

Gearbox Shifts for Himself

Written by
Greg Raven

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET

SOUND: TRAFFIC SOUNDS OF A
DOWNTOWN STREET. FOOTSTEPS INTO A
PAY PHONE, THE DOOR CLOSSES. A COIN IS
DEPOSITED AND "OPERATOR" IS DIALED.

OPERATOR ONE (filter)

Operator, may I help you?

JOHN JOHN (as a young man)

Yes, I'd like the conference operator, please.

OPERATOR ONE Thank you.

SOUND: PHONE CLICK AND BEEP.

OPERATOR TWO (filter)

Conference operator, can I help you?

JOHN JOHN Yes operator. I'd like to place a conference call.

OPERATOR TWO (filter)

What are the numbers, please?

JOHN JOHN Three, five, seven, nine, and eighty-six.

OPERATOR TWO (filter)

Thank you, sir. I'll have your first number in just a moment. That will be \$3.75 for the first three minutes, please.

JOHN JOHN Uh, OK.

SOUND: COINS BEING DEPOSITED.

ALL WEDDING PARTICIPANTS ON FILTER
NOW.

OPERATOR TWO Thank you, sir. Here is your first number.

LOUISE SMITH (as a young woman)

Hello?

JOHN JOHN Hello, darling. It's I. How are you doing?

LOUISE Oh, good morning, darling. Fine, I guess. I'm a little nervous.

JOHN JOHN Boy, I am too. Well, it's only natural on your ...

OPERATOR TWO Excuse me, sir. I have another of your parties.

JOHN JOHN Thank you, operator. Hello?

PASTOR DEFENSES Hello?

JOHN JOHN Is this Pastor Defenses? This is John John.

PASTOR DEFENSES Oh, good morning, John. I see you repeat yourself when under stress.

JOHN JOHN What? I didn't realize I was ...

PASTOR DEFENSES (interrupting)

Sure. Where's the bride-to-be?

LOUISE SMITH I'm here, Pastor.

PASTOR DEFENSES Hello, Louise. Well, this is the big day.

LOUISE SMITH Yeah. I'm a little nervous.

PASTOR DEFENSES Not too nervous, I hope.

JOHN JOHN We sure were fortunate to get you to perform the ceremony, sir.

PASTOR DEFENSES Well thank you. But what do you mean, "fortunate"?

JOHN JOHN All my friends were asking me how I got past her defenses.

OPERATOR TWO Sir? I have another of your numbers.

JOHN JOHN Thank you. Hello?

RALPH ICEBERG (as a young man)

Hello?

JOHN JOHN Hi, Ralph. It's John. Today's the big day.

RALPH ICEBERG Oh, wow. Hey, I'm glad you caught me. I sort of forgot.

JOHN JOHN What!?

RALPH ICEBERG I'm just kidding. I wouldn't miss your wedding for the world.

LOUISE SMITH Hi, Ralph.

RALPH ICEBERG Hey, Louise. Congratulations! I know you both are going to be very happy.

JOHN JOHN Thanks, Ralph. Say, I'd like you to meet Pastor Defenses.

PASTOR DEFENSES A pleasure to meet you, Ralph.

RALPH ICEBERG Boy, you too. I read about you all the time in the paper. You must be the busiest guy in town. John must have been a pretty smooth operator to get Pastor Defenses!

PASTOR DEFENSES (interrupting)

Well, thank you, Ralph. But really, I'm not so busy that I can't answer the call. Especially if it means helping a young man get a leg up.

OPERATOR TWO Excuse me, here is another one of your numbers, sir.

JOHN JOHN Thank you. Hello?

MRS. SMITH Hello?

JOHN JOHN Hello, Mrs. Smith. This is John.

LOUISE SMITH Hi, Mom!

MRS. SMITH Hi, darling. Hello, John. Just a minute while I get your father.

(off)

Father! Father! Pick up the phone! It's Louise and John.

(on)

Oh, he's still getting dressed. Just a minute.

(off)

Father!

SOUND: PHONE CLICK.

MR. SMITH Howdy, everybody. Sorry I'm late.

VOICE: ASSORTED GREETINGS BY ALL.

JOHN JOHN (nervously)

Can we start now?

PASTOR DEFENSES I don't see why not. Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here today to witness the act of holy matrimony between this man, John, and this woman, Louise ...

FADE UNDER:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) The story you are about to hear is true. Only the facts have been changed to convict the accused.

The scene: A run-down office in Clowntown with a refrigerator that makes a noise like two-by-four boards eight feet long falling to the pavement from a height of three feet in an alley 150 yards away ...

The scene: An old church next to the San Diego Sports Arena that has been converted to a rehearsal facility for the second-loudest rock band in the world ... with a refrigerator that makes a noise like a famous space show communicator being snapped open ...

The scene: A posh Laguano Beach cliff-front house with a refrigerator that makes a noise like a diesel truck down-shifting for a hill ...

To the casual eye these three probably unrelated events are simple matters of coincidence. But when stuck in the eye of T. Barnabus Gearbox, famous muckraking detective, the truth becomes as clear as mud on a rainy day.

ALL WEDDING VOICES STILL ON FILTER.

PASTOR DEFENSES (fade up)

... or forever hold his piece. You may kiss the ...

JOHN JOHN (interrupting)

Hey, wait a minute! Where's TB?

MRS. SMITH (off)

Didn't you get your shots?

JOHN JOHN Operator! Operator!

OPERATOR TWO Yes sir?

JOHN JOHN Did you get all of the numbers I asked for?

OPERATOR TWO I'm sure I did, sir. Oh, wait. I ran out of papers before the last number. I'll roll it for you now.

MR. SMITH What's this all about?

VOICE: MUTTERING BY EACH OF THE
WEDDING PARTICIPANTS.

SOUND: RINGING OVER THE LINE, THEN A
CLICK.

INT. OFFICE OF T. BARBABUS GEARBOX

POLLY T. Barnabus Gearbox, detective.

JOHN JOHN (filter)

Hi, my name is John John. Could you get TB on the phone for me?

POLLY Gee, I don't know. It's not THAT communicative.

JOHN JOHN (filter)

No, no. I mean T. Barnabus Gearbox. He's supposed to be at my wedding.

POLLY I'm sorry, sir. Mr. Gearbox is working on a client's case. I can have him call you, though, when he isn't out.

JOHN JOHN (filter)

But I need him immediately. I'm getting married right now. Just get him on the ...

OPERATOR TWO (interrupting, on filter)

Sir, your three minutes are up. You will have to deposit ninety cents for each additional minute you wish to speak.

JOHN JOHN (filter)

Get Gearbox on the phone!

OPERATOR TWO (filter)

I'm sorry, sir. You will have to deposit ninety cents.

VOICE: HUBBUB BY ALL, ON FILTER.

FADE OUT:

GEARBOX
Hmm. Only one more bottle left in this client's case. I hope they don't ask for it back. Oh, well.

SOUND: BEER OPENING.

GEARBOX
Here's mud in your eye, Gearbox.

(slurp)

Ahh.

(a beat)

Ughh, what a mess.

SOUND: GEARBOX KEYING THE INTERCOM.
FOOTSTEPS ON.

GEARBOX
Polly, could you come in here a moment, please?

POLLY
And not a moment too soon. What do you want?

GEARBOX
Get me something to eat while I work on this client's case.

POLLY Would you like some caviar, or would you settle for some beer farts?

GEARBOX Oh, anything. I'm so hungry I could eat some horse. By the way, where did all this mud come from?

POLLY If you ever went outside you'd know that it's reigning Fisk and Gould out there.

GEARBOX That means we're in for a soaking, then. That's funny, I didn't hear anything about it on the radio this morning.

POLLY That's because someone snapped the antenna off your car. Your reception is going to be pretty poor for the next few days.

GEARBOX Don't bother me with your money problems. I've enough of my own. Wait ... How were you able to get a radio station?

POLLY I went to a stationary radio store.

GEARBOX Where did you find a stationery store around here?

POLLY They're all stationary. You would know that, too, if you didn't sock that stuff away so much.

GEARBOX Then explain this; if all the stores around here are stationery, why can't I find some good blotter anywhere? Something is amiss.

POLLY That's "Ms.," you sexist pig!

GEARBOX (narrating)

Struck by the truth of the words just spoken by my secretary and bleeding heavily, I stumbled out to the lobby in search of a bandage.

SOUND: MEDICINE CHEST DOOR OPENING.

GEARBOX I should have known; the only thing we have in here is a bottle of plastic skin. I remember when drug stores sold useful stuff.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL HOME

SOUND: FLASHBACK FX. KNOCK ON DOOR.

GASHER (off, muffled)

Who is it?

GEARBOX (as a young boy)

Delivery boy. I'm here from the drug store.

GASHER OK.

SOUND: DOOR OPENS. OFF SOUNDS OF A
STAR TREK COMMUNICATOR BEEPING
OVER AND OVER. OFF SHOUTS AND
HUBBUB.

GASHER I hope you got everything.

GEARBOX Oh, yes sir.

GASHER Let's see.

(bag rustling)

Here's the beer, here's the candy, here's the gas. Great.

(shouting)

Hey, everybody, the gas is here.

GEARBOX What's that sound?

GASHER Oh, that's just the refrigerator.

GEARBOX What's everybody shouting at?

GASHER Well, you see kid, this refrigerator is a dangerous electrical appliance left behind by a highly ...

VOICE: SHOUT OF DISAPPOINTMENT FROM OFF.

GASHER Hey, what's happening back there?

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ON.

BLUTO Ah, the darn impulse engines melted down, so they had to beam up the whole frig.

GASHER Fine! What are we going to do with all this beer and gas?

BLUTO We'll have to use it all before it gets warm, I guess.

GASHER Oh, yeah, and then forget about the gig tonight.

BLUTO (a beat)

We could give some to the kid.

GASHER Couldn't hurt.

 (to GEARBOX)

 Hey, kid, how would you like to help us. By the way,
 what's your name?

GEARBOX TB Gearbox, sir.

GASHER Timmie Germbox? Well now, little Timmie Germbox,
 how would you like a beer?

GEARBOX Oh, no thank you, sir.

BLUTO Ah, come on. We have more than we can drink.

GEARBOX No, really. Thank you, sir.

GASHER Go on. One little beer won't hurt you.

GEARBOX Oh, I'm not supposed to.

BLUTO Well, how about some gas? It's good stuff.

GEARBOX (weakening)

 Well ... No thank you.

GASHER Come on. I can tell you want some. Hey, it's fresh; you
 just delivered it. And you know it must be good for you
 or you couldn't buy it.

BLUTO That's right. Federal mandate.

GEARBOX Is it real hydrogen?

GASHER You bet. This is the best, too. Pure Cape Canaveral
Clear. No better anywhere.

GEARBOX Well ... Maybe just a little.

BLUTO Hey, that's the way. Here, just breathe in on the end of
this ...

FADE OUT:

SOUND: FLASHBACK FX. CRASH.

POLLY Back from your second childhood already?

GEARBOX Yes. Those jumping jack flashbacks suck the gas.

POLLY Can I help you get up?

GEARBOX I don't think the FCC would approve.

POLLY I meant on a chair.

GEARBOX I didn't know that it mattered.

POLLY What?

GEARBOX Don't bother me now, Polly. I've got a lot of work to do if
I expect to get another case out of this.

POLLY Would a six-pack hold you over?

GEARBOX No time for half-way measures or wild goose chases.

POLLY If you pull that stunt again I'll Mace you.

GEARBOX Hold the sentimentality, Polly, and my calls. I don't want to be disturbed while I sift the facts. Falling lumber, diesel refrigeration with no VD radio, a frost-free communicator left behind by a superior intelligence, all this beer and no nuts ... What's it all add up to? Only an addict like me would even know where to begin.

SOUND: BEER CAN OPENS. SOME RANDOM SNIFFING. SCRATCHING OF PENCIL.

GEARBOX Addicts. Hmm. That may be it. Let's see.

(more sounds of industry)

Yes, yes. That must be it. I think I have sums of the answers. Two plus two ...

(scratching and mumbling)

I've got sums of the answers, all right. This thing is beginning to fall into place, and this place is beginning to fall to pieces. That must be the clue! Who would live in an area like this unless he was interested in junk? And the only junk dealer I know of is none other than Ralph Iceberg, that notorious purveyor of used major household appliances. That must be it! I'll bet that Iceberg is up to his old tricks, swindling innocent mathematicians by posing as a fellow addict. The police will want to know about this, but first I must get proof, and the only way to do that is to get to Laguano Beach before that refrigerator makes it to the top of that hill. I'd better tell Polly.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS. DOOR CLOSING.

POLLY Going somewhere?

GEARBOX Cut the gab, Polly. I think I have a lead in this case.

POLLY In that case, where does it lead?

GEARBOX Straight to none other than Ralph Iceberg. It looks like he might be dealing junk again.

POLLY I wonder if he has a used car he would recommend to me?

GEARBOX That's good, Polly. Keep your sense of humor. But this may be serious. I have a suspicion that he is dealing illegal gas to addicts again.

POLLY Well I don't have to worry; I was never any good in math.

GEARBOX Just don't let your guard down. When the time comes he's not going to differentiate.

POLLY What's your next move?

GEARBOX A number two. Then I am going to Laguano Beach to see if I can locate Iceberg.

POLLY That sounds dangerous. Please be careful, Barnabus.

GEARBOX Don't worry. I handled it OK last time. What worries me is that I might not make it in time.

POLLY Should I get you a change of clothes?

GEARBOX No, I mean in time to get that refrigerator before it gets to the top of the hill.

POLLY Oh.

GEARBOX I've got to go now. Give my regards to Figueroa.

INT. CAR

SOUND: CAR DOOR SLAMMING. CAR
ENGINE STARTS. CAR DRIVES OFF.

GEARBOX (narrating)

Polly was right; it was dangerous. But I couldn't go to the police with my flabby hunches, and I didn't have time to go to the spa for a work-out. The only way I could make the case was to get Iceberg and tow him in myself. I pulled into a gas station to make a deposit, then headed my big Belchfire Eight down Coast Highway toward Laguano Beach. Turning off on a side street, I started looking for the house where I would soon be looking into the hole left by the missing piece of the puzzle I had assembled. Wait! This looks like the place. That sign ... "Beware of Refrigerator."

EXT. LAGUANO BEACH

SOUND: CAR STOPS. DOOR SLAMS.
FOOTSTEPS. A GATE SWINGS OPEN.
KNOCKING ON DOOR. DOORBELL RINGS.

GEARBOX Hmm. Nobody home. I wonder if they left a window open?

SOUND: WINDOW BREAKING.

INT. LAGUANO BEACH HOME

GEARBOX Yep, they did. When will people learn?

(grunts as he climbs through the window)

Some place they've got here. But none of this fits. Plush neighborhood, beautiful day, and that refrigerator that keeps downshifting ...

SOUND: DIESEL REFRIGERATOR IN THE BACKGROUND, GROWING LOUDER AS GEARBOX APPROACHES.

GEARBOX

This must be the way to the kitchen. Yep, here it is. It's one of Iceberg's, too. But where are the people? Where are the marked cards who dealt with Iceberg's cold deck? Who were the giddy gamblers who took a deathly spin on the roulette wheel with Iceberg?

(filter)

I felt the pressure of a thousand questions building up inside of me. Questions that needed answers. Answers I didn't have. I knew that I wouldn't be able to cope unless ...

(off filter)

Where's the bathroom? Ah, here.

INT. BATHROOM

SOUND: DOOR CLOSES.

GEARBOX

Hey, oof!

(sounds of a struggle)

What's going on? It feels as if I am being attacked by a snake, or a tree, or maybe a rope or a wall. Got to get away.

(filter)

I dove under a pile of towels until I could survey the situation. When I did, I was horrified. I thought I had ducked into a bathroom, but instead of a duck I was looking into the eyes of a gas-crazed elephant. I had to think quickly. I knew how to get down off a duck, but how do you get down off an elephant? If I could just get the door open ...

SOUND: DOOR SQUEAKING OPEN.

GEARBOX

... enough to squeeze under it. Ah, there. Now I've got to get away from that monster, and the further the better. Got to get further, further, further, further, further ...

(snoring)

FADE UNDER:

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Gearbox backed further and further away from the giant pachyderm until he could get no further from it. Then he gently collected the furthers, separated the larger furthers from the pin furthers and the down, which he made into a pillow and used immediately.

GEARBOX

(filter)

I didn't realize at first what it was that had caused me to wake up. In my semi-coma I felt happy as a clam. "Happy is as clammy does," I remembered my mother

saying. Then I felt it: The clammy hand upon my shoulder. I twisted around violently in the wind of my own exhaust to face none other than the man I had been seeking: Ralph Iceberg.

RALPH ICEBERG How do you feel, Mr. Gearbox?

GEARBOX You've been feeling me, decide for yourself, Iceberg.

RALPH ICEBERG Don't try any tricks; this is a sharpened slide rule I'm holding at your throat.

GEARBOX You wouldn't be considering a little long division, would you?

RALPH ICEBERG Ha! You addicts are always afraid of the unknowns.

GEARBOX It isn't the division that I'm worried about, it's the aftermath.

RALPH ICEBERG Well don't lose any sleep over it. In the plans I have for you, the remainder isn't big enough to bother with.

GEARBOX Don't be so smug, Iceberg. I've always managed to come out even in the final tally before.

RALPH ICEBERG The Chinese have a saying, "Those who tally are lost." And I believe that is you, Mr. Gearbox. Don't count on the future until it's past, I always say.

GEARBOX I'm already tired of hearing you say it, too.

RALPH ICEBERG Clutch the chatter, Gearbox. Come on, get up.

GEARBOX Where are you taking me?

RALPH ICEBERG You'll see.

GEARBOX (filter)

In spite of myself, I was beginning to feel lost but not least, and a new lease on life was just what I needed. Iceberg took me to a closet and forced me inside.

RALPH ICEBERG You have a few minutes to think before your imaginary number is up. Don't waste them.

GEARBOX I can take care of myself. I've never been the negative one.

RALPH ICEBERG We'll see about that. Ha ha!

INT. CLOSET

SOUND: DOOR SLAMS.

GEARBOX (narrating)

Locked in the closet: Reminds me of when I was a kid. How do I get myself into these situations? Damn. Why didn't I settle down and lead a simple life when I had a chance? I should have kept that little place I bought down by the railroad tracks when I first moved to Clowntown. It wasn't long before I was unable to find a job, though, that's for sure. I always felt like a square root in a round house. I guess that's why I'm a detective.

VOICE: MUFFLED COUGHING, NOT FROM GEARBOX.

GEARBOX (on filter)

It sounds as if I'm not alone in here.

(off filter)

Who's there?

JOHN JOHN

(as an adult)

I'm Commodore John J. John and this is my wife, Louise. We own this house. Who are you?

GEARBOX

My name is T. Barnabus Gearbox. Here. I'm a private investigator detecting this case.

JOHN JOHN

Yes, I've heard of you. What's this you've handed me?

GEARBOX

That's my card.

JOHN JOHN

Thanks. I'll read it when Iceberg takes us out of this closet to kill us.

GEARBOX

That reminds me, John. What's your connection with Iceberg?

JOHN JOHN

That damn skunk tricked us into buying one of his refrigerators. Ever since then we've been in his power.

GEARBOX

How's that?

JOHN JOHN

The refrigerator developed a leak. Iceberg sent a man out to fix it, but he just replaced the lost gas. When it happened again, we were miffed. We demanded that Iceberg either give us our money back or fix the refrigerator. He just laughed. He said that we'd soon be begging him to take our money. He was right. The next morning we felt lousy. It didn't help that all of our food

was spoiled. We couldn't seem to get warm, and our bodies began to ache all over. That's when we called Iceberg. He came over himself. He took all the money we had in the house and then sprayed some stuff in our faces. Then he said that we wouldn't be needing the refrigerator any more. That's when I sussed we were hooked. We've been keeping up with our joneses ever since.

GEARBOX Don't I have a line in here somewhere?

LOUISE JOHN I want one too!

JOHN JOHN Sorry, no. He said something about being part of the Free Honor movement, whether we liked it or not. He warned us not to say anything to anyone or we would die the death of a thousand agonies. When we found out that you had included us in your story we panicked. Iceberg came over last night to tell us that he expected us to take care of you once and for all. That is why we put the elephant in the bathroom. You know, "Asses to ashes, in tusks we trust." When we failed, Iceberg said that we had outlived our usefulness and he locked us in the closet. By the way, how did you escape the elephant?

GEARBOX Well, I had a little help from the Announcer, but I also knew that elephants have fantastic mammaries, so I just made the breast of a bad situation.

JOHN JOHN Really, Gearbox old bean. Can't you control that sort of thing? I'm beginning to wish that your death was on my conscience.

GEARBOX I'm in control, don't worry yourself on that account. Now I've got to find a way out of here before the Iceberg

returneth to freeze us out. I just need a moment of silence to let my mind race.

(on filter)

What is the meaning of all this? It seems to be without rime or reason. It would make more scents if Iceberg were dealing black-market perfumes, unless ... unless he is dealing Freon! That must be it. I was right about Iceberg being up to his nose in gas. Oh, when will people learn, no honor is free, and free honor is ruining the ozone layer? One thing is for sure; I have to find a way to get these people out of this closet. Wait a minute, I think I have it.

(off filter)

Don't worry, folks. I can get everyone out of this safe and sound, but you'll have to bear with me for a moment.

LOUISE JOHN	You mean take our clothes off?
GEARBOX	No, nothing like that. Just bear with me.
JOHN JOHN	I think I'd rather take off my clothes.
GEARBOX	I'll have to work fast, but we have a chance. There are two factors in our favor. You see, this is radio.
JOHN JOHN	I can't see anything in here. It's pitch black.
GEARBOX	I meant that metaphorically. What I am trying to say is that I may be able to use my knowledge of radio techniques to get us out of this fix.

LOUISE JOHN A fix?

JOHN JOHN Later, dear. What were you saying, Mr. Gearbox?

GEARBOX Simply this; I am going to make one of my famous Gearwood sandwiches. Uh, you wouldn't happen to have any spread, would you Mrs. John?

LOUISE JOHN Please! I'm a married woman.

JOHN JOHN Gearbox! Where's your training?

GEARBOX I left it in the roundhouse.

JOHN JOHN What on Earth are you talking about?

GEARBOX It's really quite easy to explain. You see, in a market economy such as ours, all we have to do is to break the laws of supply, and d' man will beat a path to our door.

JOHN JOHN Comforting. But how will all this happen?

GEARBOX First, I'll take my pocket radio ...

SOUND: PLASTIC RADIO BEING RENT
ASUNDER.

GEARBOX ... break it apart, and put the ingredients of the Gearwood sandwich inside. Soon, news of the surplus of this product will attract widespread attention, consumers will be caught unawares by our element of supplies, and economic equalization will arrive in the form of the local police.

JOHN JOHN I'm not sure I understand. It seems they'd HAVE to be loco to get a message like that.

GEARBOX They will be. Let's see what I've got here: Horseradish, a package of Sen-Sens, some Petrobits, surrogate dog solids, mustard gas, and simulated wood grain alcohol to wash it all down. Yes, this is going to be some sandwich. Lucky for your people I happened along.

SOUND: GEARBOX TAKING A BITE OF THE SANDWICH.

GEARBOX You want some?

JOHN JOHN (coughing)

Are you out of your mind? Who in the world is going to demand a sandwich like that?

GEARBOX (swallowing)

You're right. It's not the same without the spread.

JOHN JOHN Mr. Gearbox, I am beginning to have serious doubts about the way your parents raised you, if indeed you have parents.

GEARBOX That reminds me of the other factor in our favor: Iceberg can't stand this sun at the beach.

LOUISE JOHN (coughing, too)

What did you put in that sandwich? I can barely breathe in here.

GEARBOX Like it, huh?

LOUISE JOHN I don't think I can take much more.

JOHN JOHN This had better work.

GEARBOX If it doesn't, don't come crying to me when you get hungry.

ANNOUNCER Meanwhile, at police headquarters ...

INT. POLICE STATION

MUSIC: BRIDGE, UP AND OUT.

SOUND: POLICE STATION BACKGROUND NOISES.

RADIO OPERATOR (oriental accent)

Sergeant? Come quick! Something wrong with radio.

SERGEANT Good lord! I should say so. What is that coming out of the speaker?

RADIO OPERATOR Maybe we being invaded.

SERGEANT That's a distinct possibility.

RADIO OPERATOR It sure DO stink.

SERGEANT What channel is that, anyway?

RADIO OPERATOR It special emission coming in on a private frequency.

SERGEANT Special emission, you say? Hmm, maybe Lieutenant Pothead should know about this.

RADIO OPERATOR Good idea.

SOUND: DOOR OPENING. BACKGROUND
NOISES UP.

SERGEANT (shouting, off)

Lieutenant! There's something weird going on in here.
Could you come and take a look?

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS ON. BACKGROUND
NOISES DOWN AS DOOR IS CLOSED.

LT. POTHEAD What is it, Sergeant?

SERGEANT We've got a special emission coming in on an irregular frequency. I can't make heads or tails of it. You ever seen anything like it?

LT. POTHEAD Let's have a look, here. What do you know? Probably just someone farting around with their new radio. They're getting a little carried away, it seems.

SERGEANT Thank goodness, a false alarm.

RADIO OPERATOR Ha! How you like that? Nothing but a prank.

LT. POTHEAD That's my guess. Except ... wait a minute. A prank, you say? A prank is a rog and a rog is a roaf. Hang on a second, this may be the straight poop!

SERGEANT Even I could tell that, Lieutenant.

LT. POTHEAD Wise up, Sergeant. This isn't some guy trying to pull the wool over our noses. It's been a long time, but now I'd recognize those ingredients anywhere. This is a food alert from T. Barnabus Gearbox. What's it say? "AM IN PITS. BRING NAPKINS." Come on, men. We have to

get out there quickly ... before he sends another message.

INT. CLOSET

ANNOUNCER Meanwhile, back at the house ...

VOICE: CHOKING AND GASPING.

JOHN JOHN I don't know how much longer we can stand this.

GEARBOX Help will be here soon, I'm sure of it. I think your wife has passed out.

JOHN JOHN Yes, when we were poor, she took a job as a canary in an underground bar, but she couldn't keep it.

GEARBOX Underground bar?

JOHN JOHN Yes. It only served miners. It didn't work out, though. She was always dead when she got home at night.

GEARBOX Wait! It sounds as if someone is coming.

SOUND: DOOR IS THROWN OPEN.

VOICE: ALL GASP.

RALPH ICEBERG (coughing, too)

Gearbox, what in the world did you ...

SOUND: SIRENS IN THE BACKGROUND.

RALPH ICEBERG ... Huh? What's that?

ANNOUNCER Suddenly, the sound of sirens wailing plaintively against the livid blue Laguano Beach sky grips the small neighborhood and pulls to a stop on the manicured lawn of the house owned by Commodore and Louise John.

RALPH ICEBERG Back in the closet, Gearbox!

SOUND: SCUFFLE, AND THE DOOR SLAMS.

GEARBOX Iceberg, you vegetable, lettuce out!

LOUISE JOHN (regaining consciousness)

What's happening?

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS OFF.

LT. POTHEAD (off)

Gearbox, are you in there?

SOUND: BANGING ON THE CLOSET DOOR.

GEARBOX Pothead, in here! We're in the closet!

SOUND: THE CLOSET DOOR BEING FORCED OPEN.

VOICE: COUGHING AND SWEARING.

LT. POTHEAD Gearbox! Thank goodness you're safe. I guess your luck held out this time.

GEARBOX It did, thanks to urinalysis of my message. Did you catch Iceberg?

LT. POTHEAD Iceberg! Was he here?

GEARBOX He was, and if you had played your cards right, you would have caught him. When he heard the sounds of sirens he thought it was Simon and Garfunkel at the door until you started all the shouting and pounding. That must have been what scared him off.

LT. POTHEAD Curses. Who are these people?

GEARBOX This is the otherwise fine couple of American Standard Johns who shot the dice of freon addiction with Iceberg and crapped out.

LT. POTHEAD Huh?

JOHN JOHN I'm Commodore John J. John, and this is my wife, Louise.

LT. POTHEAD Pleased to meet you, Commodore.

JOHN JOHN Mr. Gearbox, I really MUST thank you.

GEARBOX I really mused, too. But don't mention it. After all, my life was in danger as well.

JOHN JOHN No, I mean for this business card.

LT. POTHEAD So, Gearbox: Where do you fit into all this?

GEARBOX I discovered that Iceberg is the one who has been spreading Free Honor in these parts. The Johns will back me up on that.

JOHN JOHN I'd rather be off to one side, if it's all the same to you.

GEARBOX Suit yourself, John. Oh, by the way. You owe me three bucks for the sandwich.

LOUISE JOHN (revived and hysterical)

Officer, you got here just in time. This man ...

GEARBOX (interrupting)

That's not important now. Pothead, don't you think that we should be finding Iceberg and breaking up his little operation?

LT. POTHEAD Not so fast, Gearbox. Suppose you fill me in on the details, first.

GEARBOX I'll tell you on the way. We don't have a moment to waste. I'm going after him with you or without you.

LT. POTHEAD Haven't you had enough for one day?

GEARBOX Not me. Remember the saying, "If in first you don't succeed, clutch for whatever you can."

MUSIC: STING.

INT. POLICE CRUISER

SOUND: BACKGROUND AUTOMOBILE FX.

LT. POTHEAD Alright. Spill the beans, Gearbox.

SOUND: BEANS SPILLING.

GEARBOX (off)

Oops.

(on)

When I first heard about these refrigerators, I could sense that there was danger floating in our scene of tranquility. All I had was a slim lead, but it was enough to get me wondering. The more I thought about it, the less I liked it. I knew that there were all these addicts around, but there was no heroine. That thought kept needling me. Where was the heroine for this show?

LT. POTHEAD

Maybe it's those sexist writers.

GEARBOX

I thought of that already. I also thought that she might have gone into hiding, but I had talked with her before the show tonight and she mentioned that she wasn't into S&M. That's when she ... I mean, that's when IT ... hit me. In a rush, I realized where Iceberg would go if things got too hot. And I'll bet my pants that he's there right now.

LT. POTHEAD

Gearbox, you're nuts.

GEARBOX

No, that's my flesh-tone underwear.

LT. POTHEAD

Never mind. Calm down or I'll belt you one.

GEARBOX

I take a forty-two.

ANNOUNCER

A few short minutes later, Daylight Savings Time, the police car pulls up to the Western Motors factory in Irvine, California.

LT. POTHEAD Is this your idea of a joke, Gearbox? Iceberg would never show up here. He can spot a plant a mile away. Quit goofing around.

GEARBOX Ha! I didn't realize you were so eager to catch him, Pothead.

LT. POTHEAD Yeah, well don't worry about me. I can keep my pants on until it happens.

GEARBOX We'll see.

LT. POTHEAD Look, Gearbox. The department has sunk a Titanic amount of money into trying to locate this Iceberg, and I won't have you spoiling everything.

GEARBOX Size doesn't impress me. I'm not going to blow it.

LT. POTHEAD OK, Gearbox. This is your show. Where to now?

GEARBOX Turn in here at the gate and pull up to that loading dock.

LT. POTHEAD What makes you think we're going to find Iceberg here?

GEARBOX That's simple, Pothead. One reason is the loading dock, itself. That alone is enough to entice him into seeking refuge here. In fact, I may apply for a position myself. I'd love to get a pull on those lines.

VOICE: GEARBOX INHALES EXPANSIVELY
THROUGH HIS NOSTRILS.

LT. POTHEAD Calm down. We're here to do a job.

GEARBOX Right! As I was saying, the main reason is that this factory is where they shoot up the air conditioners for

every Western Motors car and truck in the entire country. They must use nearly two hundred barrels of Freon a day. What better place for someone who is trying to spread Free Honor across the face of this country like soft- whip margarine on the face of a child?

LT. POTHEAD That's REAL impressive, Gearbox. You know, I always thought you were full of it, but now I ...

GEARBOX (interrupting)

Can it. I'll read it later in the round file. See that guy over there talking to that gorilla? If that isn't Iceberg, I'll drop my load.

LT. POTHEAD Let's hope it is, then.

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS.

RALPH ICEBERG (fading up)

... So I said, "That was no alien, that was my CLONE."

VOICE: GORILLA LAUGHS.

GEARBOX Well, Ralph! What's an Iceberg like you doing in a place like this?

RALPH ICEBERG Do I know you from somewhere?

GEARBOX Never been there, but I know you.

RALPH ICEBERG I don't get familiar with guys, if that's what you're driving at, you weirdo.

GEARBOX

That's not the way I heard it.

RALPH ICEBERG Yeah? Well, maybe you'd like to go behind the cafeteria with me and share a knuckle sandwich?

GEARBOX That trick won't work; I'm a vegetarian. Besides, my mother told me never to talk with my mouth full.

RALPH ICEBERG I thought so. You're yellow. Beat it back to your closet, buster.

GEARBOX You can't pull a dick like me off the trail that easily. I've been beating it all morning, and I know who you are ... Iceberg!

RALPH ICEBERG What makes you think my name is Iceberg, squirt?

GEARBOX I know, all right. You thought that you could fool me with that disguise because I never got a good look at you. But I remembered a hat, and that tipped me off.

RALPH ICEBERG Just what are you trying to say, bub?

GEARBOX This, Iceberg: I never forget a fez.

RALPH ICEBERG What? I'm not wearing a fez.

GEARBOX That's what I remember! Tough luck, turkey. Grab him, Pothead.

SOUND: STRUGGLE.

LT. POTHEAD Come along peaceful-like, Iceberg, or I'll pick out a spot to crush on that block head of yours.

RALPH ICEBERG Alright, alright. I'll go. I never could stand you heat.

MUSIC: BRIDGE.

SOUND: POLICE STATION BACKGROUND FX.

LT. POTHEAD Well, Gearbox, I never thought that a wateristic thinker like you could get so much accomplished. You really amazed me with the way that you put out.

GEARBOX All in a day's movements, Pothead.

LT. POTHEAD You mean, "All in a dazed work," don't you?

GEARBOX Ha! I guess so. Well, I'll be getting along home now.

LT. POTHEAD Aren't you even going to stay to see Iceberg get hauled up before the judge?

GEARBOX Nah. The way the system works these days, he'll be out again before you know it. I'll bet he has plenty of tug around here, or water it ever takes.

LT. POTHEAD You are too cynical. We got him dead to rights. How could he ever beat this rap?

GEARBOX If I know this dog, he'll be released on his own recognizance after plea barking with the judge.

LT. POTHEAD Yeah, well cheer up. At least it wasn't just another crank case. You did your part right.

GEARBOX Yeah. This way it covers my bald spot.

LT. POTHEAD You handsome devil. Say, before you go, here's a free bag of ice for the little woman.

GEARBOX Thanks, but I live with no one.

LT. POTHEAD Well, take one to no one and one is two. Go on, they're on the house.

GEARBOX Well, alright. If anything has the ability to help me forget the day's dirt, the ice have it.

LT. POTHEAD That's more like it. See you later, Gearbox. Keep your fingers clean.

GEARBOX You can count on them, Pothead.

MUSIC: THEME FADES UP.

ANNOUNCER Tune in next time for another exciting adventure as Gluebrush pits his cunning against "Flash" Flood, the rogue plumber.

THE END