michael?
Do they ever call you Mike?

MICHAEL

Yes. And no. Please have the champagne. I'll have a sip
of Jill's.

HENRY

No, no. Don't compromise yourself. Beth?

BETH

Be right back.

Beth exits for the kitchen, at the far end of the den.

Jill follows her grandmother.

LIGHTS DIM ON THE DEN; LIGHTS UP ON THE KITCHEN.

JILL

(whispers to her grandmother)

Well?

The following conversation is said in whispers.

BETH

Well?

JILL

What do you think?

BETH

About Michael or you getting married?

JILL

Both.

BETH

He seems very nice.

JILL

Is there a “but”?

BETH

I don't know Michael at all, sweetheart. I can't give an opinion. Now your grandfather on the other hand doesn't have to know someone very well or even at all to give an opinion.

JILL

Do you think it was safe to let them in there alone?

BETH

No, I don't. Let's go.

The women carry the bottle and three glasses.

BETH

I have orange juice. Would he drink orange juice?

JILL

No. You don't toast with orange juice. He can have
a sip of my champagne.

They re-enter the den. LIGHTS UP on the den; LIGHTS DIM ON THE KITCHEN.

Beth pours three glasses.

BETH

To a wonderful marriage. Like ours.

HENRY

Don't go giving away our secrets.

(raises his glass)

Happy marriage. Make love every day.

MICHAEL

Good advice.

Michael takes a sip from Jill's glass.

HENRY

Twice on Sunday.

BETH

Henry!

HENRY

Oh, sorry. Saturday.

JILL

Come with me, Michael. I want to show you the
back yard.

Henry and Beth look at each other. They get up and join Jill and Michael at the patio glass doors
off the kitchen.

LIGHTS DIM IN DEN; UP IN KITCHEN.

JILL

It's perfect.

HENRY

For?

JILL

For a wedding reception. May we please, Grandpa?
I love the pictures of mom and dad's reception here.

HENRY

That's when we were young, insane and rich.

MICHAEL

We'll pay for it, Mr. Thomas. We want to pay for
everything.

HENRY

Did I miss a memo? Isn't the bride's family
supposed to pay?

MICHAEL

Not this time. If we can't afford it, we won't have it.
That's going to be our mantra, right Jill?

HENRY

Mantra? How ecumenical of you. How do you plan
to afford this wedding?

MICHAEL

I've been saving, Mr. Thomas. I tutor students at
Pepperdine and week-ends I work as a waiter.
Also I have a small trust from my grandmother.

HENRY

And go to school full time?

MICHAEL

Yes, sir.

HENRY

Do you have any idea how much a wedding costs?

MICHAEL

No, sir. I can get the restaurant where I work to cater.
It's Indian cuisine. Very spicy but I love it.

JILL

I don't. Michael, I don't think we can serve that
spicy food to guests no matter how reasonably
we can get it.

MICHAEL

I could get them to tone it down.

JILL

Every time I've ordered it toned down it still
burned my throat. But we'll see.

BETH

Maybe we can come up with something else.

HENRY

When is this shindig?

JILL

Next month.

HENRY AND BETH

(in unison)

Next month?

JILL

We have the church. Michael's church where he
hopes to be the pastor some day.

BETH

Which church is that, Michael?

MICHAEL

First Baptist on Elm.

HENRY

And will the First Baptists be coming to the reception?

MICHAEL

A lot of them.

HENRY

Are we serving alcohol?

MICHAEL

Well... that could be a problem. They're mostly non-drinkers.

HENRY

What about the drinkers? Jill comes from a long line of... drinkers.

BETH

We can have two bars.

HENRY

We can have two receptions. One at the church and one here. I vote for the drinkers' reception here.

BETH

One month is a very short time to plan a wedding, Jill.

JILL

Oh, I have it all in my computer, grandma. I already know the dress I want and the bridesmaids and the cake and Michael and I can listen to some groups for the music and all we have to settle on is where we have the reception and what we're going to serve. Michael and I will talk about it.

Jill sets down her glass and tugs at Michael.

JILL

I hate to run but we have soooooo much to do.
Grandma, mom and I are going shopping tomorrow
for invitations and stuff. We have to get them in the
mail like last week. Will you come with us?

BETH

I'm honored to be asked, sweetheart.

HENRY

But will you go?

BETH

Of course, I'll go.

JILL

I'll call you in the morning about the time. Love
you both. I'll let you know about the reception.
Thanks for suggesting it.

MICHAEL

Very nice meeting both of you.

Jill pulls Michael out the front door.

JILL

'Bye.

Jill throws kisses at her grandparents.

Henry and Beth stand at the door watching the car drive away.

BETH

(closes the door)

Well, that was exciting.

HENRY

Horrifying. I didn't suggest the back yard. Did you?

BETH

No, I didn't. He's a very nice young man.

HENRY

I don't like him.

BETH

Henry!

HENRY

A minister in our family? I'll have to watch my language.

BETH

And your drinking. And your stories.

HENRY

And church on Sunday.

BETH

And tithing. Do people tithe any more?

HENRY

I think that's Mormons. Baptists just...

I don't want to think about it. I know they're
against a lot of stuff that we do.

BETH

Henry... our back yard. In one month. You'll have to resod.

HENRY

You think if I slip him ten thousand, they'd elope?

BETH

It's probably against his scruples.

HENRY

To hell with scruples. It'll cost me twenty thousand to
redo the yard. I don't know. He's too... something.

BETH

I wondered if there was ever going to be a man good

enough for your granddaughter.

HENRY

There isn't. She's trying to lure me into accepting that she's going to get married by bringing home a religious, non-drinking, hard working, principled young man like Michael, but I see right through that.

BETH

Good for you. She should never have tried to put one over on you.

HENRY

Damn right. Talk her out of it, Beth.

BETH

I'll try, dear. Call the nursery tomorrow.

HENRY

You think I got time to build that gazebo?

BETH

Come to bed, Henry.

HENRY

That's your answer for everything.

BETH

It always works.

HENRY

Yes, it does. Do you think Jill and Michael have been.... you know?

BETH

I'm not going to think about it.

HENRY

I'm not either. I hope. It could be worse. She could

be marrying somebody named Jack. I always worried about that. I couldn't stand the little napkins with Jack

HENRY (cont'd)

and Jill. I'll bet people have been introducing her to guys named Jack all the time, just to be cute. Little did I know what she'd drag home.

Henry turns off the light.

Act One, Scene Two

The next morning.

Henry is on the outside of the patio doors, knocking on one of them.

Beth, dressed for a day out with her daughter and granddaughter, comes over and opens the patio door.

HENRY

I need to run an electrical line to the kitchen.

BETH

And you need me to do what?

HENRY

(holds up a wire)

Run this wire to an outlet. Where are you going all dressed up?

BETH

There's an outlet right below the doors, Henry.

HENRY

(looks down)

Oh. Isn't that convenient.

BETH

Henry, I think we need somebody whose good with...

Beth hesitates to say any more.

HENRY

Good with what?

BETH

With their hands.

HENRY

I'm good with my hands.

BETH

Yes, you are, dear. And I've always loved that about you. But I want you to keep your hands. Maybe somebody who knows carpentry.

HENRY

I built that bookcase in Penny's room.

BETH

That's true, you did.

HENRY

It's perfectly balanced.

BETH

With "Catcher In The Rye" on one end.

HENRY

You don't want me to build the gazebo.

BETH

I'm afraid there isn't time, Henry.

HENRY

Don't placate me, Beth.

BETH

I'd never do that. A gazebo is going to take up a lot of space. And what are we going to do with it after the wedding?

HENRY

We could sit out there in the evening. I could run

speakers and we could dance. "In The Mood",
"It Had To Be You".

BETH

Do you know how to run speakers?

HENRY

Can't be that hard.

BETH

Maybe you could run speakers to the patio and
we could dance there. Or we can take your Ipod
outside.

HENRY

I could get spectacular speakers.

CAR HORN

BETH

I have to go, dear. Please promise me you won't
be sawing anything while I'm gone.

HENRY

I knew you'd talk me out of building a gazebo. I
thought you'd never get around to it. I even
dragged all this stuff out of the garage all dusty and...

CAR HORN

BETH

I have to go. You'll put all that stuff back?

HENRY

Just for you, sweetheart.

BETH

There's chicken salad in the frig for lunch.

HENRY

Go! Put in a good word for waiting five years.

BETH

If I get a chance.

Beth leans out the patio door.

Henry leans in. They kiss goodbye.

Beth hurries to the front door.

SOUND OF FRONT DOOR SLAMMING SHUT.

Henry is outside moving the saw and his carpentry table back into the garage when...

DOORBELL

Henry doesn't hear the bell.

DOORBELL.

Henry hears the bell, walks into the house to the front door and opens it.

DICK MORRIS (Henry's son-in-law, Jill's father) is at the door.

DICK

I thought they'd never leave.

HENRY

(checks his watch)

It's eight thirty.

DICK

I've been awake all night. What do you think of

Dobie Gillis?

HENRY

Who?

DICK

Dobie Gillis. Wasn't that the All American boy in
your day.

HENRY

In my day? You mean way back then. Let's see,

who the hell was it?

DICK

You like him?

HENRY

You first.

DICK

He's...

HENRY

Yes, he is.

DICK

What are we going to do?

HENRY

We can't very well eliminate him on the basis of religion.

We got you.

DICK

That's true.

HENRY

So, in our family we have protestants, a jew and now
a Baptist minister. Always makes for an interesting
Hanukkah/Christmas season. What do Baptists celebrate?

DICK

Christmas.

HENRY

Oh, well, two out of three isn't bad. You're the odd ball.

DICK

I pictured somebody so different for my little girl.

HENRY

As I recall you didn't like Jeannie's husband-to-be either.

DICK

Eh.

Dick waves his hand in the air; so-so.

HENRY

But you do now?

DICK

He's the father of my wonderful grandsons.

HENRY

Whom he is not raising Jewish.

DICK

Tell you the truth, Henry, now that my mother's passed, I don't really care.

HENRY

Blasphemy! Something is going to come down and smite you.

DICK

It probably will. I learned Hebrew for one morning only, my bar mitzvah, and then I forgot it.

HENRY

Mazel tov. Speaking of occasions, I got seven eighths of a very expensive champagne left. Why don't we toast.

DICK

Toast what?

HENRY

You think of something while I get the glasses. How about joining forces to stop this wedding?

DICK

I'll drink to that. But Jill can never find out.

Henry talks while getting the champagne and glasses and carrying them into the den.
LIGHTS UP ON THE DEN; DOWN ON THE KITCHEN.

HENRY

I say we hold his feet to the fire. He'll cave. Did
you see that white skin.

Both men are sitting in the lounge chairs.

DICK

Out there waiting on tables when he should be
surfing at Malibu. Can you imagine going to school
in Malibu and not having a tan? There's something
very suspicious about this young man. He's hiding
something.

HENRY

We'll find it and expose it.

DICK

Henry... we have to meet the parents.

HENRY

That should be fun. Where exactly will we have
this punch and cookies gala?

DICK

(becoming maudlin)

I was looking forward to hanging out with Jill's
in-laws some day. Not now, but some day.

HENRY

In about five years.

DICK

Exactly. You think we can talk them into waiting?

HENRY

Not a chance in hell. That's why we have to blow up this engagement.

Both men drink.

DICK

Emily can never find out.

HENRY

Beth either.

DICK

What do women see in a guy like that?

HENRY

A guy who's not going to cheat on their little girl?

DICK

There's no proof of that. Look at those guys with all the wives. And those communes. It can't be his earning power. What do ministers make?

HENRY

Whatever's in the collection basket. Who knows?

DICK

No. They have a Board of Directors or something in their parish. Holy shit! A parish! He might be assigned out of town.

HENRY

No, no. Un uh. Not another suitor coming in here and ripping another granddaughter out of my arms.

DICK

Now you know how I feel. I am totally against this marriage.

HENRY

I'll drink to that.

Henry refills their glasses.

HENRY (cont'd)

Did Jill tell you that she wants to have the reception
in our back yard?

DICK

No!

(thinks about it; drinks)

Actually, Henry, that's not a bad idea. Save me a bundle.

HENRY

Spanky's going to pay for the wedding himself.

DICK

How dare he! You see. You can't trust a guy like that.

HENRY

He wants spicy Indian cuisine. Only I think Jill's put the
kabob on that.

DICK

Kabosh. Good for her. Indian food. That's where he
probably wants to preach.

(tears up)

My baby living in Calcutta.

HENRY

Ain't gonna happen. We got a month. What should we
do first?

DICK

How about meeting the in-laws? That should be a great
time to point out how unsuitable their marriage is.

HENRY

Good idea. We'll have it on neutral ground. Right here.

Henry raises his glass.

Dick toasts with his.

Act One, Scene Three

The engagement party.

Henry and Beth are busy putting the finishing touches on the house.

(Decorations as the budget permits; flowers everywhere.)

Henry is busy with the bar. Dick is busy drinking Henry's martinis.

Beth and EMILY are nervously keeping an eye on Henry and Dick. They know the boys are up to no good. They are too anxious to meet Michael's parents.

DOORBELL

Henry moves to the door.

HENRY

I'll get it.

Jill, Michael and MICHAEL'S PARENTS (Tom and Connie) are at the door.

Henry greets everyone warmly; hugs and kisses his granddaughter, Jill, hugs Connie as he introduces himself.

HENRY

Connie, I'm Henry. Come in, come in. Michael, this must be your father. Hi. I'm Henry Thomas, Jill's grandfather.

Beth comes up behind Henry, hugs and kisses Jill and Michael, shakes hands with Connie and Tom.

BETH

So nice to meet you.

Everyone enters. Henry motions to the bar.

HENRY

What can we get you to drink? Tom?

TOM

Club soda would be great.

HENRY

(without flinching)

Have you met the father of the bride, Dick Morris.

Dick comes up, without his martini, and offers his hand to Tom and Connie. Pats Michael on the back.

DICK

I'm Dick and this is Emily, my wife.

Emily comes up behind Dick and shakes hands all around.

EMILY

Is it Reverend Conn?

TOM

Just Tom, thanks.

HENRY

Please, sit down. What can I get you to drink, Connie?

CONNIE

Whatever Tom's having, thank you, Henry. What a lovely home you have.

BETH

Thank you. We thought meeting in a home was better than a restaurant.

CONNIE

Oh, much better. So inviting.

BETH

Thank you.

Henry is busy at the bar making the drinks, which Dick distributes.

Beth puts some hors d'oeuvres on the cocktail table and sits facing Jill and Connie seated on the divan. The men are all seated on the opposite side of the room.

HENRY

We promise not to discuss war or politics over here.

TOM

Those are two of the three subjects that I never discuss
in public, Henry.

DICK

And what's the third subject, Tom... as if I didn't know.

TOM

You know. Religion.

DICK

Right.

HENRY

(nudges Dick)

You thought sex, right?

BETH

Henry.

HENRY

What? Oh, a toast. To the union of Jill and Michael.

Is that a safe subject, Tom?

TOM

Well, a timely one.

HENRY

What specifically do you do, Tom?

Beth starts to quiet Henry, but Tom replies...

TOM

I'm a bishop.

HENRY

A bishop. Wonderful. Dick?

DICK

I don't know what to say.

TOM

(laughs)

We're just plain people, Dick. Michael is our only child.

TOM (cont'd)

We've been looking forward to meeting you and your family. Connie and I think the world of Jill. We just knew that a young lady like Jill would have exemplary parents and grandparents. You've all done a wonderful job of raising a loving, caring, respectful young lady. I have to agree with Hillary Clinton on one thing only and that's the last I'll have to say on the subject of politics... it takes a village to raise a child. Connie and I are very grateful to be joining your God loving family.

There's nothing Henry or Dick can say to that.

Everyone drinks.

BETH

No one can outdo that toast, Tom. We second it.

Henry and Dick, sipping their martinis, have lost round one.

DICK

I better check on the bar-b-que. Do you eat steak, Tom?

TOM

Love it. Do you eat pork, Dick?

Tom, Dick and Henry get up and walk through the kitchen (LIGHTS UP) and out the patio doors off the kitchen to the bar-b-que.

BETH

(trying to pick up the pieces)

I volunteer to address invitations.

LIGHTS DIM.

When the lights come up again, the guests have gone. Henry is picking up glasses and putting them in the kitchen.

Beth is stacking dishes in the dishwasher.

BETH

That lovely couple thwarted your plans, didn't they?

HENRY

Thwarted? I don't know what you mean.

BETH

Come on, Henry. You and Dick sat there just waiting for the firecrackers.

HENRY

That's another thing I don't like about Michael.

BETH

What?

HENRY

His family. He has a nerve bringing around a bishop and a bishopress.

BETH

I think it evened the playing field.

HENRY

You approve of this marriage?

BETH

Actually, I wish it weren't happening.

HENRY

Ah ha!

BETH

Only because of something I learned from Emily.

HENRY

What? He has a past?

BETH

No. He has a future.

HENRY

And that worries you?

BETH

It worries me where it takes him. Emily told me that Michael wants to be a missionary.

HENRY

I knew it! Calcutta! Typhoid! Malaria! Stinkin' sacred cows.

BETH

Harlem.

HENRY

What?

BETH

Harlem. Or Watts or some other ghetto. He says he's good with young people.

HENRY

This gets worse. Wait till Dick hears.

BETH

It is admirable, Henry. I can imagine that he's very good with young people.

HENRY

I have to call Dick.

BETH

Don't you dare.

HENRY

What is the big hurry to get married? She's not...???

BETH

No. She's not.

HENRY

Then why the hurry?

BETH

Because Michael starts school in September and they'll have to...

(mumbles the rest of it)

HENRY

What? They'll have to what?

BETH

Move to Texas. Temporarily. Just until he finishes his Masters.

HENRY

What's wrong with schools here in California? What good ever came out of Texas?

BETH

Henry, don't be prejudiced.

HENRY

There's not a prejudiced bone in my body.

BETH

Right. Well, I thought Michael's parents were wonderful people. Jill is very lucky to be marrying into...

HENRY

I'm calling Dick. Harlem!

BETH

Don't ruin this night for Jill and Michael.

HENRY

You're on their side.

BETH

I'm not taking sides. I respect Jill's choice for a

husband. She's a very sensible girl. I don't know

BETH (cont'd)

how that happened, but she is. She has parents
and grandparents who love and support her and
now she needs us to show how much we respect
her choices.

(pauses)

How's the back yard coming?

HENRY

I quit.

BETH

You and Dick don't think this wedding is going to
happen, do you?

HENRY

"Hope" not "think". Hope.

BETH

And the two of you have some sort of plan to
sabotage it, haven't you?

No response from Henry.

BETH (cont'd)

I can't believe you would do this to Jill.

HENRY

She doesn't know what's best for her.

BETH

And you do.

HENRY

I know what isn't good for her. Michael.

BETH

How can you think that, Henry? He's industrious,

ambitious, gentle, doesn't drink, comes from a

BETH (cont'd)

wonderful family and loves Jill very much. What
is there not to like?

HENRY

I don't know. It's just a feeling.

BETH

A feeling? You're ready to ruin your granddaughter's
happiness because of a feeling? When have you ever
had feelings you could trust?

HENRY

When I asked you to marry me.

Beth looks at Henry, walks over and puts her arms around him.

BETH

We both want Jill to be happy. Who are we to say
that she won't be happy with Michael?

HENRY

Does she seem happy to you?

BETH

I think she's caught up with this wedding. I don't
know what she's feeling.

HENRY

Can't you talk them into waiting?

BETH

I'll talk to Emily. Meanwhile, promise me that you
and Dick will not do anything to jeopardize this wedding.

PHONE

Beth answers.

BETH

Hello.

Beth listens a long time to whomever is calling.

BETH (cont'd)

Where are you?

Beth walks with the cell phone to the front door; opens the door. Emily and Dick are standing at the door, Emily with her cell phone in her hand.

Emily hangs up.

Beth hangs up.

DICK

I need a drink.

HENRY

Does everybody call when they're ready to walk
in a house?

EMILY

Oh, dad, what are we going to do?

HENRY

Come in.

Henry walks back into the kitchen, followed by Emily and Dick and Beth.

They sit on stools at the kitchen island.

Henry makes drinks.

He and Beth stand opposite Emily and Dick at the island.

BETH

How did you get away?

EMILY

We told them that we wanted to give them some
alone time.

HENRY

Where did you tell them you were going?

EMILY

Here. To talk to you about the reception.

HENRY

The answer's "no". Not unless I have a full bar.

DICK

That's perfectly acceptable.

EMILY

No, it isn't, Dick. I think we're going to have to have dinner first...

HENRY

At five o'clock?

EMILY

Hear me out, dad. Dinner. A string quartet. And then, we'll have a reception with drinks and the kind of band that Jill would want. And the Conns and their friends can stay or leave, as they please.

HENRY

Joyous.

BETH

There's no other choice, Henry.

HENRY

Oh, there's a choice, but you don't want to hear it.

EMILY

This is Jill's decision, dad. I thought we might present a united front and approach them tomorrow, after we decide.

HENRY

What About the stag party for Michael? What do we

do, go bowling? Pizza and cokes? Do they drink caffeine?