

**Tool Thyme:
An Unauthorized Parody
of Home Improvement**

By: Grizzly K. Sunshine

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SUMMARY

A HANDYMAN WHOSE LAST CHANCE TO SAVE HIS TOOL SHOW COMES WHEN A NEW PRODUCER, HIS EX-WIFE, FORCES HIM TO COHOST A CHAOTIC HYBRID SHOW OF HOME REPAIR AND FRENCH COOKING THAT MAY SAVE THEM BOTH OR DESTROY EVERYTHING.

SETTING

DETROIT, MICHIGAN
DECEMBER 1992

RUN TIME

90 MINUTES

CHARACTERS (4M & 2W)

TOM, 40s: LOCAL TELEVISION HOST

JUNE, 40s: TOM'S EX-WIFE AND NEW CO-HOST

ABE, 40s: TOM'S ASSISTANT, LUMBERJACK VIBES

HOLLY, 20s: TOM'S LOVELY ASSISTANT

WATSON, 50s: TOM'S NEIGHBOR (DOUBLES LAWYER, AVON LADY, & SHADOW SURGEON)

SIMBA TAYLOR THOMAS, 10: TOM & JUNE'S SON (DOUBLES CAMERA MAN & CUE CARD GUY)

OPTIONAL 4-D SMELL FX: WOODSHOP, FLATBREAD PIZZA, ROASTED PEACHES, LEMON COOKIES, FRENCH GARLIC BREAD, BLUEBERRY PIE, VANILLA POTPOURRI, CHERRY PIE, & BURNT RUBBER

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ACT 1 SCENE 1

Lights up on the modest set of a local cable tool show, Hammer Time. “Fix It,” the Hammer Time theme song plays. Woodshop Smell FX. It’s snowing outside the window.

HOLLY, 20s, is holding a microphone and waiting for the song to end. She is blonde, has a comically large chest, and wears tight overalls. America’s sweetheart vibes.

HOLLY. Does anybody out there know what time it is?

MALE STUDIO AUDIENCE. HAMMER TIME!

HOLLY. That’s right! *Blunt Force Tools* is proud to present, *Hammer Time*, starring Tom, the tool master, Thomas! *(Holly exits.)*

Jazzy theme music instrumental flare plays. Male Audience Applause SFX. TOM, 40s, enters in a sportscoat and toolbelt. He’s an aging handyman but his alpha male demeanor is still very charming.

TOM. Thank you, Holly! Hello, Detroit! Welcome to *Hammer Time*! Put your feet up, grab a beer, and untangle that chest hair! *(He does his signature grunt.)* Please allow me to introduce my assistant, Abe Babejack. *(Abe salutes.)* That’s enough out of you, Abe. The folks at home tuned in today because we are going to show them how to dismantle a devil piece of drywall. Sledgehammer style! *(Tom grunts. Holly brings in a large piece of drywall on wheels and locks it in place.)*

HOLLY. Here’s your drywall, boys... *(It is revealed that June’s face has been painted on the drywall.)*

ABE. Thank you, Holly. *(Holding a sledgehammer.)* Who is that supposed to be?

Tool Thyme

TOM. That is, of course, my soon-to-be-ex-wife.

ABE. You want me to take a sledgehammer to June's face?

TOM. What's the problem? It's not a load-bearing wall.

ABE. I'm a lover, not a fighter.

TOM. Fine. I'll do it myself. *(He rolls up his sleeves and takes the sledgehammer. Male Audience Cheer SFX. He looks at the painting of June.)* I think I might enjoy this.

ABE. *(To the camera.)* You always want to be cautious when opening a wall in your house. Behind each sheet of drywall, there could be electrical lines, plumbing, or—

TOM. The fat skeleton of your ex-mother-in-law! *(Male Audience Laugh SFX.)*

ABE. Tom... Hitting an electrical line is very serious...

TOM. Oh, Abe...

ABE. Sledgehammers are excellent conductors of electricity...

TOM. I've been working on houses for years. I've never hit an electric line.

ABE. Danger—

TOM. —is my middle name. Anyway, I redid some drywall in my basement recently and you'd never guess what I found...

ABE. Oh?

TOM. A treasure map. *(Pirate SFX.)*

ABE. *(Excited.)* A relic! Really? From buccaneers? Or maybe Vikings?

TOM. Well... I followed the map to the letter...

ABE. And?

TOM. I ended up at Long John Silver's Strip Club. *(Male Audience Laugh SFX.)*

ABE. *(Joking.)* You certainly didn't need the map...

TOM. I should have just turned it over. The backside was a 55+ senior menu. *(Male Audience Laugh SFX.)* I know how you like their shrimp there, Abe.

ABE. *(His signature phrase.)* I don't think so, Tom.

TOM. *(Beat.)* Okay. It's time to give the people at home, and our studio audience, a real demonstration.

ABE. Always remember to wear safety goggles when using power tools.

TOM. A sledgehammer isn't a power tool.

ABE. It is in my hands, Tom. *(He winks.)*

TOM. Tough talk from someone who looks like the Brawny Paper Towel guy.

ABE. He wishes.

Tool Thyme

TOM. Careful, if you ever lose all that hair, you'll be Mr. Clean. (*Male Audience Laugh SFX.*) I just need to take a few practice swings. (*He does. He stretches and takes too long.*)

ABE. Tom, this is only a thirty-minute show. *The Diet Mug Root Beer Dana Carvey Hour* will start soon.

TOM. Okay, here we go. It's important to remember not to swing with your back. (*He takes a large windup.*)

ABE. That's sage advice. (*Tom takes an elaborate backswing.*) Tom, did you cut the power just in case?

TOM. (*He swings at the drywall. He hits an electric wire, electrocuting himself comedically. The lights in the studio flicker.*) AHH!!!

ABE. (*The lights return. Tom is singed and smoking with his hair standing tall. Theme music flare plays.*) Uh... Well— That's all for this week. Tune in next week when we talk tremendous tricks for wallpaper removal. (*Abe salutes. Tom winces and falls over. Fade to black. After a beat, the lights suddenly return to normal, and the actors are out of character. Holly comes back in with a first-aid kit for Tom.*)

TOM. Electrocuted again!

ABE. You really got shocked? I thought that was all for the camera...

TOM. I didn't think I could make it look real enough.

ABE. Brave.

TOM. S-s-stupid.

HOLLY. Look alive; the President of *Blunt Force Tools* is backstage. (*Hacksaw SFX.*)

TOM. President Hacksaw is here?

HOLLY. (*Nodding.*) He wants to talk to both of you. Right after me. (*Holly exits.*)

TOM. Great. Abe, how do I look? (*His hair is smoking.*)

ABE. Charred... What about me?

TOM. Lucky for you, you're wearing your best flannel.

ABE. And my lucky camouflage underwear. (*Combing his beard.*) I really want to make a good impression.

TOM. You need a Hoover on that thing.

ABE. Hardy-har-har.

TOM. What do you think Hacksaw is doing here?

ABE. I don't know.

TOM. I have a feeling heads will roll...

Tool Thyme

HOLLY. (*Hacksaw SFX. Running back on, crying.*) That...that tool!

ABE. What's wrong, Holly?

HOLLY. Hacksaw just fired me!

TOM & ABE. What!?

HOLLY. He said the next show is my last!

ABE. Did he say why?

HOLLY. Just that I'm being replaced with another woman!

TOM. Don't worry.

HOLLY. She's probably younger and— Oh, they might as well just cancel us all!

ABE. (*Worried.*) Cancel!?

TOM. He can't replace you. This is my show.

ABE. Actually, Tom... *Blunt Force Tools* owns most of the show.

TOM. I don't understand. How can that be?

ABE. Stocks... Shareholders... Market share...

TOM. (*Pretending to understand.*) Right, right. Bell curves...

ABE. Sure, Tom.

TOM. But there is no show without us!

ABE. Maybe this has something to do with all the medical debt you've accrued.

TOM. Preposterous.

HOLLY. You've been to the emergency room a dozen times this season.

TOM. So?

ABE. Hospitals cost the producers money.

TOM. (*Threatening Abe.*) So does an assistant.

HOLLY. (*Looking at her large chest.*) Well, I guess I won't need these anymore!
(*She takes a pin and pops one of her fake balloon boobs.*)

TOM. (*Grunting in confusion.*) Grr? (*Holly pops the other balloon boob. Tom grunts with more disappointment this time.*) Grrr...

ABE. I'm sure this is all a misunderstanding.

HOLLY. No, they've been fake the whole time. I have a whole bag in my car.

ABE. I meant your termination.

HOLLY. Oh, come on. Our ratings have been slipping for years.

TOM. Hey, hey, hey. We're still number four.

HOLLY. It's local cable! There are only four shows!

ABE. She's right. We'd be dead if they didn't leave us on 24/7 at the Wayne County Jail.

Tool Thyme

TOM. *(Giving in.)* I know, you're right. Last week we lost to a psychic pet hotline show.

ABE. Well, if I may... I do have ideas to help bring up our ratings...

TOM. Flannel of the week? Momma's Boy Tutorials? C'mon, Abe. You're an assistant. That's all you'll ever be...

HOLLY. *(Realization.)* Oh, my... *(Tearing up, embracing them.)* Boys... I can't believe we've only got one more show together... That's going to be as hard as excavating and waterproofing a tilted basement on soggy land... *(Hacksaw SFX.)* You two had better run! *(Tom and Abe hustle out. Fade to black.)*

SCENE 2

Hours later. Lights up on a lawyer's office. Tom sits alone at a table in a Detroit Lions sweater and football helmet. There is a small television in the room playing a Detroit Lions game.

JUNE, 40s, enters. She is a very snappy dresser. She's wearing a Christmas sweater featuring a large, sparkly snow globe.

TOM. Finally.

JUNE. Babysitter was late. Really? A helmet?

TOM. It's symbolic. Your lawyer pummeled me last time.

JUNE. Where's *your* lawyer?

TOM. Representing myself...

JUNE. Ha! Then why don't you just give me everything now? Let's start with your 1933 Roadster.

TOM. *(Taking off the helmet.)* I'd drive that car off a cliff before I'd give it to you.

JUNE. I accept your offer! Can I pick the cliff?

TOM. I don't see *your* lawyer here...

JUNE. He's right here. *(She takes the remote control from him.)*

TOM. Hey, it's fourth down!

Tool Thyme

June uses the remote control to change the channel on the television in the room. A flamboyant LAWYER is seen on the screen wearing a suit from the waist up and beach clothes from the waist down. The actor playing Watson should be this double.

TOM. What is this?

JUNE. My lawyer is in Miami. So, he's doing a video call.

TOM. A phone call in a video screen?

JUNE. Yes. It's the 90s... *(The lawyer appears on the television screen, but he is very blurry, perhaps behind frosted T.V. glass.)*

TOM. That's it? We're basically talking to a watercolor painting!

JUNE. Oh, how typical. Nothing is clear enough for you, powerful enough for you, alpha man, souped-up, double engine...grunt, grunt, grunt!

TOM. Let's just start. So we can end.

JUNE. Fine by me. *(To the screen.)* We're ready to begin...

LAWYER. *(Delayed, low quality audio/video.)* Great! Today is simply a matter of signing paperwork.

TOM. *(Sarcasm.)* Subtle time delay.

LAWYER. You've both agreed to split the assets...

JUNE. Well, not *all* the assets.

TOM. Oh, no! Not this again!

JUNE. I'm just saying, Tom isn't sharing everything...

TOM. *Hammer Time* is mine. You can't have it!

JUNE. Ugh! Why are you being so stingy?

TOM. I built that show with my bare hands. Just like the Roadster.

JUNE. Oh, I don't care about that rusty Roadster. Keep it.

TOM. Rusty? That fine automobile—

JUNE. But the show... You know that I've always wanted to be on television! Why couldn't I be a guest even once?

TOM. I don't want to do this here.

JUNE. Tom, we're doing this! Why didn't you let me on? Why? Why? Why?

TOM. Because— You're not a star! *(Long pause.)*

LAWYER. *(Delayed reaction.)* Damn.

JUNE. I'm not a star? I'm not a star? How dare you!

TOM. Here we go...

JUNE. I have all the trimmings of a soap opera star! And I don't even sing!

Tool Thyme

TOM. So, join the opera...

JUNE. Never had time! I was too busy supporting your career! And raising our son, Simba Taylor Thomas.

TOM. That's rich. You don't even watch *Hammer Time*.

JUNE. Because you make fun of me, Tom! I seem to recall a whole segment about my drool!

TOM. You think you could do better?

JUNE. In a heartbeat, sweetheart.

TOM. Well, too bad we'll never find out. Because you don't have a show!

JUNE. You know, I could make this ugly...

TOM. You made this ugly when I came home two weeks ago and saw you using another man's tools! (*Awkward pause. Delayed, the lawyer gasps.*)

JUNE. (*Pause.*) I wouldn't have had to use another man's tools if I had access to yours...

TOM. That's bologna!

JUNE. My plumbing was so backed up; I had no choice!

TOM. Oh, please!

JUNE. So, in a way, this is all your fault!

TOM. Don't turn what you did back on me!

JUNE. You neglected me, Tom—

LAWYER. (*Delayed.*) Bologna will do that to you... Wait a minute... (*Pause.*) Is this whole power tool conversation really about sex?

TOM. *Blunt Force* betrayal!

JUNE. (*To Tom.*) Thick as a two-by-four! As always! I swear, my hair is going to catch on fire!

TOM. Oh, you love fire! Remember the hotel room fire? Was that my fault too?

JUNE. Ugh! You put way too many volts into that curling iron!

TOM. You were taking forever to get ready! I was just trying to speed up the process. More power! (*He grunts.*)

JUNE. You want to play this game? I seem to remember a certain bonehead using radioactive face paint on our son last Halloween...

TOM. You told me to make him glow in the dark!

JUNE. Not permanently! He's already dealing with buffalo bullies at school and—

TOM. Hey! No son of mine gets bullied, okay? (*He grunts.*)

Tool Thyme

JUNE. Ugh! I hope that's the last grunt I ever hear as long as I live! (*Long pause. They both realize it's over.*)

LAWYER. If you both just sign this form, you are free of each other's grunting.

TOM. Got a pen?

JUNE. We still have joint custody, right?

LAWYER. Yes. You have both agreed to joint custody of your one son, Simba. Father sees him on the weekends and every other rainy season. Sign here. (*Tom and June both stare at each other. Then, they both click their pens. Fade to black. Sad music plays.*)

SCENE 3

Lights up on the Hammer Time set. Tom is mid-conversation with President Hacksaw. Hacksaw is represented by the sounds of a powerful saw. Holly is seen comedically inflating two large balloons off to the side.

TOM. How could you do this, sir? (*Hacksaw SFX.*) Ratings? We are just in a low spot, that's all. Our ratings will come up. We've got an episode about high-powered snow blowers that will really— (*Hacksaw SFX.*) You're blindsiding me here! We've represented *Blunt Force Tools* for years, and— Why did you fire Holly without talking to me? She's a vital part of this team. Balloons or not... (*Hacksaw SFX.*) No, no, we've got to keep Abe too. He gets the most fan mail, somehow. (*Hacksaw SFX.*) Listen, I can boost our ratings. If you just give me some time— (*Hacksaw SFX.*) Changes? What changes? (*Hacksaw SFX. Beat.*) Cooking? Did you say cooking? (*Hacksaw SFX.*) French cooking? No! This is a nightmare! Well, what if I say no? What if I refuse to change the show? (*Laughing Hacksaw SFX.*) What do you mean you'll hand me my medical bills? (*Tom is defeated.*) Yes, sir. Wait, wait... I have to tell everyone??

ABE. (*Entering.*) We've got a big audience out there tonight. Probably 100 men! What did Hacksaw want?

TOM. Tonight...will be our last show of *Hammer Time*.

ABE. (*Pause.*) So, we got cancelled after all.

TOM. No. Worse. The show is getting a makeover.

ABE. What?

Tool Thyme

TOM. Hacksaw wants a ratings boost. He wants to attract women...

ABE. Fine... I'll do nudity. (*Abe begins to undo his suspenders.*)

TOM. I said audience boost, not get our audience to stampede away.

ABE. Are any of us getting the axe?

TOM. Just Holly... New cast members in fact! New producers even.

ABE. Oh? Who bought the show?

TOM. (*Joking.*) Julia Child. Whoever it is, President Hacksaw said we would meet them tonight. Apparently, they're in the audience.

ABE. Okay, I'll be extra charming.

TOM. (*Sarcastic.*) We're saved! (*The lights shift and the show begins.*)

HOLLY. Does anybody out there know what time it is?

STUDIO AUDIENCE. HAMMER TIME!

HOLLY. That's right! (*Sad.*) For the last time... *Blunt Force Tools* is proud to present, *Hammer Time*, starring Tom, the tool master, Thomas! (*Music plays. Tom enters. Holly exits.*)

TOM. Thank you, Holly! Welcome to *Hammer Time*, Detroit! I'd like to start the show a little bit differently. Holly, Abe... Can you come out here, please? (*They do.*) We are going to start tonight with an announcement... I think of you two, and our viewers of course, like family. And families need to be honest with one another...

ABE. I couldn't agree more, Tom.

HOLLY. Do you want me to pop the balloons again?

TOM. No, no. The truth is... *Hammer Time* will be getting a new look, maybe even a new name. Well, to be blunt, let's just say we are adding French cooking to the show. (*Male Audience Laughter SFX.*) No, no. Unfortunately, I'm not kidding. We will still do home improvement segments, but now we will be showing our viewing audiences how to sauté a duck.

ABE. Sauté means to pan sear...

TOM. Not yet, Abe. Anyway, I just wanted to say that *Hammer Time* has been the pleasure of my life, and I just wanted to sincerely say—

HOLLY. (*Interjecting, revealing a baby bump.*) Uh-oh! I'm pregnant! Gotta go!

TOM. What? What?

HOLLY. (*Packing up.*) New baby. New job. I'm going to work at the beach.

TOM. The beach?

HOLLY. Lifeguard. Lake Michigan. It's twins! (*She pats her large baby bump.*)

Tool Thyme

TOM. Another balloon! Good one! *(He uses a pin to pop her balloon, but she is really pregnant.)*

HOLLY. Ow! Hey!

TOM. When did this happen?

HOLLY. Commercial break.

ABE. Congratulations! You'll be an excellent mother.

HOLLY. Do you really think so?

ABE. I do.

TOM. But Holly...

HOLLY. Listen, I know my way around a mortar hawk and a plugging chisel...

TOM. *(Grunting.)* Yeah, you do.

HOLLY. But I'm a disaster in the kitchen! I degrease engines. Not ovens.

ABE. I for one don't think it will be so bad. We all have to eat.

TOM. You say that now until you're wearing a pink lace apron with Martha Stewart's face on it.

HOLLY. Goodbye, boys. I wish you luck on your new culinary adventure.

TOM. You too, Holly. Go save lives.

HOLLY. Will do. *(Snapping into lifeguard character, wearing a red lifeguard hat, and blowing a whistle.)* Hey! No peeing in the water! Hey! Wait thirty minutes to swim after eating! Hey! No naked swimming unless you're in shape!

ABE. You're a natural.

TOM. Well...

HOLLY. *(Smiling.)* Natural...for once. Time to turn in my balloons. *(She begins to take them off.)*

TOM. You keep them.

HOLLY. Will do! I've got to go. And I've got to do it in slow motion... *(She kisses them on the cheeks. Then, she runs out in extreme slow motion, balloon chest bouncing, à la Baywatch. As she exits, her giant balloon chest needs to bounce in comedic ways to knock away villains of the sea.)*

ABE. A real natural.

TOM. Do you think she knows it's December? *(Audience Laughter SFX.)* I suppose ice fishers need lifeguards too...

ABE. Well, men. That slow motion exit took up all the time we have today.

TOM. Perfect last show...

ABE. Thanks for watching over the years...

Tool Thyme

TOM. From now on, this show will be called *Tool Thyme*. (*A banner labeled Tool Thyme falls and covers up the Hammer Time logo.*) They spelled ‘time’ wrong!

ABE. ‘Thyme’ like the seasoning to signify the hybrid structure of the show.

TOM. (*Defeated.*) We are totally ducked. This is Tom, the tool master, Thomas, turning the garage light off. (*Abe salutes. Theme Music. Male Audience Applause SFX. The lights return to normal. The actors are sitting on the set. They crack beers.*)

ABE. I know that show was low on content, but I think it was one of our best.

TOM. Where are these new producers? I just want to meet them and go home.

ABE. What did Hacksaw say they looked like?

TOM. Look for white hair, wrinkles, and testicles tucked into tube socks.

ABE. What’s June doing here?

TOM. June? My June? I mean, uh, June as in my ex-wife? Or June from high school? Or June from Dairy Queen? Or that June I got shingles on my nipple?

ABE. The June whose head you destroyed with a sledgehammer.

TOM. That could still be a few... (*June enters looking very fashionable.*)

JUNE. Great show. Very...educational.

TOM. Come to gloat that *Hammer Time* has been shut down?

JUNE. That’s not what I heard.

TOM. Re-tooled, then.

JUNE. Cooking? I may start to watch now.

TOM. Great.

JUNE. Did you know that I was the only woman in that audience tonight?

TOM. So?

JUNE. That’s why your ratings have dropped. You’ve ignored half the population.

TOM. If you’re going to talk like that, you should be holding a hacksaw. What are you doing here, June?

JUNE. Well, I have news.

TOM. What?

JUNE. My Uncle Milton has passed away...

TOM. Oh. Well, that’s tough. I’m sorry to hear it. I always liked him.

JUNE. You never met him.

TOM. What happened?

JUNE. Bitten by a tarantula named Maitika. (*Jungle to Jungle reference.*)

TOM. Been there.

Tool Thyme

JUNE. Well, when Uncle Milton wasn't navigating the jungle, he lived on Park Place.

TOM. Oh, right. Your rich, jungle uncle.

JUNE. My name was all over his will.

TOM. So?

JUNE. So, I've come to work.

TOM. What?

JUNE. *(Pause.)* I'm a co-owner with President Hacksaw. Spent every jungle penny!

TOM. You!? You're the new producer?

ABE. I've always liked you, June.

JUNE. Changes are coming...

ABE. I can do a fine British accent and full frontal...

TOM. *(Grunting.)* Bad news... Bad news... *(To June.)* But you don't know anything about producing!

JUNE. Watch your tone! Next to Hacksaw, I'm top tool around here, baby...

TOM. Hack me.

JUNE. There's more.

TOM. Go ahead, hit me with the spud wrench.

JUNE. I'm also your new co-host. *(Tom and Abe laugh.)*

TOM. You're the professional chef they hired? You burn macaroni.

JUNE. I told you I could make this ugly.

TOM. And what happens when the ratings tank because of this terrible idea?

JUNE. What happens when they rise like a soufflé?

TOM. You think it's that easy?

JUNE. I don't know why you're so upset! I saved your dream.

TOM. You think my dream was to be some cable access cooking clown?

JUNE. You said clown, not me.

TOM. You are doing this for *your* dream of being a star!

JUNE. Afraid you'll get outshined??

TOM. Why don't we make this interesting?

JUNE. I prefer ugly.

TOM. A bet.

JUNE. A bet?

TOM. If the ratings fall because of your cooking crap, you hit the road! Once and for all.

Tool Thyme

JUNE. Deal.

TOM. Just like that? You'll just cream poof away?

JUNE. That's how confident I am.

ABE. Go, girl.

JUNE. And if the ratings soar because of my star power?

TOM. Name it.

JUNE. Well, I already own your show...

TOM. Watch it.

JUNE. I want your Speedster.

ABE. No way!

TOM. *(Pause.)* You mean my sky blue 1933 Ford Roadster? The one that I built from scratch?

JUNE. I want to paint it thyme green! Or Barbie pink... Just because I know you'll hate it.

TOM. *(Whining.)* You want my hotrod?

JUNE. You want your solitude?

TOM. *(Thinking.)* Fine. Deal.

JUNE. Abe, you're the witness.

ABE. *(Saluting.)* Yes, ma'am.

TOM. You have no idea how hard being a star is!

JUNE. Neither do you! *(She hands him a pink, lace apron.)* By the way...here's your new uniform, co-star. *(Furious, they both exit opposite ways.)*

ABE. For the record, if anyone was wondering... I've always wanted to be a star too... *(Fade to black.)*

SCENE 4

Lights up on the backyard of Tom and June's home. Stars are out.

WATSON, 50s, the wise neighbor, is in his backyard. Watson is behind a fence, and we only ever see his fishing hat. The hat should be on a stick and not well concealed. Tom enters with a box of personal things.

TOM. Watson! Watson, are you back there?

Tool Thyme

WATSON. Hiddly-dee-ho, good neighbor!

TOM. What's that smell?

WATSON. Well, Tom, I'm doing a ceremonial coal walk...

TOM. Coal walk? That's melted bunion I smell??

WATSON. Not if I wrap my forefathers around my foot, like the ancient Fiji tribes did.

TOM. I prefer Adidas.

WATSON. No, it's not a literal wrap, Tom. It's a covenant of protection with my ancestors. It's all mental.

TOM. Sounds mental...

WATSON. The people of Fiji believe that if one can complete this coal walk, they can be purified. Care to try?

TOM. Not unless you want a corn roast. (*Looking over the fence.*) Nice, grass skirt.

WATSON. This is actually a traditional Malo, made of hibiscus fibers. I can get one for you, neighbor, if you'd like.

TOM. Well, that's what I came to talk to you about, Watson. We aren't going to be neighbors anymore...

WATSON. (*Pause.*) I'm sorry to hear that... The divorce is finalized?

TOM. Doesn't feel that way. Feels like we are at war now more than before.

WATSON. You know, Tom, your marriage to June reminds me of a famous quote from the great thinker, Plato...

TOM. My son loves the Play-Doh Fun Factory.

WATSON. No, no, Tom. Not Play-Doh. Plato. The ancient philosopher.

TOM. (*Grunting.*) Right, right...

WATSON. Plato said: 'Only the dead have seen the end of war.'

TOM. Very comforting.

WATSON. He goes on to say that we are always at war with something. And—

TOM. (*Grunting.*) Deep, deep...

WATSON. Tom... (*Pause.*) I... Well, I always thought it'd be light years before I'd see the Thomases split up. I am so very sorry, neighbor.

TOM. (*Looking at the box.*) Me too... Me too. Lot of memories in this box.

WATSON. If it's not being too forward... What happened?

TOM. I caught June using another man's tools, if you know what I mean.

WATSON. Well, Tom, I don't think she was using his phallus as much as she was borrowing his blowtorch.

Tool Thyme

TOM. *(Confidently misunderstanding.)* Exactly.

WATSON. What I mean to say is—

TOM. Ah, Watson, I can't rehash this now. It gives me the willies.

WATSON. *(Beat.)* How is little Simba taking all this?

TOM. Rough. He's been up in a tree all day.

WATSON. Divorce can be hardest on the cubs. *(Beat.)* Where are you going to go?

TOM. *(Posing.)* To infinity...and beyond!

WATSON. *(Confused.)* Where?

TOM. Hotel Infinity. A motel outside of the Silverdome. And after that Bed, Bath, and Beyond. I'll need towels.

WATSON. Well, I can't have that. You'll come and stay with me.

TOM. No, I couldn't put you out...

WATSON. I insist.

TOM. Well... *(Sincere.)* Thank you. Thank you, Watson.

WATSON. Don't mention it. Besides, I'll need someone to drive me to the hospital in case my ancestors forget about my feet.

TOM. How hot does that coal walk get?

WATSON. Around 600 degrees on average.

TOM. Wow. Nature sure knows about 'more power.'

WATSON. And this coal walk has a dual purpose.

TOM. Oh?

WATSON. Flatbread pizza and roasted peaches. *(4D-Smell Effect.)*

TOM. Sounds good! What time do we eat?

WATSON. To answer you I'd like to quote a great poet... "Break to ya crib, change your clothes once more... 'Cause you're invited to a barbecue that's starting at four."

TOM. Let me guess... Socrates?

WATSON. Close. DJ Jazzy Jeff.

TOM. I prefer Play-Doh. *(Beat.)* Watson, I think one of your peaches is on fire.

WATSON. So it is. I'll run inside and grab my stoker. *(Briefly exits.)*

TOM. No need. I think that I can reach it. *(Tom reaches over the coal walk to grab the peach. He falls onto the coals.)* AHHHH! Watson! I've fallen and I can't get up!

WATSON. *(Returning, shocked.)* Hiddly-dee-ho! *(Ambulance SFX. Fade to black. The new Tool Thyme theme music begins to play to connect the next scene.)*

Tool Thyme

SCENE 5

Lights up behind the new Tool Thyme set. Abe and June are waiting to go on. June is dressed in a beautiful outfit. She is looking through a rack of beautiful clothes. The new theme song continues. It is classical in nature. Tom's hands are bandaged from his burns.

JUNE. Listen up, boys... We're three-camera today. Camera One is our master, Camera Two stays locked tight on the central cooking station, and Camera Three follows Tom's inevitable destruction. Don't get sloppy. Hit your marks and speak clearly. Questions?

TOM. *(Shocked at her industry knowledge.)* Have you been possessed by Steven Spielberg?

JUNE. No funny business out there, Tom.

TOM. It's a comedy show. *(Beat.)* What are you wearing?

JUNE. I made it myself. I am a woman of many talents.

TOM. Not music selection... What is this music?

JUNE. Elegant, pig.

TOM. We ended *Hammer Time* with a 4.0 in the ratings.

JUNE. In three episodes or less, I'll double that!

TOM. Double? Ha! Abe, did you hear that?

JUNE. Double! 8.0!

TOM. That would make us number one. *(The Tool Thyme theme music ends. Audience Cheer SFX. We hear more females now.)*

JUNE. Did you hear that? The ladies showed up! Kiss your hotrod goodbye.

TOM. We both know if I could kiss my own hotrod I would.

JUNE. *(June walks on set waving.)* Hello, Michigan mamas!

TOM. *(To himself.)* Michigan mamas?

ABE. Nervous?

TOM. No, I'm going to sink *Tool Thyme* like the Titanic.

ABE. What?

TOM. Nobody steals my show.

ABE. You're going to sabotage June?

TOM. Are the Spice Girls British?

ABE. I don't like this, Tom.

Tool Thyme

TOM. June used another man's tools, Abe.

ABE. She...she what?

TOM. Now you understand.

ABE. June wouldn't do that to you. There's got to be some mistake.

TOM. Listen, Abe... Marriage is World War I. Divorce is...Vietnam.

ABE. I don't understand.

TOM. Let me explain... *(Misquoting Watson.)* It's like the great philosopher always says... In war, you have to kill your wife with Play-Doh.

JUNE. Please welcome my lovely assistants, Tom and Abe! *(Tom and Abe enter the show.)*

TOM. Hello, Michigan mamas. I'm your Detroit daddy. *(He salutes with his bandaged hand and hurts himself.)* Ow! *(Beat.)* And also, please give a salute to my Kalamazoo cousin, Abe Babejack. *(The female crowd erupts in fanatical cheering for Abe.)*

ABE. Wow. Well, thank you, ladies.

TOM. Keep it in your toolbelt, Abe.

JUNE. On our premiere episode, we have something really special for you.

TOM. *(This show features a CUE CARD GUY doubled by the actor playing Simba. They read the cards slowly.)* Prepared with crude tools...

JUNE. And served to you! Free of sawdust or chest hair.

ABE. *(They all stumble around a bit finding their blocking and camera. Reading cue cards.)* What are we making for the people at home today, June?

JUNE. Well, I'm glad you asked Abe...

ABE. Whatever it is, it smells delicious.

TOM. That's me. New cauliflower cologne. *(The audience doesn't laugh.)* Tough crowd.

JUNE. I guess your laugh track won't be featured on this show, Tom.

TOM. *(Worried grunt.)* Grr?

JUNE. *(To the audience.)* Our new show is called, *Tool Thyme*... So, every recipe will feature the spice: thyme. You'd be surprised how flexible seasonings can be. From German lemon cookies *(Smell FX.)* to French garlic bread *(Smell FX.)*, thyme is... *(She leads the audience into her catch phrase.)*

ALL. À LA CARTE!!!

TOM. What was that?

JUNE. My catchphrase.

Tool Thyme

TOM. This show airs in America. Don't overcook your redneck audience.

JUNE. (*To the camera.*) On today's menu, spinach fettuccini with grilled asparagus and lemon thyme butter... I have some baking in the oven as we speak...

ABE. (*Deep inhale.*) Fabulous as a flannel sale. (*Audience Laugh SFX.*) And for dessert?

TOM. (*Joking.*) I'm going to fix a joist while eating Skittles.

JUNE. Dessert will be blueberry pie! (*4D-Smell Effect.*)

ABE. My favorite!

TOM. Hey! I'm allergic to blueberries.

JUNE. (*Fully aware.*) Aw, that's tragically tragic...

ABE. (*Tying his apron.*) Thyme goes in blueberry pie?

JUNE. Sure does! Cuts the sweetness!

TOM. There's definitely too much sweetness around here now.

JUNE. Watch it, Tom.

TOM. (*To the camera.*) For the three men left watching, today's home improvement section will be a salute to power tools. I own 276.

JUNE. Actually, that number is 275.

TOM. June, June... I think I know how many power tools I have.

JUNE. I'm sure you do. But subtract one because I used your jackhammer to destroy your man cave.

TOM. You what?

JUNE. Destroyed your man cave. And your jackhammer.

TOM. You can't destroy a *Blunt Force* jackhammer. It can cut through diamond.

JUNE. Oh, it worked great. It's the water pressure at the bottom of Lake Michigan that I think ruined it.

TOM. (*Grunt of shock.*) Grr?

JUNE. You'd still have a jackhammer if you weren't such a jack—

TOM. —asinine language like that will get you fined on local cable...

ABE. You were saying something about the power tool portion of the show, Tom?

TOM. Don't worry, men. Power tools are on the way!

JUNE. Just remember. This is my kitchen.

TOM. Kitchen? You think you have dominion in any kitchen? Simba calls you the queen of Hot Pockets!

JUNE. You try being a mother and getting a Ph.D.

TOM. I thought it was a Master's...

Tool Thyme

JUNE. Whichever!

ABE. Maybe we should get back to the recipe...

JUNE. Good thinking, Abe.

ABE. What is our first step?

JUNE. Well, we need to prepare our pasta noodles.

ABE. As you can see here, we have our dough premade.

JUNE. Made up of simple all-purpose flour, a pinch of salt, and three eggs.

ABE. First, we need to roll the dough. *(Abe and June roll.)*

JUNE. Right. Making sure to get out any lumps or air bubbles. There we are. Very nice, Abe. Great form. *(They finish.)* And now it's time to cut it. What is your preferred noodle, Abe?

ABE. Well, I've always had a hankering for linguine.

JUNE. Ah, linguine. For our viewers at home, those are long, flat, narrow ribbons of dough.

ABE. Very popular for a dish like spinach fettuccini. My mother taught me that...

JUNE. That's right, Abe. You know, ladies, Abe is an eligible bachelor. *(Audience reaction.)*

TOM. Hey! Am I just supposed to watch you two roll?

JUNE. I suppose you can cut the dough.

TOM. Now, we're talking!

JUNE. Here is your knife...

TOM. Oh, I won't be *kneading* any knife. *(No audience reaction.)*

JUNE. Oh, really?

TOM. It just so happens...I have a special tool just for this occasion.

JUNE. What occasion?

TOM. We are cooking for a studio audience. That's a lot of people. We need to speed up the process.

ABE. Tom...

TOM. *(Holding a yellow electric string trimmer.)* Using a modified Weed Whacker with a lemon twist!

JUNE. That's never going to work— *(The few men in the audience grunt in support.)* Well... Fine! Whatever! If you must...

TOM. 'Fine! Whatever! If you must....' Aw, our wedding vows...

JUNE. Sounds more like our honeymoon night.

TOM. Ah. *(Beat.)* The grunts have it!

Tool Thyme

JUNE. Don't make a mess.

TOM. Stand back. *(He turns on the string trimmer. It buzzes.)*

ABE. Careful, Tom. Remember what happened last time we used one of those...

TOM. That lawn gnome was asking for it! *(Beat.)* Hold up my dough!

ABE. I have to hold the dough!?

TOM. Who else would? You're the Holly now.

ABE. Shucks. *(He adjusts his chest and holds up a large section of dough the size of a queen-sized bed sheet.)*

TOM. How many noodles should a dough wall this size produce?

ABE. Quick math... I'd say around 4,800 noodles.

TOM. That should be enough to feed this studio audience!

ABE. And then some!

TOM. Let's see who will get the first bite. *(He draws a number from a spinning raffle cage of a real audience seat and calls it out.)* Who is in studio seat number ____? *(He identifies the patron and when items come into play that involve opinion, like salt or side sauce, June can actually ask this person what they'd prefer and cook to their actual taste.)*

JUNE. Tom, this is my show. We never discussed a live raffle.

TOM. *(Mocking her from earlier.)* That's tragically tragic...

JUNE. Fine.

TOM. Now... How long would it take to cut 4,800 noodles the traditional way, June?

JUNE. I don't know... Probably 20-30 minutes.

TOM. Let's see if we can cut that down to 20-30 seconds. *(Grunts of approval.)*

JUNE. We really need to screen our audience better.

TOM. It's time!

ABE. I can't hold it! It's not safe!

TOM. You're right.

ABE. I am? I mean, of course I am.

TOM. Get that dough spinning. Pizza style. Above your head.

ABE. You're going to cut the noodles mid-air??

TOM. Pasta-la-vista!

ABE. I don't think so, Tom.

TOM. Don't forget. You're the lovely assistant now. So, assist. And keep shut.

ABE. I really don't think this is a good idea. *(Mr. Hacksaw is heard from off and he sounds angry.)* Okay, okay. I'm the new Holly.

Tool Thyme

TOM. Abe is the eye candy now. *(One older audience female does an attracted 'ow-ow.')* God help us.

JUNE. *(Still cooking.)* You know, I think I want to see this flying fiasco.

TOM. Like a pizza, Abe. *(Abe spins the dough above his head. He gets it going fast. Tom approaches slowly with the string trimmer.)*

ABE. When do I let go?

TOM. Almost, almost... Now! *(Abe tosses the dough in the air and Tom slices it up at its peak height. But the dough hits the light above causing a brief power outage. When the lights return, everyone is covered in noodle dough, audience included.)*

JUNE. What a mess!

ABE. We look like Christmas trees covered in fleshy tinsel!

JUNE. Tom, your pasta power surge destroyed my oven! You've ruined dinner! *(Audience SFX of disappointment. June pulls out a burnt pasta dish.)* Look at this!

ABE. No worries! I've burnt many a T.V. dinner and I can save anything!

TOM. He's not kidding. I once saw him eat a pizza off a driveway.

ABE. If we take large pieces of Texas Toast... Our burnt cheese, which is now 'smoked gouda...' And a dash of thyme... We make Thyme Crunch Toast.

JUNE. Let me try that. *(She does.)* Holy smokes! But I have an idea... *(She cooks.)* What if we added ¼ tsp garlic powder, 1 teaspoon of Dijon mustard... Pinch of salt...

ABE. Yes! Perhaps a bit of honey...

JUNE. Or even a thin apple slice if we wanted to get cheeky... *(They have a finished product.)*

TOM. Apple and cheese? Barf. *(She shoves it in his mouth.)* Michigan mama that is outstanding! *(They give a piece of Thyme Crunch Toast to the selected audience member from before. Then they give it to another audience member who is a planted actor who will do a fake choking scene. Audience SFX of disappointment.)*

JUNE. No, don't go! He didn't die or anything... Please sit back down... *(The studio audience exits. June looks defeated.)*

TOM. *(Pause. With a smile.)* Tragically tragic...

ABE. That does it! I can't stand this nastiness. If this is how it's going to be... I QUIT! *(Abe exits.)*

JUNE. Now, look what you've done!

TOM. Abe will return when the poison is gone.

JUNE. *(Referring to Tom.)* Oh, the poison's leaving now. *(Reminding him.)* To pick up his son.

Tool Thyme

TOM. With pleasure.

JUNE. Go, then!

TOM. Don't bully me.

JUNE. That reminds me. You're going to have to teach him to fight.

TOM. My son knows how to fight.

JUNE. Oh? Who taught him?

TOM. He's... He's naturally tough. He's a Thomas...

JUNE. The bullies at school—

TOM. Enough of that already! My boy doesn't get bullied by anyone but you.

JUNE. Tom, you're not listening... Simba Taylor Thomas needs real understanding here— *(Mr. Hacksaw is heard from off.)* Mr. Hacksaw! Hello! What did you think of the show? Did you get the ratings back yet? *(Hacksaw SFX. Pleased.)* Hey! That's not bad for our first show! *(June exits smiling and talking to Hacksaw. Tom puts on his coat. The oven beeps wildly. Tom inspects it. After a beat, he gets a face full of soot.)*

TOM. Soot!

JUNE. *(Reentering, smiling.)* President Hacksaw loved the ratings...

TOM. He did? *(Faking it.)* Great. That's just great.

JUNE. I think so too.

TOM. It's a borderline Christmas miracle.

JUNE. He wants another episode...

TOM. Of course he does...

JUNE. *(Pause.)* Without you...

TOM. *(Grunting.)* Grr? *(Music plays. Fade to black.)*

END OF ACT ONE.

ACT 2 SCENE 1

African music plays. Lights up on Watson's backyard, lush with greenery. The sun has set and the coal walk has cooled off but there is a body imprint of Tom's fall.

Tool Thyme

Watson examines his grass skirt, which hangs from a clothesline and obscures his face. He shines a blacklight flashlight over the skirt, bathing it in purple light.

WATSON. Now where did you go to? I know you're hiding in here you little devil... Come out, come out... Wherever you are... *(A stick crack is heard. Beat.)* If you're going to stalk me young neighbor, you need to breathe more quietly.

SIMBA TAYLOR THOMAS, 10, jumps out from the greenery with a weak roar. He is a regular kid with wild lion's mane hair. His face is permanently painted like a neon lion from last Halloween. He wears bright 90s colors.

SIMBA. Roar!

WATSON. *(Not fazed.)* Getting better every day.

SIMBA. You could really hear me breathing from the bushes?

WATSON. Indeed, young Simba. *(He shines the light on Simba's face, and it glows in vivid color from the face paint.)* Besides...you're a bit phosphorescent in this light.

SIMBA. Tell me about it. My dad used some 'more power' face paint last Halloween and now I'm stuck like this.

WATSON. I see, I see.

SIMBA. Doctor said it could take months to fade.

WATSON. Oh, boy.

SIMBA. Everybody picks on me because of it.

WATSON. I can imagine.

SIMBA. I might as well be a meerkat.

WATSON. Aw, don't talk that way... I'll bet you're as bold as your father.

SIMBA. I'm bold, all right. *(Referring to his face.)* I'm basically a highlighter. You should hear the jackals laugh. Not to mention the hyenas.

WATSON. Ah, yes. Your mother mentioned an issue with buffalo, I believe...

SIMBA. Don't get me started on those watering holes. They push me around.

WATSON. Well, there are very simple ways to handle buffalo—

SIMBA. I roar at them until my lungs are about to explode.

WATSON. Does that work?

SIMBA. No.

WATSON. Of course not. I'm reminded of the old African proverb... "A roaring lion kills no game."

Tool Thyme

SIMBA. What does that mean?

WATSON. It means... Noise and action are two different things...

SIMBA. Action... Meaning I should attack them?

WATSON. I never advocate for violence. *(Beat.)* What does your father say about all this?

SIMBA. He... He doesn't know.

WATSON. Have you tried asking him for advice?

SIMBA. I don't think he'd understand... Pride and all... *(Beat.)* Can't we talk about something else, Watson?

WATSON. Sure thing, neighbor. What are you asking Santa for?

SIMBA. Well, if I meet him at the mall... I guess I'd ask for a Sega Genesis.

WATSON. But that's not what you really want...

SIMBA. Well, no...

WATSON. You really want your family back... Don't you?

SIMBA. You're very wise, Watson. How did you know?

WATSON. Any young cub would want the same. I'm asking Santa for the same thing as a matter of fact...

SIMBA. *(Beat.)* What's with your dress here?

WATSON. Well, since you're in the mood to hunt, I'm currently looking for a small scorpion.

SIMBA. A scorpion? In Michigan?

WATSON. See, I ordered this authentic Malo skirt from West Africa—

SIMBA. Wait... There's a scorpion loose back here!?

WATSON. I'm afraid so... Must have snuck into the crate packaging.

SIMBA. Is it poisonous?

WATSON. Most certainly so. I saw him crawl in the fibers here—

SIMBA. How are we going to find it?

WATSON. With this black light. Scorpions glow under ultraviolet light.

SIMBA. Cool! Can I try?

WATSON. Well... I suppose so. Careful, now. Don't get within striking distance of the tail.

SIMBA. I'll be careful; I'm a predator, after all... *(He looks.)* I don't see anything. Are you sure it's still in these fibers?

WATSON. Well, I suppose it could have crawled away somewhere.

SIMBA. Time to hunt! *(Looking around.)* We need a bigger black light.

Tool Thyme

WATSON. You're right, young neighbor! I know just what to do.

SIMBA. Do you have more flashlights?

WATSON. Flash, no. Flood, yes. For my plants. (*Watson flips a switch and the entire backyard is bathed in ultraviolet light. Suddenly, we see several glowing scorpions scattered everywhere, some the size of a couch.*)

SIMBA. Watson...

WATSON. Oh, my...

SIMBA. What... What do we do? It looks like Jurassic Park back here.

WATSON. Run! (*They run off. Fade to black.*)

SCENE 2

Lights up on a Lumberjack Bar. Abe and Holly are sitting, watching sports.

ABE. Well, I didn't think this Christmas that I'd be unemployed. (*He takes a shot.*)

HOLLY. (*Eating pretzels.*) At least you don't have kids to buy presents for...

ABE. (*Crying at that realization.*) You're right... God, I'm almost forty and family-less. You know, I always told myself that I was a career man. Now I'm career-less.

HOLLY. You're bumming me out, Abe.

ABE. Do they need any more lifeguards at the Bay?

HOLLY. You don't have the chest for it. There's a required buoyancy...

ABE. (*Devastated.*) I'm going to have to move back in with Mother!

HOLLY. (*Watching T.V.*) Can you believe Klaus Topper is going to beat Matlock Helming?

ABE. What sport is that?

HOLLY. (*Chainsaw SFX.*) Logging, of course! For someone who looks like a lumberjack, you sure don't know the culture.

ABE. I'm familiar with timber sports. Hot saw, stock saws, single bucks...

HOLLY. I love the underhand chop.

ABE. Classic.

HOLLY. Look, Klaus is using a *Blunt Force* chainsaw.

ABE. A good choice.

HOLLY. Are you kidding? The *Moving Machete* is a much more powerful tool...

ABE. You sound like Tom.

Tool Thyme

HOLLY. I'm just saying. If it were me out there, I'd be using a *Moving Machete*.

ABE. You always did know the best tools.

HOLLY. You don't hang around you boys for nine years and not pick up a few things.

ABE. I'd imagine a few new swear words.

HOLLY. You were both good teachers.

ABE. (*Beat. Shot.*) Oh, why did I quit the show? I abandoned my best friend... In his time of need.

HOLLY. Tom and June need their space now... (*Beat.*) Look! Matlock is about to come back!

ABE. Go Helming!

HOLLY. Chop!

ABE. C'mon...chop!

HOLLY. (*They cheer in celebration.*) Yes! He did it!

ABE. Yes indeed!

HOLLY. It's because he was using a *Moving Machete* chainsaw!

ABE. They really are the best. Lumberjack approved.

HOLLY. You sound like an authentic infomercial...

ABE. (*Upset again.*) That's probably my future! Selling *Blunt Force* power hoses at two in the morning to housewives who can't sleep.

HOLLY. Hose be tripping. There's nothing wrong with the infomercial life. It's a paycheck.

ABE. It seems like a step down.

HOLLY. Maybe... But I'm sure your agent can at least get you an audition for something.

ABE. What would I even sell?

HOLLY. Well, what tools are you passionate about?

ABE. Hmm. I've always had a soft spot for an impact wrench. No! An orbital sander!

HOLLY. See! The infomercial life won't be so bad.

ABE. Maybe you're right.

HOLLY. And look at it this way... You're the star of an infomercial. Not a sidekick.

ABE. (*Perking up.*) That's true! Without sounding too shallow, I've always wanted more camera time.

HOLLY. You should have it! The camera loves you!

ABE. You really think so?

Tool Thyme

HOLLY. Of course!

ABE. Well, shucks! Thanks, Holly!

HOLLY. Don't mention it.

ABE. No, I really appreciate it. You've restored my smile. I think this is the start of something great for Abe Babejack! *(As he triumphantly touts his future, his chair breaks underneath him and he falls to the floor. He spills his beer on his flannel shirt.)*
Whoa!

HOLLY. What happened!?

ABE. This barstool broke on me! And I've ruined my favorite shirt!

HOLLY. Let me take a look at that...

ABE. It's just a stain, I'm sure some club soda...

HOLLY. No! The stool...

ABE. I've shattered it.

HOLLY. *(She produces a fancy gadget from her cleavage.)* I'm always prepared.

ABE. What is that?

HOLLY. Little invention of mine.

ABE. A tool?

HOLLY. Yup. It can repair wood lickety-split.

ABE. What kind of tool is that?

HOLLY. Think; if a nail gun had a baby with wood glue.

ABE. Nails and glue in one? That's brilliant.

HOLLY. *(Fixes the chair.)* Sit. Good as new.

ABE. *(Sitting, impressed.)* Wow! Sturdy! How did you make this?

HOLLY. I've been tinkering with all of Tom's broken tools for years.

ABE. When?

HOLLY. Off camera... Backstage... Hospital waiting room... I had hours...

ABE. An incredible invention!

HOLLY. I've got *dozens* more! All unique and useful!

ABE. Dozens? You're like the Thomas Edison of tools!

HOLLY. Now, let's see that shirt.

ABE. Just a stain.

HOLLY. I have just the tool.

ABE. Really?

HOLLY. *(Pulling a hairdryer from her bag.)* A blow-dryer.

ABE. Practical.

Tool Thyme

HOLLY. Not really. It's gotten Tom's 'more power' treatment. I've got jet engine parts in here. *(She turns it on and it sounds like a jet engine.)*

ABE. Uh-oh.

HOLLY. But don't worry. I added a woman's touch. Scents! Hope you like vanilla potpourri! *(She points the blower at Abe and he comically blows away. Vanilla Potpourri Smell FX.)*

ABE. *(From off.)* Wow! I'm dry! And vanilla-scented!

HOLLY. *(Grunting.)* Grr! Scratch and sniff! *(Fade to black.)*

SCENE 3

Weeks later. Dim lights illuminate the Tool Thyme set. There are promotional photos of June all over. The lights are off. Tom sneaks in. He has a toolbox and starts to cut up the set. He begins setting booby traps to destroy June's hard work live on air. After all his traps are set, June enters for rehearsal and turns on the lights. She looks very sharp. They are both holding scripts.

TOM. Hello, June. Glad you made it to rehearsal...

JUNE. What are you doing here? Hacksaw fired you.

TOM. I checked my contract. He can't until this season ends.

JUNE. Oh.

TOM. So, I hope you've enjoyed the last few weeks alone—

JUNE. The last six episodes have been bliss without your *Blunt Force*.

TOM. Well, daddy's home now.

JUNE. Great. *(Annoyed.)* Stupid contracts... *(Beat.)* Let's just rehearse...

TOM. Part of the reason that I'm back is because you aren't promoting tools enough.

JUNE. I promoted the *Blunt Force* eggbeater last week!

TOM. Hacksaw wants the *power* tools promoted...

JUNE. Like what?

TOM. *(Revealing a cement mixer.)* Ta-da! For the cranberries!

JUNE. We cannot use a cement mixer for the cranberry sauce!

TOM. You didn't even let me show you! *(Tom turns on the cement mixer and almost immediately it malfunctions and sprays June with cranberry sauce.)*

Tool Thyme

JUNE. Tom! This is one of my favorite outfits! It took me days to make!

TOM. I can fix this...

JUNE. Give it up!

TOM. Go change, I'll have this all sorted out—

JUNE. I don't need to change. I came prepared. I was married to you for over a decade. I know the hazards. *(She does a very fast quick change into an even more impressive outfit.)*

TOM. You're telling me after all these years you can get ready that quickly!?

JUNE. Put that mixer away!

TOM. How else are we going to feed the studio audience?

JUNE. Who said we have to feed them all?

TOM. You are such a tease.

JUNE. Stop that! We feed the *camera*.

TOM. Fine.

JUNE. Let's just stick to my script. I've thought of everything this time!

TOM. Hope so. It's the Christmas Special, you know...

JUNE. *(Snapping.)* I am aware of how important this show is, Tom.

TOM. We'll see, my Chérie. *(He pops a cherry in his mouth and briefly chokes.)* So, what are we burning tonight?

JUNE. Humph! It's Christmas dinner! Roast Duck with Orange & Thyme.

TOM. I see you're whipping out the big guns. That's your specialty.

JUNE. Viewership always increases over the holiday break. I know this is my 'thyme' to hook new fans.

TOM. That's— Right, actually.

JUNE. Surprised I'm faring so well?

TOM. Let's just murder this duck.

JUNE. It comes pre-murdered. *(She throws the frozen duck at him.)* Heads up!

TOM. Gross. You're a bully, you know that?

JUNE. Oh, quit crying. Speaking of bullies...

TOM. Oh, not this nonsense again.

JUNE. Tom, you need to take this seriously.

TOM. I spent all weekend with Simba. He didn't say a word about buffalo...

JUNE. You don't let him, Tom.

TOM. Here we go.

Tool Thyme

JUNE. You would struggle to tell your father about a weakness if your father was all about ‘more power.’

TOM. I couldn’t tell my father anything.

JUNE. And that’s how you want it to be with Simba?

TOM. Of course not.

JUNE. Then, listen to him. He’s getting trampled—trampled out there.

TOM. Don’t exaggerate. *(Simba enters.)*

SIMBA. Mom, Watson is here to pick me up.

JUNE. Okay, Simba. You don’t want to stay for the show?

SIMBA. I’ve got homework...

JUNE. Okay. Buckle up. And I made you rabbit stew. It’s on the stove.

SIMBA. Thanks. *(Turning around, we see buffalo trample marks on his back. He exits.)*

JUNE. Did you see those hoof marks?

TOM. Hmm. I did actually.

JUNE. Now do you believe me? *(Tom thinks. Hacksaw SFX.)* Mr. Hacksaw! I’m so glad you’re here for the show! *(Hacksaw SFX.)* What? How can that be? *(Hacksaw SFX.)* There must be some mistake... *(Hacksaw SFX.)* Men have abandoned us? Blunt Force Tools has lost how much business? It can’t be all that bad... *(Hacksaw SFX.)* The ratings have sunk to what?? *(Phone Ring SFX. June doesn’t notice. She keeps talking to Hacksaw. Tom answers. The lights shift to him momentarily.)*

TOM. Hello...

HOLLY. *(From off.)* How could you, Tom?

TOM. Holly?

HOLLY. How could you be so cold?

TOM. I don’t know what you’re talking about.

HOLLY. June! She doesn’t have enough money for Christmas presents for Simba.

TOM. How do you know that?

HOLLY. Women tell each other things, Tom.

TOM. Why didn’t she tell me?

HOLLY. Oh, right. Ask her estranged husband for money? After she flaunted it in his face!

TOM. That’s right, she did.

HOLLY. Forget your petty differences, this is about your son.

TOM. Listen, I had no idea June was struggling like that.

Tool Thyme

HOLLY. Well, now you do. Oh, and tell June I have her Tupperware lid. *(She hangs up. Hacksaw SFX. The lights shift back to June.)* No, please, sir! You can't do that! It's Christmas! Give us one last show! I will turn everything around! I know I can do it! I've got everything I have in this show! *(Tom notices June's desperation. Hacksaw SFX.)* Yes! Thank you! I won't let you down! *(The lights change. It's show time. The Tool Thyme theme music plays. Tom and June get into places. Music ends. Audience Cheer SFX. Trembling, June looks nervous. Tom notices.)* Welcome, my Michigan mamas! I'm Tom, sorry... I'm June and— *(Getting nervous.)* And... And Merry Christmas to all! I'd like to start our show— Well— By— By...

TOM. *(He has a moment of realization that he must help her.)* By introducing her returning sexy sidekick. I'm Tom, the tool master, Thomas. It's great to have all of you here this snowy evening. *(Taking her hand, giving her confidence.)* June has a great show prepared. She's got this. *(To her.)* No matter how tragically tragic, she's got this...

JUNE. That's right... *(Gaining confidence.)* I do! We do! Tonight we are going to prepare a Christmas dinner classic! We will create an atmosphere that inspires the yuletide of classic Christmas past but bring a new flavor or two to spice things up. We've really got some Michigan magic here for you, folks.

TOM. Tonight's meal is even mother-in-law approved! *(Audience 'ooo' SFX.)* Even Santa would sit down for seconds...

JUNE. *(She lifts three silver domes to show the finished products. First lid lift.)* Roast Duck with Orange & Thyme! *(Larger Audience 'ooo' SFX. Second lid lift.)* Seasoned Mashed Potatoes...

TOM. And... *(Third lid lift.)* Cherry Pie for dessert! Made with authentic, hand-picked, Michigan, Montmorency cherries! *(Largest Audience 'ooo' SFX.)*

JUNE. So, that's the finish line...

TOM. *(Reading the cue cards successfully.)* But where do we begin, June?

JUNE. Well, personally... I like to start with my dry ingredients. Let's start with the duck sauce. We will need flour, black pepper, salt, and of course...thyme! *(She adds all the dry ingredients. Then, she picks up a mixing bowl, but the bottom has been cut out by Tom earlier and the flour goes everywhere. June's face is covered in powder.)* Oh no!

TOM. Uh, oh. Some jerk gave you a faulty mixing bowl!

JUNE. *(Accusatory.)* Some jerk, eh? *(She sneezes.)*

TOM. He may have added a bit of Simba's sneezing powder in there too.

Tool Thyme

JUNE. *(Sneezing.)* What?

TOM. I'm sure the jerk is sorry. And he wants you to succeed. Scout's honor.

JUNE. Well, as long as that was all he did. *(Sneezing.)* I suppose it's fine. *(To the camera.)* Just a little prank... *(Sneezing.)* A fun way to start the holidays. *(She laughs it off awkwardly. After a beat, Tom joins her.)*

TOM. *(Looking around worried, lying.)* Yes. A fun prank. That's all...

JUNE. I need to clear my eyes. Can you walk me to the sink, Tom?

TOM. Sure thing, June. *(He does carefully.)* Let me turn the faucet on for you... These things can be temperamental.

JUNE. That sink works fine, please move aside. It's starting to burn.

TOM. Just a second, I want to get the water warm for you.

JUNE. How kind... *(He turns on the water carefully trying to navigate his own booby trap, but it blasts him for a moment before he turns it off.)* What was that noise?

TOM. *(Dripping.)* Pressure was a bit high. *(He adjusts it.)* Fixed. Go ahead and try it now.

JUNE. *(Washing her face.)* Okay. Sorry about that, everyone. Let's get back to the recipe.

TOM. Yes. Perhaps we should deal with the duck.

JUNE. Not just yet. It's still defrosting. But we can preheat the oven.

TOM. I can do that! *(To himself.)* And it's booby trap free! *(The oven beeps.)* Done!

JUNE. Thank you! Now, we should start the seasoned mashed potatoes. *(She and Tom gather the materials.)* I used to love my grandmother's mashed potatoes. She didn't just make these at Christmastime. She'd make them anytime I felt sad. Being a navy brat, we moved a lot, so I felt sad a lot...

TOM. Good thing you didn't live through the Irish potato famine.

JUNE. So, I guess in a way these are my ultimate comfort food.

TOM. Wait... Is that why you always made these when we would fight?

JUNE. I guess so. Anyway...

TOM. How come you never made these after my softball team lost?

JUNE. Well—

TOM. Or after any of my trips to the emergency room?

JUNE. Oh, well—

TOM. Or after—

JUNE. Moving on! Bottom line. My seasoned mashed potatoes will warm your soul better than chicken soup!

Tool Thyme

TOM. How do we begin?

JUNE. Well, we take peeled potatoes like these russet potatoes here—

TOM. And?

JUNE. Add them to cold water with a pinch of salt...

TOM. Why cold?

JUNE. Cold water ensures they cook evenly.

TOM. Pro tip indeed.

JUNE. After they've softened, we begin by well...mashing them.

TOM. In a bowl that isn't broken.

JUNE. Right. *(She begins mashing, but the handle comes off.)* Oh, no!

TOM. *(Pretending he's not responsible.)* Another faulty item!

JUNE. That's the only one I had!

TOM. We can use our hands!

JUNE. Gross! Stay here, I'll go and find something! *(To the audience.)* Be back in a jiffy! *(She runs off.)*

TOM. *(Looking around, he finds a plunger. He begins mashing the potatoes. June returns with a hammer.)* Got it!

JUNE. What are you doing!?

TOM. What? It works...

JUNE. You have got to be kidding me! A plunger!? That's vile!

TOM. Calm down, they are brand new...

JUNE. You're making toxic waste!

TOM. Look for yourself. Lump free, babe...

JUNE. *(Looking in the bowl.)* I'll be. Those look perfect!

TOM. And I did it butt crack free. Grab a plunger and get to work. *(They each mash the potatoes and after a moment, they build a little rhythm together. The mashing noise plays the tune of Jingle Bells. They each smile. Once they are aware of it, they break off the rhythm awkwardly.)* I think we mashed that one enough. Don't you, June?

JUNE. We don't want to over-mash. Then our dish will become gummy.

TOM. Like a Stretch Armstrong doll.

JUNE. Let's mash the rest of the potatoes.

TOM. How many more do we need to do?

JUNE. That whole barrel.

TOM. That's going to take forever!

Tool Thyme

JUNE. *(Playing along.)* Well, what did you have in mind?

TOM. More power of course! *(He grunts. The men in the audience grunt with him, and to his surprise, a few female grunts emerge.)* Were those female grunts I heard?

JUNE. I think so! Show us your stuff, tool master.

TOM. Direct from the *Blunt Force* warehouse. *(He pulls out two large power drills.)* These are state-of-the-art power drills...with a 'peeling' setting.

JUNE. You think of everything, Tom.

TOM. If you're tired of wasting your holiday doing mindless potato peeling, then this baby is for you.

JUNE. How powerful is it?

TOM. Twin engine. And get ready for this... Six horsepower.

JUNE. What? Really? That sounds like a lot.

TOM. The holidays are a time for family. Not peeling. The only peeling I want to do is on the beach in Honolulu. *(He puts on goggles, June does too.)* Let's slice the spuds! *(They turn their drills on, and they work at first, but then they go haywire and potatoes start flying everywhere, some mashed. Tom and June dodge the projectiles.)* These drills seem to have a mind of their own! *(Tom gets them offstage. After things calm down, we hear a Hacksaw SFX.)*

JUNE. Don't worry, Mr. Hacksaw.

TOM. Everything is under control! *(He takes a potato to the groin from off and falls down.)*

JUNE. Oh, my!

TOM. *(He can barely talk.)* Man down! Both of them! *(Hacksaw SFX.)*

JUNE. Maybe we should move to the cherry pie to save the show?

TOM. *(Whispering in pain.)* My cherries are squashed.

JUNE. *(To the audience.)* How about dessert? Anyone up for that? *(The audience claps.)* Okay! We haven't lost them yet! *(Tom squirms in pain.)*

TOM. *(Whispered.)* I need a commercial break. Back in a jiffy. *(He rolls off.)*

JUNE. Well... The show must go on! This is one of my all-time favorite recipes. My son Simba and I went all the way to Kalamazoo for these cherries because they are the best in the whole state. We got them from a wise woman named Juniper. She grows them with mountain water! Not too tart, but just enough to wake your taste buds up. We will be using a dash of thyme to even out all the sugary flavors. *(She gets out all the ingredients.)* So, to begin, we will need five cups of pitted cherries.... One cup of granulated sugar... A quarter cup of cornstarch, one tablespoon fresh

Tool Thyme

lemon juice, half a teaspoon almond and vanilla extract, a little salt, a lot of butter, cut into small pieces...and a dash of cinnamon! Will you just take a look at these cherries? They are almost baseball sized. In fact, they look even bigger than I remember! *(Tom rolls back on set in major pain trying to warn June, but he can't yell or move quickly to get her attention, so he slowly crawls to her as she talks.)* Some people like their cherry pie to be extra sweet, but not me. I like a little tang. But the real secret is in the pie crust. *(Tom is desperately trying to get June's attention but failing. He inches closer to her.)* Adding a shot of vodka to the dough will ensure a softness that even Betty Crocker would envy! *(Tom crawls closer in tremendous pain, trying to shout, but his voice is gone.)* You know, not to brag, but I think my cherry pie might outdo even Martha Stewart. Maybe someday you'll be able to buy my pie at K-Mart too. *(She picks up the finished cherry pie from earlier.)* Wouldn't that be something? To have my pie available in all fifty states? That would really be explosive for my career! So, shall we get to—

TOM. Cherry bombs! Cherry bombs! *(Tom jumps onto the set and grabs the pie and tries to run off with it. But it explodes, blowing off both his arms comically and covering the set in red cherry goop.)*

JUNE. What happened!?

TOM. *(Covered in cherry, missing two arms.)* Cherry bombs! There are cherry bombs in the pie... *(Blood squirts out of both his arm sockets. He barely reacts.)*

JUNE. *(Sarcastically.)* Good to know now! *(Upset.)* Your arms! We're going to have to go to the hospital again! *(Beat. More upset.)* Oh, no! The pie is ruined!!! *(Audience Disappointment SFX. They begin to leave.)* No! Don't go! Please!

TOM. What a mess.

JUNE. Doesn't that hurt?

TOM. Hasn't kicked in yet...

JUNE. Cherry bombs!? Why would you do something like this?

TOM. I'm sorry. I didn't realize— *(His arms squirt blood on her.)*

JUNE. You are unbelievable! *(The smoke alarm goes off. The beeps are a Christmas tune.)*

TOM. I'm sorry, June. I didn't mean to ruin everything.

JUNE. No. You did actually.

TOM. Let me give you a hand cleaning up.

JUNE. Go to the hospital, dummy!

TOM. Right. *(He exits.)*

Tool Thyme

JUNE. *(Hacksaw SFX.)* Mr. Hacksaw! I know that wasn't our best work yet... And I know you have given me many chances... *(Hacksaw SFX.)* No! The ratings can't be *that* bad! A 2.0 flat? That's almost impossible. I know we were doing great in the beginning... Didn't one of our early episodes hit big numbers? *(Hacksaw SFX.)* I know my son at least watches... *(Hacksaw SFX.)* If you just let us finish the season I know we will find our footing... *(Tom returns for his car keys. He picks them up with his teeth. He eavesdrops.)* Please, sir. Don't fire me! I don't have anything else. It's Christmas... My son... *(Hacksaw SFX.)* Yes, sir. *(Sad.)* I'll clean out my dressing room. It might take a while... I've got five racks of clothing in there... *(Defeated, June exits. Still bleeding, Tom looks upset for June too. Fade to black.)*

SCENE 4

A room at the hospital. Watson is there in bed with bandaged feet. Tom is in the bed next to him with bandages all over his torso, still no arms.

WATSON. ...cherry bombs?

TOM. Stupid, I know.

WATSON. Well, I can't pretend I'm any smarter... *(He wiggles his bandaged feet.)*

TOM. Your ancestors forgot to protect your feet?

WATSON. They must not like me.

TOM. Still, it was brave to try that coal walk.

WATSON. Thank you, neighbor. It was supposed to be purifying. *(His feet smoke. Simba enters.)*

SIMBA. Wow! What happened to your arms!?

TOM. Gone with the wind. *(Beat.)* What happened to your eye?

SIMBA. Nothing...

TOM. Come here. It's usually neon pink. Now it's black and blue?

SIMBA. It happened at school.

TOM. The buffalo?

SIMBA. How do you know about them?

TOM. Apparently, you told everyone but me about them.

SIMBA. Well, it's really just one buffalo. Billy. He's the problem.

TOM. How so?

Tool Thyme

SIMBA. He takes my zebra money, makes noise when I'm trying to stalk, pushes me into the wrong herd's bathroom. Stuff like that.

TOM. Classic bully.

SIMBA. So, what do I do about him?

TOM. Bite his hindquarters.

WATSON. *(Coughing.)* Violence is never the answer, hiddly-dee-ho... *(Coughing.)*

TOM. Right. Right. Simba, if this guy is bothering you, you have to stand up to him.

SIMBA. Okay. How? He outweighs me by 350 pounds. Did I mention the horns?

TOM. So, then we can't...shouldn't...fight. Then, according to all those after-school specials, we need to use our words.

SIMBA. He's as dumb as an ox. Words aren't his forte.

WATSON. I believe it was Winston Churchill who said: "You can't argue with a tiger when your head is in its mouth."

TOM. Okay... Then... Poison? That always works...

SIMBA. Well, I have an idea. But it's a little crazy.

TOM. Mustard gas?

SIMBA. No. But I will need some of Watson's *grass*... And maybe a black light or two...

WATSON. I think I know what you're up to, young neighbor.

TOM. Someone want to fill me in? *(Simba whispers his plan into Tom's ear.)* That's sick! I love it!

SIMBA. Really?

TOM. *(Nodding.)* But...I think your plan needs... 'More power!' *(He whispers his idea into Simba's ear.)* How about that?

SIMBA. Awesome! *(He grunts.)*

TOM. So glad you are my cub. Smart and strong.

SIMBA. Aww, thanks, Dad. I'd give you a hug, but you don't have any arms...

TOM. Just promise me one thing...

SIMBA. What's that?

TOM. When your mother remarries the plumber, don't call him dad.

SIMBA. The plumber? You mean the butt crack guy?

TOM. Yes.

SIMBA. Mom hates him. She says he smells like cheese.

TOM. Simba, your mom and him snaked a drain or two—

Tool Thyme

WATSON. No, no, neighbor! That's what I was trying to tell you earlier! I think you are mistaken.

TOM. She admitted to using another man's tools, Watson.

WATSON. And she meant it literally, Tom.

TOM. (*Confused.*) Grr?

WATSON. She literally used his tools to fix the plumbing issue you neglected in your master bathroom nook.

TOM. Enough euphemisms...

WATSON. These are not euphemisms. They are literal!

TOM. You mean...

WATSON. Yes.

TOM. June never...

WATSON. Nope.

TOM. (*Grunting.*) Oh, no!

SIMBA. Mom would never do something like that to you. She even stuck by you when you nailed your head to Holly.

TOM. I got confused... I'm such an idiot! I need to make this up to her.

SIMBA. She loves snow globes...

TOM. Maybe I can convince President Hacksaw to give her another episode of *Tool Thyme*.

WATSON. I think your past episodes have proven that tools and cooking don't mix.

TOM. *Power* tools maybe. But what if we had... (*He gulps.*) Less power...

WATSON & SIMBA. Grr?

Holly and Abe enter.

HOLLY. We leave you alone for a few shows and look what happens!

ABE. Tom! Hardly a handyman anymore.

TOM. Holly? Abe? What are you doing here?

ABE. We come bearing good tidings.

TOM. If you're here to Christmas carol, I'm in enough pain already...

HOLLY. Looks rough...

TOM. Yes, but I'm on Tylenol 2, thank you.

HOLLY. Don't worry... We're here to assist you... What we do best. (*Calling off.*) Bring in the plastic surgery team!

Tool Thyme

TOM. *(Grunting.)* Grr? *(A white sheet is brought in, and a light shows the silhouette of a SURGEON. Surgery shadow scene. Tom's missing arms are replaced with two customized Moving Machete chainsaws. Abe and Holly stand by to observe like mad scientists. Tom is part machine now. He emerges in smoke and glory à la Wolverine. Chainsaw SFX. He grunts with power. Fade to black.)*

SCENE 5

The Thomas home. June admires her snow globe collection while talking on the phone, hopelessly tangled in the cord. Simba is in the backyard building a snow-warthog with Billy the Buffalo.

JUNE. *(On the phone.)* I'm so glad our boys could squash their differences. Yes. Me too. They are both out in the backyard playing in the snow. I'll have them come inside soon. It's pretty dark out there. But, yes, they seem to be getting along great! So, you'll be here at seven to pick up Billy? Okay. Great. See you then, Mrs. Buffalo. *(She hangs up.)*

TOM. *(Knocking on the door.)* Hello?

JUNE. Just a minute. Oh. What do you want? *(She shakes a snow globe in stress relief.)*

TOM. Hello, June...

JUNE. Come to gloat? *(Untangling herself from the phone cord.)* I've been fired. Just like you wanted.

TOM. That's not what I wanted.

JUNE. Yes, it is.

TOM. Why do you always assume the worst in me?

JUNE. You risked your hotrod to make me disappear... That's why!

TOM. All that mean stuff was in the heat of the moment.

JUNE. Why are you here, Tom?

TOM. Well, I have news.

JUNE. News?

TOM. It's about *Tool Thyme*.

JUNE. I hope I never hear that theme song again!

Tool Thyme

TOM. Why? You did great things on that show.

JUNE. Right.

TOM. Really. *(He reveals a large sack of letters.)* This is fan mail...for you...that I hid in the dumpster.

JUNE. What? *(Surprised.)* Why would you—

TOM. I was jealous. You got more letters in your first season than I ever did.

JUNE. I miss it so much. Even though it was a huge failure.

TOM. It could have been a success if we had worked together.

JUNE. What do you mean?

TOM. I was never really on your side. Not the way I should have been.

JUNE. Why are you telling me this now?

TOM. Well, I've been thinking about a way to combine our talents...

JUNE. We're divorced; I don't have to do that anymore.

TOM. No, no! Stop joking around. I'm talking about season two here.

JUNE. I'm listening.

TOM. It's hard to explain. Let me show you... Simba, bring in the prototype! *(Simba enters with a domed silver platter. He removes the lid to reveal a dessert.)*

JUNE. A snow globe?

SIMBA. An *edible* snow globe!

TOM. Or as I like to call it...a sugar showpiece!

JUNE. The glass is edible? No way!

SIMBA. The glass dome is made of sugar.

TOM. Melted over one of Holly's balloons. And the gingerbread house is a luxurious Victorian Tudor. Steep roofs, stained glass, asymmetrical shapes...

JUNE. Look at the little mailbox!

SIMBA. Pretzel sticks and white chocolate. Dad worked really hard...

JUNE. This is a work of art!

TOM. *(Grunting.)* Thank you, thank you. Combines your love of sugar and my love of gingerbread architecture.

JUNE. It's genius.

TOM. It actually took *less* power...and tiny tools. My brain almost broke.

SIMBA. I'm going back outside to finish my snow-warthog.

JUNE. How are things going with Billy?

SIMBA. *(Shrugging.)* About the same. *(He exits.)*

Tool Thyme

JUNE. I love it. I really do. (*Romantic twinge. The phone rings and the answering machine picks it up. Hacksaw SFX.*) Did you hear that offer? Hacksaw's giving you a new show? That's amazing! You're the star again. Congratulations!

TOM. No need for congratulations...

JUNE. Why not? You got your show back!

TOM. I just came from Hacksaw's office. I turned his offer down.

JUNE. Why?

TOM. I've come to learn that things aren't the same without you, June. When I spoke with Hacksaw, I demanded you stay on as my co-host.

JUNE. I'll bet he rebelled. I was a ratings dud.

TOM. Yes. He fired me too. Outright.

JUNE. So, we are both out.

TOM. I guess our local cable days are over.

JUNE. That was really nice what you did for me. You didn't have to do that.

TOM. I wanted to.

JUNE. It's really the end?

TOM. Look on the bright side. (*Referring to his saw arms.*) I can always go into lawn care. (*Stressed Buffalo sounds come from the backyard.*)

JUNE. What on Earth was that?

TOM. Wounded buffalo?

JUNE. The boys! (*They rush to check on the boys. Suddenly, Watson's purple plant lights illuminate the backyard, and Billy runs off screaming at the giant phosphorescent scorpions all around him. Simba is seen laughing and then gives a triumphant roar. June looks stern, Tom looks pleased.*) Simba!

TOM. Way to go, son!

JUNE. Get inside now! And knock the snow off your paws first!

TOM. King of the jungle gym!

JUNE. Go to your den! (*Simba runs off. Abe and Holly come to the front door.*)

TOM. Abe? Holly? What are you two doing here? Come to give me lawn-mower legs. Hey, that's actually not a bad idea.

HOLLY. Looking sharp, Tom.

ABE. Hello, Tom. June.

HOLLY. We heard what happened.

ABE. Canceled. That's tough.

HOLLY. You both deserved better.

Tool Thyme

TOM. That's kind of you to say.

JUNE. Have a seat. I'll cut you a piece of coffee cake.

TOM. I'll be doing the cutting.

JUNE. Can I get either of you a Crystal Light?

HOLLY. No, thanks. We have news.

JUNE. More news? *(Suddenly, Tom's Moving Machete arms briefly spark and malfunction.)*

TOM. *(Moving erratically.)* Power surge. It will pass. No need to worry.

ABE. *(He dodges Tom's arm.)* Duck!

JUNE. Watch out for my snow globe collection! *(Tom accidentally breaks the snow globes.)* No!

TOM. Global catastrophe!

ABE. Look out! *(Tom cuts a bit of Holly's hair off.)*

HOLLY. That does it! *(She takes out a weird-looking gadget and fixes Tom's arm.)*

TOM. Thanks, Holly. That was close.

JUNE. *(Devastated.)* My snow globes...

HOLLY. It's rare the *Moving Machete* malfunctions...

TOM. Made a few modifications... What kind of tool was that?

HOLLY. An invention of mine.

ABE. She's got dozens more just as handy!

TOM. Maybe Holly is the real tool master.

HOLLY. With the balloons to boot.

TOM. Grr?

HOLLY. Thanks to Abe and his agent, we've signed a new contract.

TOM. With *Blunt Force Tools* and Mr. Hacksaw?

HOLLY. No. Not local cable. A national contract!

ABE. On that new thing called the internet.

TOM. Wow!

JUNE. National. Like Martha Stewart?

HOLLY. Exactly.

TOM. Tell us about your show...

HOLLY. Well, we will be selling my new inventions. Tools for the tough jobs.

TOM. So...infomercials?

HOLLY. Something like that. Abe, tell him.

Tool Thyme

ABE. My agent told me the internet is where all future sales will be. So, we started a website about two weeks ago.

JUNE. A website? One of those www things?

ABE. Yes. We're calling it...ONLYTOOLS.COM.

TOM. I don't know, guys. I don't think this internet will last.

HOLLY. In the first week we made a million dollars.

TOM. Grr?

HOLLY. Abe is going to run the website. And be the star of the infomercials!

ABE. My dreams have finally come true.

HOLLY. We were wondering, would you like to join us?

TOM. Let me stop you right there... *(Thinking.)* I'd be *honored* to be your sidekick. *(Tom and Abe hug.)*

HOLLY. Great! Here are your balloons... *(She hands Tom a bag of balloons.)* Just kidding.

ABE. We leased a studio lot! We start shooting in California on Monday! Six months!

TOM. I'll pack my scuba gear! June, did you hear that? California!

JUNE. I love this for you. But my life is here in Detroit. Simba has school...

TOM. But California...

JUNE. It sounds great. I'm sure you'll do wonderful things there. You'll bring 'more power' to the ocean itself. Surf's up! *(June runs off sad.)*

TOM. What's gotten into her?

ABE. She'll miss you, that's all.

TOM. Doubtful. She divorced me.

ABE. I thought you divorced her.

TOM. Hey, we both clicked the pens. *(Beat.)* She was using another man's tools—Oh. Wait a minute. That was all a misunderstanding...

ABE. Marriage is a series of land mines known as misunderstandings.

HOLLY. Let's go. See you in Hollywood on Monday, Tom! *(She hands him a plane ticket. Holly and Abe exit.)*

TOM. *(Holding the ticket, to himself.)* I have to go. This is my career we're talking about here. Built from the rubble. And I'm not getting any younger. I only have so many years before my back goes out... *(He paces.)* I'm single... Simba is old enough to kill a meal on his own... And I can fly home every weekend to see him... I have nothing holding me back. Why shouldn't I go? Bob Vila would go! I must do this.

Tool Thyme

I'm going. That's it. (*Indecisive.*) But— (*Watson is heard in the backyard.*) Watson! Watson will know what to do! (*Light shift.*)

SCENE 6

Watson's backyard. The coal walk is lit.

TOM. Hey, Watson.

WATSON. Hiddly-dee-ho, roommate.

TOM. At the coal walk again, I see...

WATSON. I'm close to mastering it. I can feel it. Ouch!

TOM. Sorry to distract your ancestors.

WATSON. It's no trouble. By the way, there's a snowstorm coming, Tom. Best wrap your pipes. Or should I say June's pipes.

TOM. Smart thinking. But it turns out I'm escaping the snow.

WATSON. Oh?

TOM. Thanks for letting me stay with you and all...

WATSON. Moving back in with June? Have things warmed up between you two?

TOM. Hardly. I'm moving to California to work with Abe and Holly. I think...

WATSON. That's wonderful, Tom! I'm sure your family is very proud.

TOM. So, you think I should go?

WATSON. I didn't say that...

TOM. So, I should stay?

WATSON. Didn't say that either.

TOM. Say something, Watson! I can't be the only one thinking out here!

WATSON. I'm reminded of what the great poet Charles Bukowski wrote. He said, "What matters most is how well you walk through the fire."

TOM. Hmm... Walk through the fire...

WATSON. Notice Charles Bukowski doesn't say *run* through the fire, or *survive*, or even *escape* from it...

TOM. He says walk...

WATSON. Calm in the chaos, neighbor. Listen to your inner voice... What does it tell you to do?

Tool Thyme

TOM. I guess I need to focus... (*Closing his eyes. Dream SFX play. This seems like it might be a moment of deep thought for him, but SFX for a 90s Detroit Lions game play. Tom nods like he understands philosophy. The game noises are interrupted by audio of Tom and June's wedding.*) Aw, man. June taped our wedding over the Lions game!

WATSON. Shh! Listen, neighbor... (*Tom focuses on the wedding vows. Pause.*)

TOM. Eureka! I think I get it this time. And...I know what I want!

WATSON. What is that, oh enlightened one?

TOM. June. She's all I've ever wanted. She's got my nuts and bolts for life. (*He tears up the plane ticket to California.*)

WATSON. Touching, Tom.

TOM. And I also understand what that poet Charles Barkley was saying. Well, what you were saying...

WATSON. Oh?

TOM. You think that I should do the coal walk to purify my soul for June. That's a great idea! Thank you, Watson... (*Calling off.*) June!

WATSON. That's not—

TOM. June! June! Come out here! Hurry! (*June enters in a very fashionable, homemade robe.*)

WATSON. Tom—

TOM. I've got this.

JUNE. Bitten by a scorpion or did you cut your penis off?

TOM. No, no! Listen.

WATSON. Tom, think this through. I beg of you.

TOM. This is the only way.

JUNE. The only way to what?

TOM. To show you how much I still love you, June.

JUNE. Say what now?

TOM. I still love you, June.

JUNE. But we signed papers saying the opposite.

TOM. Forget those lawyer rags.

JUNE. I must be sleepwalking... (*Leaving.*)

TOM. I can prove that I want you back by purifying my soul!

JUNE. (*Turning.*) The coal walk?

TOM. It has a technical name... We want to respect the culture. Watson?

Tool Thyme

WATSON. I believe it's called Fiji Fire Foot... *(Simba enters with a glowing bag of scorpions.)*

SIMBA. Watson, I've wrangled up all the little scorpions!

WATSON. Great hunting! Better every day!

SIMBA. Dad?

TOM. I'm going to do this for you, June. For our family. *(Taking off his shirt.)* I'll wrap my feet in your love.

JUNE. What's the point? You're going to California.

TOM. No! Not if you'll have me back. My inner voice scored a touchdown...

JUNE. Touchdown? This is crazy, Tom.

TOM. You don't think I'll do Fiji Fire Foot?

JUNE. No, I don't.

TOM. Watch me, babe. *(He prepares.)* May my calluses protect me! And also, my ancestor Victor, who died owing me thirty dollars. *(Tom takes off his shoes and takes in a few deep breaths. He puts on Watson's grass Malo skirt.)*

SIMBA. Whoa! Dude Looks Like a Lady! *(Tom smears his body with the neon face paint he used on Simba. After a few moments, he begins to do the coal walk.)*

JUNE. WAIT!

TOM. What?

JUNE. I'm going to do it with you...

WATSON. Really?

JUNE. We both need a soul cleansing if we're going to move forward...

TOM. Does that mean what I think it means?

JUNE. Let's wrap our feet in new love! *(Smiling, she takes his hand.)*

TOM. Let's do this. Grr! *(Slowly, they do the coal walk. Music plays. At the end, they embrace and kiss.)*

JUNE. We did it!

TOM. So, are we pure again? *(It begins to snow.)*

JUNE. *(Smiling.)* As the snow... *(They kiss.)*

WATSON. Bravo, Thomas family! It's so good to see you back together. I'm reminded of the Hungarian proverb— *(A larger scorpion suddenly attacks Watson and he battles it. He dances on the coal walk and in the heat of battle looks pleased he mastered the heat. He smiles and fights the scorpion offstage.)* Away, vile beast!

TOM. Get that sucker, Watson!

SIMBA. Dad, does this mean you're not going to California?

Tool Thyme

TOM. Everything I need is here in Detroit.

JUNE. That reminds me. The toilet in the den isn't working.

TOM. I'll get right on it! I've got just the tool!

JUNE. Yeah, you do!

TOM. In the morning, I'll have my agent call ABC to see if we can get *Tool Thyme* a second season.

JUNE. ABC?

TOM. Fine. PBS. Nickelodeon if we must.

SIMBA. We need to show off those sugar showpieces somehow.

TOM. Maybe at the church bake sale...

SIMBA. Speaking of old ladies... I totally forgot!

JUNE. What?

SIMBA. There was a message on the answering machine. I forgot to tell you...

JUNE. I told you to write all messages down. Who called?

SIMBA. Some lady named Avon.

JUNE. Avon? As in the beauty empire?

SIMBA. No clue.

JUNE. What did she want?

SIMBA. She sounded old... *(Beat.)* Scorpion! *(Simba exits chasing a scorpion.)*

JUNE. Avon!?

TOM. *(Playing the answering machine message.)* Let's hear it.

JUNE. My heart is racing!

AVON LADY. Hello, June! This is Mary Lou Rayton with Avon Beauty... We've been watching your show. We absolutely loved your jazzy outfits! We want to discuss an exclusive line... Call us back at 555-922-6454. Ta-ta!

JUNE. AHHHH!

TOM. That is huge!

JUNE. I'm going to be the next Martha Stewart! But for blouses and blazers!

TOM. Your stardom awaits! Good thing too, because your man has no job.

JUNE. I can bring home the bacon.

TOM. *(Buzzing his arms.)* Come here, babe. *(They kiss.)*

JUNE. I am so happy! Avon!?

TOM. We should celebrate. Want to go for a ride?

JUNE. Hotrod?

Tool Thyme

TOM. No... *(Winking.)* We're back to the 'more power' mindset, babe! *(Grunting.)* Grr! *(He winks. They kiss. Hammer Time music plays. Tom's blue 1933 Ford Roadster rolls onstage. They get inside. They kiss again. Music swells. Burnt Rubber Smell FX. Fade to black on echoed grunting.)*

END OF PLAY.