

CUT TO THE CHASE

by Pat Cook

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STORY OF THE PLAY

WHAM! – the Masked Wonder leaps into the room and fights off four or five henchmen without even wrinkling his cape and then ... ? Then the writers of the Majestic Studios have to figure out what he does next. Pop, Tiger Lil, Stu, Howard and Dena are stuck until they meet the latest addition to their writer's stable. "Like any of us are writers," says Howard, "or stable."

As the new kid on the team, Freddie has a lot to prove, mostly to his overbearing mother. Does he give up and leave with Mom? No chance! Especially not with Dena around! These two lovebirds prove that love can win out, even when Kate, their boss, makes a play for Freddie. And what does the Studio Head, Mr. Obermeyer, have to say about it all? Not much, since he's suddenly come down with amnesia. What do you do with a boss who can't remember to fire you?

Find out in this 1949 screwball comedy where the situation is hopeless but not serious, where anything can happen and usually does, and where it ain't over until they "Cut to the Chase."

CHARACTERS

(6 men, 5 women)

POPThe old veteran writer, a man in his
50s.
STUThe worrier, he is about 35.
HOWARDA true off-the-wall type, around 30.
"TIGER" LILThe wise-cracking, cynical type, she
is around 40.
DENAThe youngest and most naïve of the
group, in her early 20s.
KATEA shark from the front office, she is
in her early 30s.
FREDDIEA wide-eyed mama's boy who just
got hired, in his early 20s.
LIONEL FORSYTHEA classical actor past his prime,
around 50.
MOTHERFreddie's mother, an overbearing
woman in her 50s.
NOLA COLLYERA pushy columnist, pushing 40.
LEO OBERMEYERA meek, endearing man around 55.

Time: 1949

Place: The writers' room in the Majestic Studios.

SETTING

The Head Writer's office is a cluttered room at the end of a large, old-fashioned building on the lot of the Majestic Studios.

There are three doors utilized in this floor plan, one DSR, another USR and the third SL. The DSR door leads to the hall and the rest of the building's other offices, the USR door leads to the washroom and the SL door leads outside. There are three large windows on the US wall, always open. Around the room are the usual furnishings. A beaten-down couch, located DS of the SR door on the SR wall, is one of the usual habitats for sleeping writers. In front of the couch is a coffee table. In the USR corner is a table with chairs around it. In the USL corner, against the wall, is another, smaller table with a hot plate, coffee pot and several coffee cups which got washed just before World War II. A large desk with accompanying chair is located in the SL side of the stage, which faces the couch. There is an old typewriter and telephone on the desk and two or three other chairs scattered around it. The rest of the room is furnished with a hat rack, overflowing bookcases, file cabinets, dead plants and other remnants of a more prosperous time.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: STU is seated in front of the desk. DENA is sitting at the desk looking at the page in the typewriter. HOWARD is sitting in a near window, looking at his watch. LIL is standing behind DENA. POP is pacing in the center of the room, obviously waiting anxiously for her to type something. After a medium pause, Dena looks up.)

DENA: How about we shoot the lawyer?

POP: *(Stops pacing.)* What?

HOWARD: Great. I'll get the car! *(HE jumps up.)*

POP: Shoot the lawyer?

DENA: *(Points to the page.)* In the script!

HOWARD: *(Reseats himself.)* I won't get the car. Don't get me excited like that if you don't mean it!

LIL: That's your answer for everything.

DENA: I just thought of that!

POP: Anarchist! *(HE resumes his pacing.)*

LIL: Every time you don't like a character you kill them.

STU: My stomach's growling. *(To HOWARD.)* Can you hear it from there?

HOWARD: Yeah, I thought you had an otter in your pocket. *(HE looks out the window.)*

POP: Besides, if we shoot the attorney, then who do we have for a heavy?

DENA: Ooh, yeah. Can't beat a lawyer.

LIL: No, but let's try, anyway.

HOWARD: *(Yells out the window.)* Hey, palie, you want to get away from my car there?

POP: Stu, what was your idea?

HOWARD: Yeah, you just touch it and I'll use your ear for a watch fob! What? *(HE grimaces.)* Oh, sorry, Father. *(HE looks back.)* I just bought another weekend in hell.

STU: You're going to Pittsburgh? *(To POP.)* My idea was lunch.

POP: No, you had an idea last week.

Cut to the Chase

- 6 -

STU: Could've been lunch then too. (*HE looks over at the others.*) Didn't we have lunch last week?

DENA: Could we, at least, wound the lawyer?

LIL: With what?

HOWARD: Blowgun! Blowgun! (*Rushes to POP.*) Daddy, Daddy, let's use a blowgun!

POP: On the lawyer?

HOWARD: On anybody! (*To the OTHERS.*) I got it at an Army surplus store a month ago.

LIL: What would you be doing with a blowgun?

DENA: What would the Army be doing with a blowgun?

(STU holds out his right hand – it is shaking violently.)

STU: Look at that. If I don't get something to eat soon, I'll faint.

DENA: Could we have the lawyer faint?

LIL: Why do you want an unconscious attorney?!

POP: And how can you tell the difference?

DENA: Look, if Attorney Beauregard is unconscious, we could then have the Masked Wonder pick his pocket and get back the land deed and then place an IOU back in his pocket, letting him know, when he wakes up, that the Masked Wonder has struck again!

LIL: That sounds too much like a plot.

HOWARD: Blowgun! Blowgun!

LIL: Plots bore people, they can't keep up.

POP: (*Moves to the desk.*) What do we have so far?

STU: Indigestion.

HOWARD: How can you have indigestion when you haven't eaten?

STU: It's like one of those memory things.

HOWARD: Wow, let's dance.

(HE takes STU'S hand and the two waltz around the room.)

DENA: We have Margaret O'Brien...

LIL: (*Jumps in.*) If we can get Margaret O'Brien.

DENA: Being adopted by Robert Young...

End of Freeview

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