

Billy Burkhalter: The Maltese Man: A Video Game for Wimps

Project Paper for

CC8096

Communication & Culture: Master's Project

Joint Programme in Communication & Culture

Ryerson University / York University

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September 24, 2004

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Acknowledgments

Billy Burkhalter, the Maltese Man would not have been possible had it not for the help and support of the following people and organizations (in alphabetical order):

Andy Barr

Jerry Durlak

Dan Greenwood

Christie Hurrell

Flashkit.com

Nathan Laywine

Murray Pomerance

Agnieszka Sliwka

Jonathan Soja

Patrick Springer

Tom Stanley

Monique Tschofen

Frank Zappa

Video games imply an enormous paradigm shift for our culture because they represent the first complex simulational media for the masses.

— Gonzalo Frasca (224)

In October 2003, I received the approval of the Joint Programme in Communication & Culture to fulfill the requirements of the MA project by designing a prototype for a web-based video game which would provide an entertaining venue where players would learn about the mechanics behind the construction of masculinity. This prototype, along with a test scene (which can be played on most Internet-ready computers at www.sphincter.ca), was completed in August 2004. The purpose of this project paper is to elaborate on the project's objectives with a discussion of how theories of communication and culture guided the prototype's artistic direction, how the prototype contributes to the professional practice of video game design, and how the prototype's ultimate objective — to help male wimps achieve a sense of comfort in their masculine identity — was fulfilled.

Video Games and Masculinity in the Twenty-first Century

The idea to design a prototype for a video game sprung from a paper I had been writing called "*The Big Lebowski: A Mass-Produced Fantasy for Wimps*" (see Appendix A for a copy), in which I take note of the emergent glorification of wimps in American and British television and film of the past 15 years, as seen in *Seinfeld* (1990-1998), *The Larry Sanders Show* (1992-1998), *Being John Malkovich* (1999), *Election* (1999), *The Office* (2000-2001), *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2000-2004), *Adaptation* (2002), and *American Splendour* (2003). By a wimp, I mean, as sociologist Michael Kimmel puts it, a male whose lack of "a 'sense of purpose,' including a sense of sexual purpose" (1996, 294),

emasculates him in the face of the hegemonic dictum that real men are assertive, domineering, and virile. For the past 20 years, an era when "the structural foundations of traditional manhood — economic independence, geographic mobility, domestic dominance — have all been eroding" (298-9), the wimp has become a marginalized figure, as North American males have tried to cope with this "masculinity crisis" by suppressing signs of wimpiness in themselves and in other males. "Magazine articles and self-help books vie for men's attention, prescribing a wide variety of antidotes for gender troubles," Kimmel writes. "Many offer quick-fix solutions, continuing to bait us with the fear of the wimp, then sending us right back into the fray" (298). Journalist Susan Faludi writes, "[M]anhood is defined by appearance, by youth and attractiveness, by money and aggression, by posture and swagger and 'props,' by the curled lip and petulant sulk and flexed biceps, by the glamour of the cover boy, and by the market-bartered 'individuality' that sets one astronaut or athlete or gangster above another" (1999, 38-9).

A backlash to this anti-wimp rhetoric is on the rise, however, and it's plainly evident in *The Big Lebowski* (1998), a film which invites male viewers to live vicariously through the Dude (Jeff Bridges), an extremely wimpy protagonist. (When asked by another character, "What do you do for recreation?" he replies, "Oh, the usual. Bowl, drive around, the occasional acid flashback.") In my *Lebowski* paper (Appendix A), I contend that the Dude's appeal derives in part from his simultaneous ability to be a "real man" (because he succumbs to the occasional act of physical or sexual masochism) and a "wimp" (because he clearly lives a life in perpetual fear of sexuality and all physical activity). When a wimp lives vicariously through the Dude, he feels like a "real

man" without having his wimpiness put to shame, and this is thus an empowering experience for the wimp who finds in the Coen brothers' film a comfortable route towards an affirmative masculinity.¹ This new masculinity appeals to a large number of male wimps, because it upholds their lack of a "sense of purpose" (a quality that is normally disparaged).

While fascinated by this mechanism, I was also bothered that the film did not explicitly state that males should free themselves from (or at least be aware of) the imprisonment of gender politics. Thus, I decided to fulfill the requirements of my academic program by initiating a discourse with all *Lebowski* viewers out there who might find this conscious realization self-empowering.

Initially, I was unsure of the form my inquiry would take. Although I was interested in contributing to the canon of masculinity studies, I decided against writing an academic thesis. The canon's impressive texts — including Faludi's *Stiffed* (1999) and Kimmel's *Manhood in America* (1996) — had yet to reach *Lebowski* viewers, and thus an academic thesis would likely fail in that endeavour as well. Moreover, my target audience was not keen on consuming a direct polemic on the masculinity crisis. I was also reluctant to present my views through a film, book, or television show, all of which tend to be either entertaining or informative, but rarely both. Movies, for example, tend to be either dramatic (e.g. Hollywood movies) or informative (e.g. documentaries), but I was looking for a media form which enabled me to reach a broad audience by appealing to them on an emotional level while simultaneously educating this audience with an explicit presentation of the thesis of my *Lebowski* paper. Then I started thinking about video games which, as it happened, fulfilled both of these requirements. Gaming

scholar Gonzalo Frasca argues that while all media are based on a semiotic structure of representation, video games are uniquely based on a semiotic structure of simulation (221-2). Video games are capable of reaching mass audiences due in part to the ways they represent real life, but they also educate players by allowing players to interact with the medium and to observe the moral impact of their own decisions. Although viewers of films and readers of novels are believed to be "active readers" insofar as they identify with protagonists and project themselves into their fantasy worlds, they do not experience simulations; they are at the mercy of the authors' whimsies and have no control over the order in which events appear — let alone the way an event plays itself out. Video games distinguish themselves with "the 'feature' of allowing modifications to the stories" (227), enabling designers to construct their gameworlds in such ways that players can actively experience a simulated environment and thus more actively absorb the author's moral codes. When players turn on their XBox consoles, Frasca writes, they willingly submit to the moral rules bounding this system: "[Y]ou must do X in order to reach Y and therefore become a winner. This implies that Y is a desired objective and therefore it is morally charged" (Frasca 230). For this reason, simulation is a much more effective rhetorical structure than representation, if by rhetoric we mean "the art of persuasion." As Plato informs us in *The Phaedrus*, speech is much more rhetorically effective than writing because when an individual is dialectically involved in the creation of knowledge, such knowledge "is written on the soul of the hearer together with understanding" (98), whereas a passive reader of such knowledge "will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will rely on writing to bring things to their remembrance by external signs instead of their own internal resources" (96).

My decision to communicate through a video game was also influenced by my introduction to the 2-D animation program Macromedia Flash, which I had used to design some short films, and I became intrigued by the program's capacity to create interactive content, particularly games. (Over the past few years, Flash games have become hugely popular due in part to their integration with web browsers.) In my research of Flash games, I came across a series of disturbing games at a web site called "The Romp" (www.theromp.com), which chronicle the misogynistic adventures of an avatar named Jake. The object of the game is to watch Jake sexually harass women and homosexuals, and then, whenever Jake reaches a crossroads, to make the right decision between two options (e.g. go this way or that way), thus allowing Jake to carry on his loathsome way. Irritated by the game and its smugly self-proclaimed popularity, I decided to counteract it with a Flash game of my own.

It was settled: I would design a prototype for a video game which would help males cope with the anxiety produced by the masculinity crisis. The therapeutic approach I took is explained in Freud's "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through," in which Freud outlines a way of treating patients whose illnesses consist of unpleasant manifestations of a repressed trauma. The trauma, in the case at hand, was the male's shame for being unable to fulfill the ego-ideal of manhood, and it manifested itself in terms of moral anxiety. Following Freud, I took it that the male must be helped to "no longer regard the illness as something contemptible, but rather as a worthy opponent, a part of his very being that exists for good reasons, and from which he must extract something of real value for his subsequent life" (38). Freud suggests turning the shrink's office into a space where the patient's manifestations are treated as "harmless"

and where the patient will consciously realize the source of his trauma so long as the analyst presents the treatment "as a playground in which it has licence to express itself with almost total freedom..." (40). Interestingly enough, a video game lends itself to this process, creating a "playground" in which the masculinity crisis is revealed to the male, who can then use the game "to work his way through it, to overcome it by defying it" (41). I imagined the players of my video game coming to acknowledge the oppressive forces of hegemonic masculinity by observing how their decision-making affected the avatar's psychic energy. They would "win" the game, I figured, by ultimately rejecting hegemonic masculinity and becoming comfortable with their "wimpy" identity, at which point, the therapy session would be over.

After surveying gaming scholarship, I was encouraged by the academy's overwhelming call for video game designers to produce progressive, gender-neutral content. After entering wide circulation more than 25 years ago, video games had recently begun to dominate North American entertainment, and for the past ten years or so, scholars and the public at large had begun producing a corpus of theory on their social role. In a 2002 *Fast Company* story, a journalist writes, "Welcome to the entertainment industry of the 21st century, where video games are serious business. Last year, U.S. computer- and video-game revenue surpassed domestic [film] box-office receipts, and this year, the game industry is expected to widen that gap with more than \$10 billion in sales" (81). The popularity of video games is of huge concern, writes gaming scholar Henry Jenkins (1998), who notes that children's play spaces have changed from one in the 19th century of ravines and rolling hills to one in the 21st century of carpeted living rooms, Xbox consoles, and endless microworlds. Agreeing

with Frasca, Jenkins argues that video games set themselves off from movies and television shows through their allowance for interactive play: "A child playing a video game, searching for the path around obstacles or looking for an advantage over imaginary opponents, engages in some of the same 'mapping' activities as children searching for affordance in their real-life environments" (270). But it is shortsighted, he argues, to portray video games as a device spawning an unprecedented wave of misogyny. Drawing from Freud, Jenkins notes that our video game culture has inherited a legacy of boys' play spaces which have rewarded adolescent males for acts of aggression and, occasionally, misogyny. With the onset of the industrial revolution, 19th century boys were no longer needed to assist their fathers at work and were thus "left under the care of their mothers" (266). Whenever possible, boys dashed out into the open fields where they created a gaming environment that rejected both maternal values and the discipline of schooling in an effort to reclaim a sense of autonomy. Coinciding with this phenomenon, writes literary historian Joseph Bristow, is the cultural inscribing of militaristic and imperial ideology onto boys' psyches through the emerging genre of adventure novels. In late-19th century Britain and North America, as literacy became increasingly valued by the middle class, an increasing number of boys were spending their childhoods receiving an education. "Schooling ... was supposed to be a model of efficiency," Bristow writes.

It left very little room for creative development (except in the playground). In the 1870s, reading for pleasure, therefore, took place in leisure time rather than at school. Fictional narratives that absorbed the adventurous militarism of this new and rising imperial ideology now had a prime opportunity to enter into that comparatively unrestricted world: a world that belonged to the individual boy and not the school he went to" (27).

Writers of boys' adventure novels — Robert Ballantyne, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Thomas Arnold among them — began writing stories which depicted their globetrotting heroes fighting "the Other" in unconquered foreign lands; it is widely believed among scholars that these authors were implicitly calling on their young, male readers to become increasingly stoic and steadfast in the face of the British Empire's declining global influence (Honaker 28). Hence, these adventure stories helped to construct a cultural narrative in which boys became men by becoming aggressive and adventurous. Twenty-first century boys have inherited this adventurous legacy, Jenkins notes, but their terrain has become partially digital.

A significant similarity between the play spaces of 19th century boys and 21st century boys is that 19th century boy culture was guided by adult male writers concerned with the collapse of empire, while video games are largely produced by adult males concerned with the collapse of their sexual dominance. Stripped of their sex's once-immense social advantage, these men turn to violence and misogyny in order to achieve instant domination over their social world (Faludi 38). Such dominance gets expressed, among other ways, in violent and misogynistic video games. Although films and television shows have started to produce socially progressive content with respect to gender, video games and their designers remain stuck in a chauvinistic time warp:

Historically, gender was an unexploited category in video game design, with male designers developing games based on their own tastes and cultural assumptions without considering how these approaches might be anything other than gender-neutral. ... Yet as feminist critics note, as long as masculinity remains the invisible norm, the default set within a patriarchal culture, unselfconscious efforts are likely to simply perpetuate male dominance. (Cassell and Jenkins 25)

Masculinity is no longer the invisible norm, as films such as *The Big Lebowski* suggest; however, game designers have yet to treat masculinity as anything but. The gaming market remains disproportionately flooded with games perpetuating hegemonic masculinity. (The list of top-selling video game titles between January and June 2004 features games simulating some form of combat or another.ⁱⁱ) Given that video games are a significant site of identity formation and are continuing the trend of encouraging young boys to adopt a distinctly aggressive masculinity, Jenkins believes that Western culture must do something to counteract this problem:

Many of us might wish to foster a boy culture that allowed the expression of affection or the display of empowerment through nonviolent channels, that disentangled the development of personal autonomy from the fostering of misogyny, and that encouraged boys to develop a more nurturing, less domineering attitude to their social and natural environments. These goals are worth pursuing. (275-6)

An Alternative Model

After researching the masculinity crisis and its influence on video games, I decided to pursue Jenkins' prescribed goals through the development of an online game (online to make it accessible), which I hoped would be fun, entertaining and educational.

A budding screenwriter, I wanted to map a game narrative onto the game design and I found encouragement in the writings of certain gaming scholars who believe that narrative is a fundamental element of educational game design. At a November 6, 2003 presentation by York University's Institute for Research on Learning Technologies, York professor and gaming scholar Jennifer Jenson delivered a paper with Suzanne de Castell in which they criticize the continual failure of scholars to make an educational game both entertaining and educational. Among several things lacking in these games,

they note, is a gripping narrative, which would have helped immerse students in the gaming environment and, thus, the learning process. "[N]arratives," write Holland *et al.* "have the peculiar quality of making readers (players, viewers, interactors) care a great deal about the events they represent" (39).

Most importantly, the stories we tell as a culture influence the construction of social identities. As literary scholar Thomas King puts it, "The truth about stories is that that's all we are" (92). King describes how the contemporary native North American has inherited an unenviable social identity from the stories of decades and centuries past which have reduced any person of native descent to a simplistic collection of character traits. In contemporary times, King writes, society as a whole expects native North Americans to adopt the "Indian identity" — a person who, among other things, lives on a reservation and wears feathers and animal skins. As for the natives who lie outside this narrow definition, they experience discrimination from both natives and non-natives should they refuse to conform.

For reasons such as the one offered by King, gaming scholar Justine Cassell urges game designers to design their games around stories.

[S]torytelling is an important activity for the construction of self, for the construction of the world, and for the construction of the norms by which we lead our lives, and thus an activity that encourages storytelling is a potential space for the maintenance of an identity that is not voiceless. In other words, I claim that storytelling might be the *ur*-place to raise one's voice gladly. (307)

Stories our culture tells about men generally exclude the male wimp or have him learning to adopt a socially acceptable identity. Although certain works of recent film and television have affirmed the wimp, as discussed above, video games have yet to tell positive stories about wimps and their struggles to achieve a sense of pride in who

they are. With this in mind, I decided that my game would tell the story of a wimp and his struggle to see his wimpiness not as a stigma, but as a source of pride.

In an homage to *Lebowski*, I gave this wimp the last name of "Burkhalter," the name of the man in charge of scheduling at the bowling office (the film never actually shows us the character), and a first name of "Billy" — "Billy" because I liked the alliteration and thought it sounded funny. I then named the game *Billy Burkhalter, the Maltese Man* after Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, in which the characters are all in search of a falcon whose enamel surface is concealing its body made of pure gold. At the novel's conclusion, detective Sam Spade hands over the falcon to the villainous Gutman who then makes a startling discovery:

Gutman turned the bird upside-down and scraped an edge of its base with his knife. Black enamel came off in tiny curls, exposing blackened metal beneath. Gutman's knifeblade bit into the metal, turning back a thin curved shaving. The inside of the shaving, and the narrow plane its removal had left, had the soft grey sheen of lead.

Gutman's breath hissed between his teeth. His face became turgid with hot blood. He twisted the bird around and hacked at its head. There too the edge of his knife bared lead. He let knife and bird bang down on the table where he wheeled to confront Spade. "It's a fake," he said hoarsely.

The game's name reflected my attempt to suggest that all men are like that falcon that Gutman gutted. Many wimps believe that if they should chip away at their wimpy surfaces, they would find underneath a masculinity made of gold; however, this is a false notion. Although the prevailing middle-class belief "in the likelihood of self-improvement if you'll just hurl yourself into it" (Fussell 43) suggests that each and every male out there has the potential to become the ideal man — confident, cool, and virile — a wimp who attempts to shed his wimpy identity for a more ideal masculinity represses his true self — and this self will eventually resurface in an unpleasant

manifestation. The wimp who sheds his wimpy identity for the ideal masculinity will be sorely disappointed, much in the same way Gutman and his cohorts are disappointed that there is no golden body underneath the Maltese Falcon's skin. The wimp should instead ignore the pressure to become the ideal man and should rather become comfortable with his wimpiness.

Although digital technology enables game designers to construct interactive storytelling, I decided to design my game around a non-interactive, linear story. A story which affirmed the wimp was essential to my game, and I did not want players constructing alternative narratives which contained negative portrayals of wimps. The game thus fell under the category of what game developer Chris Crawford (2003) calls "games alternating with stories": "You interact with the nonnarrative game, then see some non-interactive story, then interact some more with the game, then see more story" (260). One of the more popular examples of this genre of games are the Sierra On-Line games produced in the 1980s and early 1990s, all of which contained relatively positive gender representations. It was thus a model worth investigating. Cassell and Jenkins believe that "[t]he arrival of games from the small company Sierra On-Line changed things somewhat" (9), having inspired game designers to produce gender-neutral games in increasingly large numbers. The 19 games from Sierra — found mainly in their King's Quest, Police Quest, Space Quest, and Leisure Suit Larry series — were "adventure games," games which simulate an adventure experience and require players to make the decisions which allowed their avatars to see a quest through to its completion. In *King's Quest IV*, "The Perils of Rosella," the player controlled Rosella, a

woman marooned on a beautiful yet deadly island and whose history is a complete mystery. The player guided Rosella across the island, encountering characters both devious and delightful as he or she typed in various commands (e.g. look at object; talk to man; ride unicorn; dive underwater; throw water at witch) in order to manipulate Rosella's way to freedom. In the Sierra adventure model, players interacted with their everyday environment (e.g. read this magazine, not that one; watch this television show, not that one; talk this way to the woman, not that way, etc.). Given that I wanted players to reflect upon the effects that their everyday decisions have on the construction of gender, I designed my game around the Sierra model. The model enabled me to immerse players in an everyday world where they could not pretend that gender is invisible. In the script, for example, I gave players access only to those objects which reminded Billy of his wimpy identity.

The goal of those burdened with a marginal identity is to convince the people in their social environment that their identity is not unnatural, but just as normal as anyone else's. A strategy they often take in order to achieve this goal is to produce what Linda Hutcheon calls a "postmodern parody." The term "parody" is generally assigned to a text in which the author has mimicked the form of another text in an effort to make light of it. A "postmodern parody," writes Hutcheon, mimics the form of the original text, but also "ironically contextualizes it" (89-113). In other words, by borrowing the text's privileged form and replacing its privileged content with marginalized content, the author of a postmodern parody makes a symbolic statement; she or he contests the social privilege of the original content and suggests that the original content is arbitrarily naturalized and is as equally "normal" as the marginalized content of the parody.

Hutcheon departs from the standard postmodernist theory of identity which claims "that in postmodern culture, the subject has disintegrated into a flux of euphoric intensities, fragmented and disconnected, and that the decentred postmodern self no longer experiences anxiety..." (Kellner 144). In his analysis of popular culture, Douglas Kellner criticizes postmodernism's totalizing characterization of contemporary identity and demonstrates that social identity continues to structure the way in which people interact with their environment (174). That said, he acknowledges that the diversification of identities in contemporary culture does offer people suffering from an identity crisis an increasing amount of latitude and choice in their attempt to construct a recognizable identity. People's identities do enter periods of flux, but only when they are transforming from one identity to another. The identities on display in postmodern parodies are only temporary manifestations; their subjects use the parody only to affirm their fixed social identity.

Playwright and performance artist Deb Margolin offers a similar definition of parody, defining it as:

"...the direct result of an attempt to make room for oneself within an airtight, closed, or exclusive social, cultural, or theatrical construct. ... A kind of aria of the poor. It is an inherently ridiculous act, like a woman in a housedress crashing a fancy party. That's why, although not all parody is funny, parody is considered a subset of comedy. Parody is a desperate act of love, it does not exist without some form of love, of passion, of desire. (248)

Although my parody was trying to be funny, just as Margolin is trying to be funny during her performances, I was not producing a work of kitsch. Kitsch, as most scholars define it, is a text empty of any statements of social significance, and is produced with the intention of eliciting an emotional response from its reader. My prototype did resemble

to a set of films released between 1941's *The Maltese Falcon* and 1959's *Touch of Evil*, which are characterised by a dangerous urban setting filled with shadows and harsh contrasts, and which explore themes of male alienation and loneliness through a hard-boiled male protagonist (sometimes a private detective) who's positioned against corruption, emasculating bureaucracy, weak-minded males and femme fatales. Frank Krutnik has observed that *films noir* were haunted by the bleak, pessimistic theme that the traditional routes towards the ideal American masculinity had evaporated. After a decade of economic depression, the Second World War, and an influx of women in the workforce, American males experienced a heightened threat to their manhood. *Film noir*, however, encourages males to reclaim their dominance through anti-social behaviour and misogyny and it overtly privileges the hard-boiled loner over the wimp.

Noir has not faded away; its influences endure in contemporary films (e.g. *Chinatown* [1971], *Blue Velvet* [1982], *Blade Runner* [1983], *Blood Simple* [1984], *Miller's Crossing* [1990], *Barton Fink* [1991], *L.A. Confidential* [1997], *Lost Highway* [1997], *A Simple Plan* [1998], *Fight Club* [1999], *8MM* [1999], *The Man Who Wasn't There* [2001]) as well as in video games, all of which have parodied *noir* in an effort to re-present themes of male alienation. The term *game noir* recently gained currency among gamers and gaming scholars who have used it to describe such popular games as *Max Payne* and *Grim Fandango*, in which the designers have mapped *film noir*'s central features (a story set in a dark, urban environment featuring a hard-boiled, alienated male protagonist pitted against a femme fatale, ill-willed males and an all-out corrupt society) onto a computer adventure game. Their popularity is understandable, Galen Davis argues in "Game Noir: The Construction of Virtual Subjectivity in Computer

Gaming" (2002), because *game noir* is a complementary fusion of the form of the computer game with the genre of *noir*. Both, he observes, call attention to the fragmentation of the self: *noir* with its exploration of the male's tenuous hold on his masculinity; computer games with their requirement that players masquerade as someone else while they play. Drawing on Davis' argument, I contend that when the player is playing a *game noir*, the *noir*-ish qualities stir his repressed anxieties, while the form of the computer game allows the player to confront these anxieties by taking on the identity of a hard-boiled male protagonist. Although the *game noir Max Payne* is popular among gamers, I found it an unsuitable model for my project since it encouraged players to transfer their anxiety into bloodshed. I decided instead that *game noir* was an appropriate object of parody for my prototype, because its conventions signalled to audiences that the game was exploring the masculinity crisis. Moreover, by substituting a wimp in for the hard-boiled protagonist, I was also criticizing *noir* for presenting the hard-boiled male as a solution to the masculinity crisis. My parody of *noir* satirized its maxim that if a man works hard enough, if he expunges himself of sentiment, and if he deprives himself of all bodily pleasures, he can become the ideal man: confident, self-made, tough, and honest. By playing the game, players would come to reject the myth that a man can easily fulfill the requirements of ideal manhood by simply hoisting himself above his oppressive, material conditions.

Billy Burkhalter — the avatar the player controlled — was modelled on the Dude (from *The Big Lebowski*). *Lebowski* is a parody of *The Big Sleep* (1946) — Howard Hawks' *film noir* based on the novel by Raymond Chandler — and the Dude is a parody of Chandler's detective Philip Marlowe. The Dude possesses all the features of a *noir*

protagonist — he mutes his fears through a “strict drug regimen,” he’s a wisecrack and a loner, he’s afraid of sexuality, and he feels alienated in an urban world — with one notable exception: he is a wimp. Unlike the Dude, who has no sense of purpose and refuses to exert himself, Marlowe is driven by a desire to restore male potency in his culture. As Krutnik informs us, the *noir* tough-guy attempts to achieve this by expunging feminine characteristics from himself and by relinquishing all dependence on females. He believes, for example, that his erotic desires for women turn him into a “softee” and might make him emotionally reliant on women, which provokes him to project negative character traits onto any women he desires in order to repress his longing for her. On his first encounter with femme fatale Vivian Regan, he writes, “She was worth a stare. She was trouble. She was stretched out on a modernistic chaise-lounge with her slippers off, so I stared at her legs in the sheerest silk stockings. They seemed to be arranged to stare at” (28).

Although the Dude does not demonize the women he’s attracted to, he represses the fact that he is a sexual being. As I observe in my *Lebowski* paper:

That the Dude cherishes sex for its own sake is a fact he keeps from himself and the Coens keep from the audience — given their heightened fear of it. In his scene with Jackie Treehorn [Ben Gazzara], Treehorn receives a phone call, scribbles something on a pad, removes the top piece of paper, and exits. Curious, the Dude sprints up to the message pad, takes a pencil, and lightly runs over it, revealing what Treehorn had scribbled: a sketch of a man with an enormous erection. The film shows the Dude’s flabbergasted expression, then returns to his POV: an extreme close-up of Treehorn’s sketch, which looks as though it was drawn by a French Impressionist and is framed as though it were on an artist’s canvas. But can a pornographer be an artist? Is sex valuable for its own sake — not solely for the sake of reproduction? This is a powerful, visceral moment, because it allows the Dude and the male audience to experience momentarily a man’s sexuality as pleasurable in and of itself — without their conscious knowledge. (19)

Determined to have players consciously realize that they are afraid of sexuality, I decided to make Billy a parody of the Dude. Billy possessed the Dude's core features, as listed above, but he was also consciously aware of his fears of sexual expression and physical self-assertion. Billy explained his problem to Diane Sawyer during their interview in the script's opening sequence:

DIANE SAWYER: What stresses you out?

BILLY: Well, sex. On account of my Catholic upbringing. Violence. On account of being abused by my brother Warren. Fortunately, I find solace in drugs, booze, classic rock, and social avoidance.

DS: Must be tough balancing your stress level with your self-esteem level.

B: You've hit the snail on the shell, Diane.

Billy was conflicted, as Diane Sawyer suggested, because sexual expression and physical self-assertion are required for entry into manhood in our culture. This struggle is one which, as argued in the *Lebowski* paper [see Appendix A], haunts all wimps and thus plays an extremely meaningful role in their lives. Each action that a wimp makes is made in order to keep his stress level at a manageable low and his self-esteem level at a manageable high; that said, the wimp often finds himself forced to make a decision that helps one level, but hurts another. Thus, the wimp weighs his every move carefully, taking into account not only the actions' potential effect on his levels, but also the current status of each level. If his self-esteem and stress levels are low, then he may be willing to engage in sexual activity. In such an instance, he sacrifices his stress level in order to rescue his low self-esteem level.

I decided to map this system of actions and reactions onto the gameplay of my prototype. I came to this decision from a therapeutic point of view, given that the central objective of this prototype was to encourage wimps to stop repressing their fears and to stop seeing their wimpy identities with a sense of shame. A simulation of male wimpiness did not criticize the wimp's conflicted mind, but treated it as a common problem which required the wimp's utmost attention. This type of design was appropriate from a design point of view as well. A simulation of male wimpiness had the potential to generate a consistent yet mysterious system which would attract players curious to see if they were capable of figuring out how to integrate one's wimpy identity into the social world.

Although wimpiness is an undesirable identity trait, players would see the game as distinct from a real-life experience of male wimpiness. Certain gaming scholars have described game simulations as being purely immersive, i.e. when the player's avatar is kicking an opponent's avatar in the face, the player believes that it is actually him- or herself who is doing the kicking (Laramée). If such were the case, no one would ever play my game given that wimpiness is largely perceived as being an undesirable identity trait. In opposition to this claim, Salen and Zimmerman write:

A teen kissing another teen in *Spin the Bottle* or a *Gran Turismo* player driving a virtual race car each understands that their play references other realities. But the very thing that makes their activity play is that they also know they are participating within a constructed reality, and are consciously taking on the artificial meanings of the magic circle.ⁱⁱⁱ It is possible to say that the players of a game are "immersed" — immersed in meaning. (452)

The immersion of meaning which one experiences when they masquerade as a wimp relates to the earlier discussion concerning the pleasure one receives from parody.

"The loss of the sense of 'the normal,'" Butler writes, "can be its own occasion for laughter, especially when 'the normal,' 'the original' is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one can embody. In this sense, laughter emerges in the realization that all along the original was derived" (138-9). I hoped that the enjoyment behind playing *Billy Burkhalter: The Maltese Man* would derive similarly from the player's sudden awareness that the ideal masculinity is both unattainable — given the wimp's psychic structure — and undesirable — given the way in which dominant masculinities are portrayed throughout the game.

It should be noted that I did not design the game with the intention of privileging the wimpy identity above all other identities, but with the intention of helping the wimpy identity to achieve social recognition. I did not want the game to encourage people to become idle slackers, but I realized that players might interpret the game as doing exactly this. Indeed, as I reflect upon the game design, I realize that I presented Billy as a rebel against not only hegemonic masculinity, but also the upper-middle social class. Billy lived in a broken-down apartment without the middle-class symbols of cultural capital (e.g. posters of fine art hanging on the wall). He was not well-groomed (tattered clothes, shaggy hair), and he worked for a pittance at a part-time job. The prototype thus contained a problematic conflation of masculinity and class. In his comparison of the novel, *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, and its film adaptation, *Purple Noon*, film scholar Chris Straayer observes that the former distinguishes between class and masculinity, whereas the latter suggests that a person's masculinity reflects his social class and vice versa. In my prototype, I had inadvertently suggested that hegemonic masculinity belongs to the upper-middle social class — and not to any other class. This, of course,

is a false notion — there are working-class, middle-class, and upper-class hegemonic masculinities, as well — and, if I redesigned the game, I would present Billy as someone whose class was less saliently obvious. The game was not an entire endorsement of the lower-middle class, however; at the end of the story, Billy transcends his class by marrying Vivian, a successful television producer, and becoming a stay-at-home dad.

The game was becoming a parody of, not only the *film noir* genre, but also the adventure genre and the video game in general. Nineteenth-century adventure stories for boys, writes Richard Phillips, "mapped masculinities" through geography. "Masculinities mapped in the geography of adventure reflect[ed] characteristics of that geography" (18). A man's place was charted not in the home, but on the high seas and in dangerous, foreign lands, and the geographical characteristics of such places were mapped onto the masculinities of boys and men, all of whom were increasingly expected to become robust and swashbuckling, intimidating and mysterious. Twenty-first century adventure video games repeat this trend, inserting their male heroes into equally daunting and magnificent territories. The most popular games on the market today chart masculinity in outer space, football stadiums, and vast, imaginative lands. In my prototype, I mimicked the adventure form, giving players a territory to explore, but I reduced the conventional volume of this space. Criticizing the male's desire to transcend his emasculating, domestic environment through the fantasy of an adventure story, I placed the avatar in his tiny apartment and other confined spaces where the player was forced to examine Billy's immediate social world. Stories themselves are tools of repression and, thus, I wrote the prototype's story as a parody of conventional

adventure storytelling (for a plot outline, see Appendix B; for the script, see Appendix D). A sprawling mess, the story was logically sound yet so complex that it held all but no one's attention. By the end of this yarn, the player was expected to be no longer caught up in the supposed fantasy it provided, but to be thinking about the story's metanarrative, which criticized the use of story to legitimate oppressive ideologies. The player's focus was directed not towards the story, but towards the non-narrative, interactive tasks which connected each narrative cutscene. For example, starting between the moments when the Billy awakens at the end of first cutscene and when he leaves his apartment, Billy is unable to leave the apartment until he feels both confident (high self-esteem) and calm (low stress). I divided Billy's metres into three regions and 10 notches: calm (notches 1-5), anxious (6-9), delirious (10); wimpy (1), timid (2-5), confident (6-10). If Billy felt both calm and confident, he could leave the apartment, but if he felt either anxious or timid, he could not, and if he ever felt delirious or wimpy, the player would lose and would be forced to quit the game or start over.

A further tool of repression in video games is its euphoric pace, which requires players to be extremely focused and alert, constantly acting and reacting to the environment, and removed from everyday life. By confining the avatar to a tiny space, in which the player must figure out how to negotiate between social pressure and personal desire, the player was forced to confront the repressions that video games often provide an escape from. At the outset of the game, in Billy's apartment, the player experienced a leisurely pace as he decided whether or not to read magazines, watch televisions, have a shower, clean the bathroom, smoke a joint, eat cereal, open the

refrigerator, or drink vodka and sangria. This game forced players to confront the fact that these activities affect our emotional stability.

I developed my parody of *noir* by writing a story in which Billy is pitted against hordes of male villains lurking in the shadows. In *film noir*, the private investigator is "[tested] in relation to other men: as partners, adversaries or representatives of legal or patriarchal law" (Krutnik 165), and thus the purpose of the male villains' inclusion in my game was to provide a standard against which the viewer could measure the protagonist's masculinity. Each villain was a parody of an archetypal masculinity: the aging Brit seeking to resurrect his country's imperial heritage; the white, upper-middle class capitalist obsessed with efficiency; the pretentious artist; the annoying, attention-seeking comedian; the sneering, overtly sexual clubgoer; and the narcissistic bodybuilder. Through a careful use of language, I built each character's dialogue around a collection of two-dimensional, stock phrases in order to suggest that each masculinity is a vacuous performance resulting from each man's flawed attempt to fulfill the requirements of contemporary manhood.

Females received a different treatment. The femme fatale usually represents male paranoia of a feminine invasion of the patriarchy; here, the femme fatale, Vivian Sullivan, was someone Billy initially feared (because he was attracted to her), even though she had no interest in exploiting him. Instead, she and Billy developed a romantic relationship, and Billy discovered that to be "in love," to be full of sentiment, was not an affront to his manhood, as male chauvinists like to suggest, but one of life's pleasures.

Mapping the *noir* convention of male posturing onto a contemporary context, I decided that Billy should become a contestant on a reality television show, a genre in which the male contestants usually compete against members of the same sex in an

effort to become crowned "most man." Ever since *Survivor*, reality television has allowed audiences to elect their favourite males and females — and to vote off their least favourite. Their voting strategies are usually based upon stereotypically gendered criteria, i.e. who's the most man and most woman? Given that the genre of reality television excludes the wimp, the game became a parody of reality television, as well. Calling attention to the fact that reality television reaffirms hegemonic masculinity, I called the game show *Who's the Most Man?* On this show, the home viewers decided if a male contestant is more man than the show's team of "supermen." Each superman represented a particular social sphere in which contemporary males are expected to dominate: the office, the gym, the club, the artist's studio, and the comedian's stage. For each night of the week (Monday to Friday), the show's producers gave Billy and each superman a task — and whoever performed each task the best received the audience's vote. For example, Billy and the office guy were put through a series of situations from a not-so-typical day at the office, including one in which a boss entered the office guy and barked, "Stevenson! Your department's responsible for maintaining efficiency. And yet the boys down in engineering say they're three weeks behind schedule on the new palm pilot design. I swear, I'm this close to a coronary!" The office guy replied, "Sir, you're not going to have a coronary. That's because I've got our boys working round the clock on this thing. They're not even going to take bathroom breaks — I've got them wearing diapers." In this instance, I parodied reality television in order to satirize 21st century capitalism. Reality shows such as *The Apprentice* privilege the heirs to Donald Trump's throne and their Machiavellian designs. Here, by presenting a business executive who forces his employees to wear diapers, I

challenged the self-proclaimed moral fortitude of big business. The five remaining situations challenged the self-proclaimed superiority of (in chronological order) the gym, the night club, the artist's studio, and the comedian's stage. I exposed the cultural norms that males who succeed in these activities are "real men" and that wimps should aspire to succeed in each one.

Conclusion: Production of the Test Scene

When I had finished designing the prototype in mid-May, I proceeded to produce a test scene based on the script's first nine pages. In the test scene, the player went to the web site www.sphincter.ca, which contained a hypertext link to a separate window. (Upon clicking the link, the player watched a pre-loader screen as the player's computer downloaded the introduction into his or her computer. The pre-loader then dissolved to an interview between Diane Sawyer and Billy Burkhalter, in which Billy explained how the game works. Throughout these instructions, the player had the option to click "skip this shit" and jump straight to the next scene, the interactive moments between when Billy wakes up and when he leaves his apartment for the first time.) In order to complete the test scene, I cast actors, directed them through their lines, recorded their voices in a studio, selected music and sound effects, constructed an audio track, designed the graphics [for a copy of the sketches, see Appendix E], married the audio and visual tracks, and wrote the actionscript (i.e. program the game). A graduate of Ryerson University's Radio & Television Arts program, I was proficient in each of the above tasks with the exception of computer programming. Before this project began, I had never heard of actionscript and I learned this programming language largely

through the help of Internet message boards. (See Appendix C for a transcript of sessions at a web site called "flashkit.com.")

The purpose of creating a test scene was to gauge whether or not the prototype had successfully fulfilled its objectives. I tested the scene on dozens of people and I received reports of a positive gaming experience. My supervisor, Jerry Durlak, offered several suggestions, from both an aesthetic and a technical standpoint, all of which enhanced the player's ability to interact with the game.

The test scene was uploaded to the web in June 2004 and underwent several revisions in the months of August and September. It is presently is available at www.sphincter.ca, which will serve as the official home page of *Billy Burkhalter, the Maltese Man*. (The completed game has a tentative launch date of October 15th.) The American Heritage Dictionary defines "sphincter" as the "ringlike muscle that normally maintains constriction of a body passage or orifice and that relaxes as required by normal physiological functioning." The domain name plays off the slang word, "tight-ass," and signals to visitors of this site that they should relax their sphincter muscles before entering.

In order for the wimp to achieve social recognition, society must learn to relax its definitions of what it means to be a man. As the Dude puts it in his farewell speech at the end of *The Big Lebowski*, "The Dude abides." This project has been my attempt to help both wimps and society at large to abide the wimpy identity.

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Notes

ⁱ David Desser (2001) makes a similar observation regarding Jewish characters of popular television from the past two decades. According to Desser, these characters have been represented in popular television as stereotypically "urban, weak, frail, and intellectual" — qualities that have historically been assigned to Jewish men as a way to oppress them. In these recent television characters, however, "in inhabiting these roles they now become sexually desirable and potent, not only heterosexually, but along interracial, interethnic lines, as well" (2001, 271).

ⁱⁱ

RANK	TITLE	PLATFORM	PUBLISHER	RELEASE DATE	ARP
1	MVP BASEBALL 2004	PS2	ELECTRONIC ARTS	MAR'04	\$49
2	NFL STREET	PS2	ELECTRONIC ARTS	JAN'04	\$49
3	POKEMON COLOSSEUM	GCN	NINTENDO OF AMERICA	MAR'04	\$49
4	FIGHT NIGHT 2004	PS2	ELECTRONIC ARTS	APR'04	\$49
5	HALO	XBX	MICROSOFT (CORP)	NOV'01	\$29
6	NEED SPEED: UNDERGRND	PS2	ELECTRONIC ARTS	NOV'03	\$49
7	NINJA GAIDEN	XBX	TECMO	MAR'04	\$50
8	NBA BALLERS	PS2	MIDWAY	APR'04	\$39
9	T. CLANCYS PANDORA	XBX	UBISOFT (CORP)	MAR'04	\$49
10	SONIC HEROES	GCN	SEGA OF AMERICA	JAN'04	\$49
Source: The NPD Group					

ⁱⁱⁱ The "magic circle" is a term Salen and Zimmerman use to describe the experience of gameplay.

Appendix A:

“The Big Lebowski: A Mass-Produced Fantasy for Wimps”

By Sean Springer

In the opening scene of Joel and Ethan Coen's *The Big Lebowski* (1998), the husky-voiced narrator (Sam Elliott) endorses a peculiar brand of masculinity. “A way out west there was this fella, fella I want to tell you about, fella by the name of Jeff Lebowski.... This Lebowski, he called himself the Dude,” he says in a slow, southern drawl over tracking shots of urban and rural Los Angeles.

Now this a'here story I'm about to unfold took place back in the early nineties — just about the time of our conflict with Sad'm and the Eye-rackies. I only mention it 'cause some- times there's a man — I won't say a hee-ro, 'cause what's a hee-ro? — but sometimes there's a man. And I'm talkin' about the Dude here — sometimes there's a man, wal, he's the man for his time'n place, he fits right in there — and that's the Dude, in Los Angeles.

The Dude (Jeff Bridges) represents a peculiar paradigm because, as a conversation with a character named Maude (Julianne Moore) suggests, he has not lived the life of achievement that typically defines the ideal man (Faludi, 1999).

MAUDE: Tell me about yourself, Jeffrey.

DUDE: Uh.... Not much to tell. I, um, I was one of the authors of the Port Huron Statement — The original Port Huron Statement. Not the compromised second draft. Uh, and then I, uh — you ever hear of the Seattle Seven?

MAUDE: Mmnun.

DUDE: That was me... There were six other guys. Uh, and then, uh... music business briefly.

MAUDE: Oh?

DUDE: Yeah. Roadie for Metallica. Speed of Sound Tour.

MAUDE: Mmm.

DUDE: Bunch of assholes. And then, you know, little of this, little of that. My career's slowed down a bit lately.

MAUDE: What do you do for recreation?

DUDE: Oh, the usual. Bowl. Drive around. The occasional acid flashback.

The Dude is an American male wary of having an active lifestyle. In other words, he is a wimp. "A wimp lacks a 'sense of purpose,'" Kimmel writes, "including a sense of sexual purpose" (1996, 294). Once celebrated as the "new man" of the 1970s, the sensitive wimp has since found himself in a culture that has increasingly sought to transform him into an assertive and domineering individual. In an era when "the structural foundations of traditional manhood — economic independence, geographic mobility, domestic dominance — have all been eroding" (298-9), American males have attempted to restore their masculinity by suppressing signs of wimpiness in themselves and in other males. "Magazine articles and self-help books vie for men's attention, prescribing a wide variety of antidotes for gender troubles. Many offer quick-fix solutions, continuing to bait us with the fear of the wimp, then sending us right back into the fray" (298). Films have likewise been dominated by the glorification of the ambitious, self-made male protagonist; film theorists note such a trend in a number of films from the past fifteen years¹ (Byers [1996], Gabbard [2001], Goddard [2000], Malin [2003], Nilsson [2000], Stukator [1997]).

In *Field of Dreams* (1989), Kevin Costner plays Ray Kinsella, a farmer who overcomes major adversity en route to building an arena for the performance of

¹ These scholars have analyzed *Field of Dreams* (1989), *The Fisher King* (1991), *Forrest Gump* (1994), *Ransom* (1997), *The Full Monty* (1997), and *Man on the Moon* (1999).

hegemonic American masculinity — a baseball park (Nilsson). Unlike Kinsella, the Dude does not build anything in *Lebowski*, which is why the Dude is such a unique and remarkable solution to the contemporary masculinity crisis. And although Maude herself is unimpressed with the Dude's curriculum vitae, the film's immense popularity — last summer more than a thousand people spent a weekend in Louisville to celebrate “all things Lebowski” at the second annual Lebowski Fest (Yost, 2003) — implies that the Coen brothers have constructed a film which presents a plausible route towards the ideal masculinity. This alternative to the ideal masculinity is similar to the one Desser sees in Jewish characters of popular television from the past two decades. According to Desser, Jewish characters of the late twentieth century have been represented in popular television as stereotypically “urban, weak, frail, and intellectual” — qualities that have historically been assigned to Jewish men as a way to oppress them. In these recent television characters, however, “in inhabiting these roles they now become sexually desirable and potent, not only heterosexually, but along interracial, interethnic lines, as well” (2001, 271). The thesis of this paper overlaps with that of Desser's, arguing that a new masculinity has emerged in popular culture of recent years which appeals to a large number of male wimps, because it upholds their lack of a “sense of purpose” (a quality that is normally disparaged), thus creating a subculture within popular culture that actually celebrates the wimp. The wimpy route is found in a handful of television series and films of the 1990s and 2000s, including *Seinfeld* (1990 – 1998), *The Larry Sanders Show* (1992 – 1998), *Being John Malkovich* (1999), *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2000 – 2003), *Adaptation* (2002), and *American Splendour* (2003). Represented by male protagonists of a multiplicity of ethnicities, this wimpy masculinity

is glorified precisely because the protagonists are wary of asserting themselves sexually and aggressively.

According to Gill,

In ten decades of films, the noble leader, the solitary cowboy, the brave soldier, the idealistic cop, the devoted priest, and the loyal servant have suffered and prevailed in moral if not always in material terms.

As the notion of what constitutes a morally acceptable protagonist has expanded over the years to include cynical, hard-boiled detectives and brutal, alienated loners, the notion of what constitutes a morally acceptable solution has expanded along with it. (2003, 157)

These males must all suffer in order to gain entry into manhood, writes Gill, who sees in films of the past dozen years a different kind of suffering protagonist. "In these films of suffering men,² protagonists despair at what they feel and suspect about themselves, and despair prompts them to agonized acts of displacement and amelioration" (160). These protagonists rarely find salvation and their films have a chilling forecast regarding the mental stability of American males. Much like the narrator from *Fight Club* (1999), the Dude also experiences feelings of alienation — in one scene he calls himself "a loser, a deadbeat, someone the square community won't give a shit about" — however, he does not agonize over his displacement so much as he revels in it. Unlike "the narrator," the Dude is presented as a viable route towards the ideal masculinity. Indeed, as this essay attempts to demonstrate, to the list of solutions to the masculinity crisis — "the noble leader, the solitary cowboy, the brave soldier, the idealistic cop, the devoted priest, and the loyal servant" — *Lebowski* adds a version of the wimp — the "wimpy slug."

² *Bad Lieutenant* (1992), *Falling Down* (1993), *Seven* (1995), *The Sweet Hereafter* (1997), *Leaving Las Vegas* (1995), *Affliction* (1997), *Boogie Nights* (1997), *Your Friends and Neighbors* (1998), *Fight Club* (1999), *American Beauty* (1999), *8MM* (1999), *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), *Magnolia* (1999), *Bringing Out the Dead* (1999), *Baby Boy* (2001), and *Lantana* (2001).

The wimpy slug is tailor-made for the contemporary American crisis in masculinity. In her book *Stiffed*, Faludi argues that, in the late-twentieth century, American males have been increasingly expected to prove themselves on two playing fields: aggression and vanity. "All the pillars of the male paradigm [have] fallen except the search for the enemy," writes Faludi (31-2), adding elsewhere,

[M]anhood is defined by appearance, by youth and attractiveness, by money and aggression, by posture and swagger and 'props,' by the curled lip and petulant sulk and flexed biceps, by the glamour of the cover boy, and by the market-bartered 'individuality' that sets one astronaut or athlete or gangster above another. (38-9)

For Faludi, the wellspring of aggressive and glamorous males is located in southern California, the home of both Hollywood and a thriving gang culture (46). Not coincidentally, the Coen brothers set *Lebowski* in Los Angeles during the outbreak of the first Gulf War, which, according to the narrator, makes the Dude "the man *for* his time'n place" as opposed to the man *of* his time'n place. As writers, directors, producers, and editors of *Lebowski*, the Coen brothers present the Dude as an antidote to Los Angeles in 1991 — a time and place in which males are constantly reminded to assert themselves sexually and aggressively. As Faludi informs us, this state of affairs has become a source of anxiety for so many American males, and it is these males — these "wimps" who want to be accepted "as men" without having to compromise their wimpiness — who find solace by living vicariously through the Dude's sluggish masculinity. The purpose of this paper is to explore and describe the performance of this unusual masculinity and to explain precisely why it appeals to the contemporary North American wimp.

“This Aggression Will Not Stand, Man”

In order to establish the prevalence of “the male paradigm of confrontation” (Faludi 604), the Coens surround the Dude with a discourse of men crying out for “the enemy.” In his first scene, the Dude stands in a checkout line watching a George H.W. Bush news conference on a television monitor. “This aggression will not stand. This aggression against Kuwait will not stand,” declares Bush — whose war mongering, Kimmel writes, was an attempt to fend off accusations of seeming “wimpy” (297). The Dude’s closest friend, Walter (John Goodman), is a Vietnam War vet who demands respect, because he’s “a fuckin’ veteran!” He informs the Dude that “pacifism is not something to stand behind,” he takes every opportunity to pick a fight, and he criticizes Bush because Iraq, unlike Vietnam, “is not a worthy adversary.” John Turturro steals two scenes playing bowler Jesus Quintana, who loves to intimidate the Dude and his bowling partners Walter and Donny (Steve Buscemi). A host of male characters — the three nihilists (Peter Stormare, Flea, Torsten Voges), the cab driver (Ajgie Kirkland), the Malibu Chief of Police (Leon Russom), Jackie Treehorn’s thugs (Philip Moon and Mark Pellegrino) — is in search of enemies against whom each can demonstrate his manhood. Their beefs, quarrels, and scores to settle are always petty, which reflects derisively on their characters. During a bowling match, Walter notices his opponent’s foot slip over the lane marking, which sparks a heated argument. When the opponent, Smokey (Jimmie Dale Gilmore), refuses to mark his score a zero, Walter pulls out a gun, puts it to Smokey’s head, and says, “You think I’m fuckin’ around, here? Mark it zero!”

As a pacifist, the Dude stands out favourably in stark contrast to every other male character — much in the way the hard-boiled private investigator of *film noir* is “[tested] in relation to other men: as partners, adversaries or representatives of legal or patriarchal law” (Krutnik 1991, 165). In fact, *The Big Lebowski* is a parody of *The Big Sleep* (1946), the *film noir* directed by Howard Hawks and starring Humphrey Bogart as private detective Philip Marlowe and Lauren Bacall as Vivian Rutledge. According to several scholars, notably Frank Krutnik, *films noir* are haunted by the bleak, pessimistic theme that the traditional routes towards the ideal American masculinity had evaporated. After a decade of economic depression, the Second World War, and an influx of women in the workforce, American males experienced a heightened threat to their manhood.

That there was such a market for these dissonant and schismatic representations of masculinity, as is suggested by the sheer number of noir ‘tough’ thrillers in the mid-to-late 1940s, is perhaps evidence of some kind of crisis of confidence within the contemporary regimentation of male-dominated culture. (1991, 91)

Marlowe and the Dude are entwined in similar stories. Both are working for an elderly, wheelchair-bound war veteran; a young blonde bombshell mixed up in a pornography ring sexually propositions them both; both indulge in a romantic affair with a mysterious woman; and both of their stories are complex, each leaving loose strands of narrative untied. Moreover, *Lebowski* maps Marlowe’s hard-boiled exterior onto the Dude, who possesses Marlowe’s penchant for wisecracks and his masochistic indifference to torture. Such traits help Marlowe and the Dude sustain masculine autonomy in their respective cultures, both of which have been shown to impinge on their masculinities. In an early scene, Jackie Treehorn’s thugs, mistaking the Dude for an aging millionaire

also named Jeff Lebowski (David Huddleston), break into the Dude's dingy apartment, dunk his head into a toilet, and demand that he cover money owed to their boss (Ben Gazzara) by Bunny (Tara Reid), Lebowski's wife. The Dude controls the conversation with male posturing. Holding a bowling ball, the blond-haired thug asks, "The fuck is this?"

The Dude replies, "Obviously, you're not a golfer."

Lebowski, however, does not compromise the Dude's lack of a "sense of purpose"; unlike Marlowe, the Dude refuses to assert himself at all. He is not a hard-boiled detective, but is rather a hard-boiled wimp. Whereas Marlowe grudgingly gets out of bed in the morning, only persuasion and coercion can force the Dude to leave the blissful confines of his bathtub. The routes towards manhood have crumbled to a point where, the Coens suggest, the American male should remove himself from society completely.

The Coens present this argument by satirizing one character in particular, the elderly Lebowski, who in one scene explicitly informs the Dude that male assertion is the ideal masculinity.

It's funny. I can look back on a life of achievement, on challenges met, competitors bested, obstacles overcome. I've accomplished more than most men, and without the use of my legs. What — what makes a man, Mr. Lebowski? ... Is it being prepared to do the right thing? Whatever the cost? Isn't that what makes a man?

This Lebowski believes that a self-made "life of achievement" is the only path towards the ideal masculinity, and yet the wheelchair-bound, Korean War vet frets that the ideal masculinity has slipped from his grasp, as a close-up on his squinted eyes and pained

face suggests. His problem, however, is that he has never been in a position to “achieve” in the first place, as his daughter Maude later informs us.

MAUDE: The wealth was all Mother's.

DUDE: But your father — he runs stuff, he —

MAUDE: We did let Father run one of the companies, briefly, but he didn't do very well at it.

DUDE: But he's —

MAUDE: He helps administer the charities now, and I give him a reasonable allowance. He has no money of his own. I know how he likes to present himself; Father's weakness is vanity.

Much like many men of his time, Lebowski has seen a drop in the number of opportunities to achieve. In lieu of such opportunities, Lebowski secretly feels he has failed as a man and compensates by hiding behind the appearance of achievement.

The Coen brothers alternatively encourage their viewers to follow the Dude's lead and to reject the life of aggression, assertion, and achievement. This is a lesson that the Dude himself must learn and is what defines his character. In fact, at the film's outset, the Dude chooses the life of assertion after one of Treehorn's thugs urinates on the Dude's prized living room rug. Lacking a “sense of purpose” (like all wimps), the Dude must turn to his manly friend Walter for advice on the appropriate masculine response. Walter's advice is to amble to the elderly Lebowski's mansion and demand compensation for the soiled rug. Sitting before Lebowski, the Dude borrows Bush's macho sound byte, snarling, “This will not stand, ya know, this aggression will not stand, man.” Throughout the film, the Dude borrows the turns of phrases of other characters, which suggests that the Dude is trying to construct a masculine identity for himself by borrowing the character traits of manly men. Here, he is imitating Bush's “machismo”

and succumbing to the social pressure which requires men to assert themselves aggressively.

Lebowski responds with his own macho rhetoric, ridiculing the Dude for being unemployed, for dressing casually, for being “a bum,” and for “looking for a handout” — in essence, for not aggressively asserting himself in the world. “Your revolution is over, Mr. Lebowski!” he shouts. “My advice is to do as your parents did — get a job, sir! The bums will always lose!” A few scenes later, when Lebowski asks the Dude to courier ransom money to the three nihilists, who have allegedly kidnapped Bunny, the Dude reluctantly agrees. But his decision to assert himself by helping out Lebowski only yields a slew of calamities.

In fact, at the start of every scene, the Dude has allowed another character — usually Walter — to persuade him into asserting himself, and by the end of nearly every scene, the Dude has consequently suffered in one way or another: a thug socks him in the jaw; a kid steals his car — taking the alleged ransom money with it; Lebowski learns of the botched handoff, receives (what appears to be) Bunny’s toe from the kidnappers, and threatens to kill the Dude; the three nihilists break into the Dude’s apartment, smash his coffee table, and threaten to cut off the Dude’s “Johnson” should he fail to recover the ransom money; a maniac takes a crowbar to the Dude’s car; someone drugs the Dude; someone else throws a coffee mug at the Dude’s forehead and then hoofs him in the stomach; and someone else torches the Dude’s car.

“I could be sitting here with pee stains on my rug,” he tells Walter and Donny in the midst of his chaotic adventures. “My only hope now is that the big Lebowski kills me before the Germans [the nihilists] can cut my dick off.” Self-assertion will ultimately

result in a man's own castration and in his failure as a man, the Coen brothers suggest. A man's best option is to stay in bed — where it's safe and where no one will exploit him. (It turns out that the elderly Lebowski withdrew the ransom money from one of his charities, kept it for himself, and gave the Dude an empty briefcase, knowing the Dude would screw up the handoff and would be shouldered with the disappearing money. Lebowski was hoping the kidnappers would kill Bunny, having realized that a trophy wife does not deliver the ideal masculinity he longs for; however, it is revealed at the end of the film that Bunny was not kidnapped but had actually gone on vacation.)

In between his chaotic adventures, the Dude does find solace: e.g. in his bathtub smoking a joint and listening to whale sounds or doing Tai Chi in his living room and drinking White Russians. He's happiest at home where he can further shield his mind from the strains of the outer world by sticking to "a strict drug regimen," as he terms it. He loathes competition and he takes no pleasure in fighting aggressors, which suggests that the Dude is not only a wimp, but is also a flaccid slug. For this reason, we do not see his final bowling match against Jesus Quintana nor do we ever get the sense that the Dude achieves any quantifiable success within the film. (Indeed, the Coen brothers are implicitly arguing that the Dude succeeds by *not* succeeding.) As Joel Coen tells *Indiewire*, "We wanted to do a Chandler kind of story — how it moves episodically, and deals with the characters trying to unravel a mystery. As well as having a hopelessly complex plot that's ultimately unimportant" (Stone, 1998). Screenwriter William Goldman finds this frustrating:

Another example of why the Coens drive me nuts: *The Big Lebowski*. This nutball mélange of a flick takes place a lot of the time in a bowling alley, where John Goodman, who is nuts, is taunted by another bowler named Jesus (John Turturro). A tournament is mentioned several times.

And I know this: that is going to be some fucking bowling match. I don't know if either Goodman or Turturro is going to survive the thing, but I *cannot wait*.

Guess what? Not only is there no bowling contest, the Coens never even *thought* of having one. For them, it was just background for character. Well guess what? — they're wrong, because I want to see Goodman kick Turturro's ass. (2000, 213)

The Dude's anti-sociality irks Goldman, much as it irked several film critics (the film received mixed reviews) and the viewing public at large (the film fared poorly at the box office). But for a large mass of North American males — those who attend the *Big Lebowski* festivals, who trade *Lebowski* merchandise over e-Bay, who maintain *Lebowski* fan sites, who play *Lebowski* drinking games at college parties, and who adore living vicariously through the Dude — the Dude's anti-social sluggishness is a fine way of coping with their aversion to demonstrating one's manhood through aggression, confrontation, and competition. It is for wimps, who see *through* the Dude that they should learn to enjoy the flaccid lifestyle for it would allow them to lead fulfilled lives without having to compromise their wimpiness. Indeed, the Dude seems to have adapted to the outer world by *becoming* the slug — the wimp's evolutionary successor.

“Which One Was *Logjammin*?”

The Coens also go to great length to demonstrate that the outer world is hyper-sexualized, which provides wimpy viewers, who lack a sense of “sexual purpose,” with further reason for staying indoors. When the Dude first enters Maude's apartment, the Coens frame him in an extreme wide shot; appearing timid and relatively tiny, he tentatively steps inside a dark, cavernous, vaginal hallway. A woman's breathy moaning is audible. Through his POV, at the end of the hallway we see an artist's

canvas bearing the effigy of a woman's body. Seconds later, the Dude hears Maude's scream, her scream getting louder as she flies over his head. Suspended by a sling, she splatters paint on the Dude and on the canvas. The Dude's expressions of bewilderment at the hallway and canvas, and his full-out horrified shriek in reaction to Maude's ejaculatory body thrusting towards him, suggest the Dude is petrified of sexuality. As she puts on her robe, Maude elevates this subtext to the surface:

MAUDE: Does the female form make you uncomfortable, Mr. Lebowski?

DUDE: Is that what that's a picture of?

MAUDE: In a sense, yes. My art has been commended as being strongly vaginal. Which bothers some men. The word itself makes some men uncomfortable. Vagina.

The Dude is obviously made uncomfortable. With a stunned look, he replies, "Oh yeah?"

Moments later, Maude shows the Dude a porn video, *Logjammin'*, produced by Jackie Treehorn and starring the teenaged Bunny and Uli Kunkel (Stormare), one of the nihilists. Four of the Dude's enemies, in fact, are portrayed as pedophiles. The elderly Lebowski is married to Bunny, a teenaged runaway from Minnesota, ~~the elderly~~ Lebowski, Jackie Treehorn is having an affair with her. Jesus Quintana, Walter informs us, "did six months up at Chino for exposing himself to an eight-year-old. When he moved down to Venice he had to go door-to-door to tell everyone he's a pederast." Quintana, Uli, Lebowski, Jackie Treehorn — they are all the Dude's nemeses and are all overtly sexually active. The Coens are positioning the asexual (the Dude) above the sexual (his enemies), given that sexual assertion apparently leads to such heinous acts as child molestation.

In a later scene, Treehorn has summoned the Dude to his house to see if the Dude can assist him in finding Bunny or in recovering the money Bunny owes him. The Dude starts things off with, “How’s the smut business, Jackie?”

“I wouldn’t know, Dude. I deal in publishing, entertainment, political advocacy —”

“Oh yeah, which one was *Logjammin’*?”

Again, the Coens position the asexual versus the sexual, with the asexual taking the moral high ground.

Unlike Uli, Lebowski, and Treehorn — men unable to ward off Bunny’s sexuality — the Dude is. Their first encounter is beside Lebowski’s swimming pool, where Bunny is sun tanning in a string bikini while painting her toenails. Upon entering her space, the Dude is unable to engage in flirtatious talk, and it is Bunny who starts the discussion.

BUNNY: Blow on them.

DUDE: Huh?

BUNNY: Go ahead. Blow.

DUDE: You want me to blow on your, ah, toes?

BUNNY: Uh-huh. I can’t blow that far.

Holding her foot, the Dude is frozen and tries to avoid the issue. But Bunny shifts the conversation back to sexuality. “I’ll suck your cock for a thousand dollars,” she says. Brandt (Philip Seymour Hoffman), the sexually repressed butler, explodes with laughter. “Ha ha ha ha ha! Wonderful woman! We’re all — we’re all very fond of her. Very free-spirited!” Ignoring Brandt, Bunny adds, “Brandt can’t watch though. Or he has to pay a hundred.” Positioned against the villainous Lebowski and Treehorn, who succumb to Bunny’s sexuality, the Dude shuns it. And thus, the male viewer’s wariness of our

sexualized culture is affirmed. Geared towards male viewers struggling to conform to the new model of masculinity, which requires men to workout in the gym, wear Calvin Klein underwear, and sport snug, colour-coordinated outfits, *Lebowski* provides the calming message, "Being afraid of sexuality is okay." Instead of wearing tight-fitting clothing, which signals sexual expressiveness, the Dude wears loose and tattered which clothes mask the contours of his body, his hair covers his face, and he often wears sunglasses. (In stark contrast, the villains — Quintana, Kunkel, Treehorn, and Treehorn's thugs — wear tight clothing; in one scene, the contours of Quintana's bulging penis are noticeably visible.) The Dude refuses to express himself sexually and his fear of sexuality is all over the film.

His fear of homosexuality is established in the Dude's second visit to Maude's apartment, where an effeminate man named Knox Harrington (David Thewlis) sits cross-legged reading a magazine. His contribution to the film is limited to a couple of lines and a few squealing laughs, all of which irritate the Dude.

DUDE: Who the fuck are you?

KNOX: Just a friend of Maudie's.

DUDE: Friend with a cleft asshole?

And in another scene, Walter screams over and over, "This is what happens, Larry, when you fuck a stranger in the ass!" when fifteen-year-old Larry Sellers (Jesse Flanagan) refuses to confess to having stolen the Dude's car. Being fucked up the ass, it is suggested, is the worst thing that can happen to a man. (Walter then turns on the heterosexual male's symbol of virility — a shiny red Corvette — and thrashes it with a crowbar.)

In the Coen brothers' films, sexual expressiveness is a symptom of moral corruption, with villains typically valuing sex as a source of pleasure and heroes valuing sex as a tool of reproduction. In a sense, the Coens are proponents of gender enslavement, requiring men and women to fulfill the traditional roles of family production and child rearing in our culture. In *Fargo* (1996), the kidnappers (Steve Buscemi and Peter Stormare) are vilified because they act on their sexual drives — there's a motel room scene where they're having blasé, mechanical sex with two prostitutes — while the hero, Marge Gunderson (Frances McDormand), is celebrated for cracking the case while carrying a child. In *Raising Arizona* (1987), the heroes (Nicolas Cage and Holly Hunter) desperately want to have a child of their own, while Glen (Sam McMurray) gets knocked out by H.I. McDonnough (Cage) for suggesting they engage in "wife swapping." Although Barton Fink (John Turturro) is the hero of *Barton Fink* (1991), he is punished for seducing Audrey Taylor (Judy Davis), waking up the next morning shocked to find himself lying next to her impaled corpse. And when Maude shows the Dude the *Logjammin'* video, she snarls, "The story is ludicrous." Emphasizing its makeshift sets, amateur performances, and wooden dialogue, the Coens are clearly mocking the porn industry, suggesting that sexual activity is immoral unless other elements — story, romance, love, and intentions to produce children — are present. "Yes, Mr. Lebowski," she adds, "these unfortunate souls cannot love in the *true sense of the word*" (italics mine). Likewise in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (1999) and *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001), the protagonists learn to value sex solely for the sake of reproduction.

“You Mean Coitus?”

Although the Dude does learn the same lesson, he is conflicted, given that sexual expression is required for entry into manhood in our vanity culture. This tension is apparent when the Coens delve inside the Dude's psyche and present an erotic dream sequence — a parody of Busby Berkeley musicals — in which the Dude shakes his hips to Kenny Rogers's "I Just Dropped In," caresses Maude's body, shows her how to bowl, and looks up dozens of women's skirts. All the while, the Dude is wearing Uli Kunkel's cable repairman outfit from *Logjammin'*. The Dude shuns sexuality, keeping it at a safe distance, but as we see in this and in other scenes, he does not completely repress it. As Maude's assistants help her off the sling, the viewer takes the Dude's POV, which frames Maude's naked body in an extreme wide shot. He looks at Maude, but keeps his distance, suggesting he is wary of, yet subconsciously intrigued by, her sexuality. In his second encounter with Bunny, the Dude has returned to Lebowski's mansion, where he spies Bunny prancing naked on the terrace, as the butler Brandt furiously picks up her clothes. Bunny is behind glass doors, so as to darken her nudity. And when the Dude watches the *Logjammin'* video, the video's blurriness divorces the image of a naked performer (played by real-life porn star Asia Carrera), from any deep, erotic attachment the audience, the Coens, or the Dude might associate with her sexuality.

Lebowski is filmed almost entirely in a wide-angle lens, which “exaggerates the distance between the various objects in a frame, emphasizing their detachment from each other” (Robertson 1998, 82). Critics accuse the Coens of being “icy-hearted, with an emotionally sterile vision of the world” (81); however, that is precisely their point.

The Dude must flirt with sexuality — in order to feel like a man — but he cannot wilfully embrace it — because it so obviously troubles him.

In his three scenes with Maude, the Dude reluctantly allows her to force the issue of sex.

MAUDE: Do you like sex, Mr. Lebowski?

DUDE: Excuse me?

MAUDE: Sex. The physical act of love. Coitus. Do you like it?

DUDE: I was talking about my rug.

MAUDE: You're not interested in sex?

DUDE: You mean coitus?

MAUDE: I like it too.

But if the Dude does like sex, he has an odd way of showing it. In their third meeting, the Dude stumbles through his front door, looks up and sees Maude standing over him.

MAUDE: Jeffrey.

DUDE: Maude?

MAUDE: Love me.

Maude disrobes.

DUDE: That's my robe.

The Dude is sexually attracted to Maude, as the Busby Berkeley dream sequence suggests. There, Maude stands before the Dude dressed in a sexually accentuating Valkyrie outfit, which the Dude softly caresses; however without a sense of sexual purpose, he's almost speechless when she disrobes. But the Dude then transcends his wimpiness and becomes the slug, allowing Maude to force herself upon him sexually.

In the process he becomes “a man,” having proven himself on sexual grounds. Moreover, Maude’s announcement that their romp in the sack was for the sake of having a child — “What did you think this was all about, fun and games?” — turns the act into the ultimate demonstration of the Dude’s manhood without having lowered the Dude into the “vulgarity” of sex for the sake of pleasure.

MAUDE: Look, Jeffrey, I don’t want a partner. In fact, I don’t want the father to be anyone I have to see socially or would have any interest in raising the child himself.

Here, women are enslaved as the child carers whereas men are relieved of their responsibilities, given their wimpy refusals to assert themselves. Still, the Dude maintains a shred of a social role — that of sperm donor — which does not require the Dude to assert himself in any other way. Thus, the Dude can be a man without compromising his wimpiness.

That the Dude cherishes sex for its own sake is a fact he keeps from himself and the Coens keep from the audience — given their heightened fear of it. In his scene with Jackie Treehorn, Treehorn receives a phone call, scribbles something on a pad, removes the top piece of paper, and exits. Curious, the Dude sprints up to the message pad, takes a pencil, and lightly runs over it, revealing what Treehorn had scribbled: a sketch of a man with an enormous erection. The film shows the Dude’s flabbergasted expression, then returns to his POV: an extreme close-up of Treehorn’s sketch, which looks as though it was drawn by a French Impressionist and is framed as though it were on an artist’s canvas. But can a pornographer be an artist? Is sex valuable for its own sake — not solely for the sake of reproduction? This is a powerful, visceral moment,

because it allows the Dude and the male audience to experience momentarily a man's sexuality as pleasurable in and of itself — without their conscious knowledge.

By braving the tortures of the outer world, the Dude transcends his wimpiness. He bears the masochistic traits of the male protagonists of *films noir* whose masochism demonstrates an ability to endure physical and emotional abuse — an ability required for entry into manhood. In the “tough” investigative thrillers, especially *The Big Sleep*, the protagonist's indifference to torture leads to “the affirmation of the hero as an idealised and undivided figure of masculine potency and invulnerability...” (Krutnik 93). Similarly, the Dude welcomes aggressive and sexual confrontation. True to his sluggish, wimpy self, he never fights back; however, nor does he ever run away. In a particular scene, the nihilists burst into the Dude's apartment, smash his telephone, and march into the bathroom. Most reasonable individuals would leap out of the bathtub, run for a phone, or hide — anything to save their skins. The Dude nonchalantly sings, “Hey, hey — this is a private residence, man!” His pathetic attempt at avoiding confrontation is not a sign of the Dude's laziness (regardless of the narrator's assertion that “the Dude was a lazy man”). In truth, it is a sign that the Dude subconsciously craves aggressive punishment and sexual humiliation — both of which usher the Dude into manhood. Ultimately, he wants to be punished — and he is. “Nice marmot,” he sneers at the nihilists' pet rodent, which provokes the nihilists to toss the rodent into the Dude's bathtub.

In *Taking It Like a Man* (1998), sociologist David Savran argues that contemporary men have experienced a paradigm shift and are under increasing pressure to willingly endure pain, for it redeems them as “victims.” The Dude likewise

enters manhood at the expense of masochism; however, he departs from Savran's paradigm of the contemporary male — Savran invokes Sylvester Stallone's Rambo — for the Dude is not portrayed as a victim and his mortality is never threatened. The Dude rather bears the scars of an assertive and competitive male, and is thus celebrated by his wimpy audience for having entered manhood without having shed his wimpy identity.

“The Dude Abides”

By placing himself in these situations, in which he suffers physical torture or sexual humiliation, the Dude sustains masculine stoicism and autonomy without having compromised his refusal to exert himself wilfully. The Coens present this strategy to a particular kind of man — the wimp, a typology represented in several characters: Brandt, Donny, Marty (Jack Kehler), and Da Fino (Jon Polito), all of whom shun aggression and sexuality, but who refuse to play the sluggish masochist. Like the Dude, they are wimps; unlike the Dude, they are not hard-boiled slugs, for they cannot present a front of indifference to the horrors of the outer world. Brandt's attempts at defusing Bunny's indecent proposals reflect an inability to hide his extreme embarrassment and an inability to sustain masculine stoicism. “That's marvellous,” he exclaims before literally dragging the Dude away. Donny is terrified of confrontation. He runs in the other direction when the nihilists challenge him to a fight and when a maniac takes a crowbar to the Dude's car. This film is ultimately for individuals who want their identities accepted — that of men who fear sex and self-assertion — but who nevertheless want the outer world to surprise them with sadism in order to feel like a

man. It's for men like Brandt, Donny, Marty, and Da Fino, all of whom revere the Dude, because they see in him a solution to their masculinity crisis. Donny clings to the Dude's side, Marty allows the Dude to pay the rent ten days late, Da Fino "love[s] his [detective] work," and Brandt consistently addresses the Dude with affection. The male wimp is a marginalized character in our culture, looked down upon for not being a "real man." Through the Dude, the Coens show all wimps how to become real men — by satisfying their urge to avoid social contact and by coolly succumbing to the occasional act of physical or sexual masochism.

The Dude's final words to the narrator, and to us, are "the Dude abides," which suggest that he will remain idle, but will readily welcome the odd onslaught of sex and violence. The word "abide" was used in an earlier scene by the elderly Lebowski. "By God, sir," he says to Lebowski after receiving (what appears to be) Bunny's toe from Bunny's alleged kidnappers, "I will not abide another toe." Instead of borrowing Lebowski's identity, the Dude subverts it, and he finally settles on a comfortable social identity for himself — one that is not based on anyone else, but one which actually unifies his wimpy self with his social self. The narrator smiles, turns to the camera, and says, "The Dude abides. I don't know about you, but I take comfort in that." Sitting atop a barstool in a bowling alley — the ultimate arena of sluggishness and idleness — he continues: "It's good knowin' he's out there, the Dude, takin' her easy for all us sinners. Shoosh." The narrator also takes comfort in knowing "there's a little Lebowski on the way" (the offspring of Maude and the Dude). With this sentiment, the Coens seem to be suggesting that idle masochism is not the greatest route towards the ideal masculinity,

but that for all us wimps, the hard-boiled slug is a temporary yet viable substitute for aggressive and sexual assertion.

For now, by oscillating between states of idleness and masochism, the Dude feels like an autonomous and stoic being — i.e. a man — without compromising his wimpy identity. Fans of *Lebowski* identify with the Dude's aversion to aggression and sexuality — receiving the smug pleasure of watching the Dude negate filthy sexuality — and they cheer when the Dude allows the world to force itself aggressively and sexually over him — receiving the smutty pleasure of watching him get jumped passionately. *The Big Lebowski* is, in essence, a mass-produced fantasy for wimps.

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Appendix B

Plot Outline of *Billy Burkhalter, the Maltese Man*

Act I. Billy Burkhalter, a hard-boiled wimp, lazes around at home one day when he receives a call from his employer Bertie, who invites Billy to his house. In his apartment's foyer, Billy meets a woman named Vivian who turns out to be the producer of "Who's the Most Man?" — a reality game show where Billy's brother Warren works. Charmed by Billy, Vivian invites him to become a contestant. Billy refuses and leaves. When Billy arrives at Bertie's, Bertie asks Billy to retrieve for him King Henry VIII's Royal Jock Strap, one of the world's most treasured undergarments. He explains that in the mid-16th century, the king commissioned the jewel-encrusted jock strap which had been since believed lost to the ages — until now. A young boy allegedly found the jock strap buried under his gymnasium, exchanged it for drugs to a local mobster who then agreed to sell the jock strap to Bertie. Bertie, however, hired Billy's brother Warren and his cohorts to steal the jock strap, but when they did, they refused to hand it over to Bertie. So now, Bertie wants Billy to talk some sense into his brother. Billy agrees, but later that night, Warren gets shot by an unknown assailant, crawls to Billy's apartment, and dies in Billy's arms. As he's fading away, he gives Billy the Royal Jock Strap.

Act II. Two weeks after Warren's murder, Billy is mourning at his brother's grave when Vivian approaches and re-invites him to become a contestant on "Who's the Most Man?" After agreeing to think it over, Billy goes home to find his apartment ransacked — and the Royal Jock Strap missing. He calls Vivian,

knowing she can put him up so long as he's on the show. He immediately sets off for the studio — out front of which he's accosted by a prostitute whom he avoids before slipping inside. Vivian greets Billy and shows him to his room. Moments after Vivian leaves, Billy hears a knock on the door. He opens it, sees no one, and then turns back in — where he sees the same prostitute lying on his bed. She offers sex in exchange for the jock strap. When Billy faints, she searches him, finds nothing, and leaves. The next day, Billy has a competition against the office guy and wins by mocking the proceedings. He returns to his room at the studio, turns on the lights, and sees two uniformed officers and a detective, who claims to be a former 1950s TV star. The detective tells Billy that the mobster, Dirty Larry, had his goons kill Bertie and that they're coming after Billy next. The detective agrees to persuade Dirty Larry into believing that Billy doesn't have the jock strap, so long as Billy hands over the jock strap to the detective. Billy explains the jock strap's been stolen, and the cops leave. The next night, Billy has a competition against the gym guy and wins — again by mocking the proceedings. He returns to his room and this time he finds Dirty Larry's goons, who knock Billy out and throw him in a closet as they search Billy's room. While he's lying in the closet, Billy peers through a hole into an adjoining room and witnesses the execution of the office guy by two masked men. Petrified, he tries to untie himself, but only ends up making a ruckus, which summons Vivian to open the closet and rescue him. Later, as Billy is having a bath at Vivian's place, she seduces him — which doesn't frighten Billy as much as he expected it would. The next night, Billy faces off against the club guy and

wins. At show's end, however, the power goes out and Billy is knocked unconscious; he comes to in the male typologies' underground lair. The typologies show Billy around, revealing a crystal methamphetamine laboratory to go with a roomful of drugged-up prostitutes enslaved in their prostitution ring. They invite Billy to join their team as "the slacker guy," and when Billy denies their request, they knock him out — but not before threatening to kill Billy and Vivian unless he gives them the Royal Jock Strap.

Act III. Billy regains consciousness in the back of a taxi driven by the prostitute Peaches, who reveals herself to be the daughter of the infamous Dirty Larry. She tells Billy that she works for the male syndicate and stole the Royal Jock Strap for them, because she has a grudge against her Dad. The next night, right before showtime, Vivian happily tells Billy that the ratings are in — and that the show's in last place. Vivian explains that she took this job only because she hated the show so much and wanted to ruin it, which is why she hired Billy, knowing nobody but his loyal fanbase would watch the show. Billy then receives a phone call from his landlord, who explains that he took out Billy's laundry to be washed. Billy naturally assumes that the Royal Jock Strap went out with the laundry. As he's heading out to face off against the artist guy, Billy reads a note taped to his door from Peaches. She asks him to meet her after the show behind the alley, which he does — soon as he dusts off the artist guy. But as he steps into the alleyway, he's mugged by Dirty Larry's goons. Peaches, who has made up with her father, orders the goons to take Billy to Larry's car where Billy tells Larry that he'll find that jock strap at a local laundromat. But after fishing through

Billy's laundry, Dirty Larry's goons find nothing. Feeling an itch on his legs, Billy fishes through his pants and unearths, lo and behold, the static clinging Royal Jock Strap. Dirty Larry then boots Billy out of his car. The next night, Billy faces off against the funny guy and wins. He's then crowned "Most Man of 2004." After the show, a network exec fires Vivian for the show's abysmal ratings. Billy then watches a newscast, which explains that Dirty Larry, Peaches, and Dirty Larry's goons died in a car crash last night. And that the alleged Royal Jock Strap, which was uncovered in the collision, has been ruled a fake. Billy and Vivian retire from television and live happily ever after.

Appendix C

Flash Postings

Post #1

Posted by smspringer on 05-08-2004 12:54 PM:

Making buttons invisible

Hey,

Simple question. How do I make all future instances of a particular button invisible once the user has clicked it?

Thanks.

Posted by Adam14 on 05-08-2004 12:59 PM:

```
on(release){  
this._visible=false  
}
```

Posted by iaskwhy on 05-08-2004 01:04 PM:

You have to give all the buttons instance names, then use a for loop to turn them off.

Or, put them all inside a movie clip, then make the clip invisible when any one of them is pressed.

Posted by smspringer on 05-13-2004 11:24 AM:

Thanks, guys. That was a huge help.

Post #2

Posted by smspringer on 06-06-2004 11:35 PM:

Looking for an actionscript translator

Hey,

In my flash movie, I have a button in scene 1 which, when pressed, tells the movie to jump from scene 1 to scene 2. Now, for the life of

me I can't figure out how to tell the button the following:

Have movie clip B in scene 2 gotoAndStop at the frame number equal to the current frame of movie clip A in scene 1.

Anyone know the actionscript?

Posted by jbum on 06-07-2004 03:30 AM:

I'm assuming this is a problem because in scene 2, movieclip A is not longer present.

In the button script (in scene 1) that goes to scene 2, store the current frame of the movieclip A in a global variable, just before you go to scene 2.

```
_global.matchframe = _root.movieclipa._currentframe;
```

```
gotoAndPlay("scene2"); // or whatever you're using for this...
```

Then, on the frame you're going to in scene 2, have a script which sets movieclip B to that frame.

```
_root.movieclipb.gotoAndStop(_global.matchframe );
```

Posted by smspringer on 06-07-2004 12:02 PM:

That's brilliant. Thanks, man.

Post #3

Posted by smspringer on 05-25-2004 08:31 PM:

problem with loading a movie clip

Hey,

At one point in my movie, I want to load a movie clip at frame 43. So, I assign the following action:

```
onClipEvent (load) {  
gotoAndStop(43);  
}
```

But when it loads, it loads up the movie clip's final frame. Anyone know what I'm doing wrong?

Posted by Computer Dork on 05-25-2004 09:08 PM:

Its going to load all of it, the gotoAndStop will just tell it to do just that.

Gibson Design Studios

Posted by mickbrit55 on 05-26-2004 04:16 AM:

Hiya 😊

If you want the main timeline to stop at frame 43 use
`_root.gotoAndStop(43);`

Mick

Post #4

Posted by smspringer on 06-16-2004 01:41 AM:

Help with loading an external player from a web page

Hey,

Quick, simple question:

How do I tell a button to bring up a .swf file in an external flash player
-- and to make it fullscreen?

Thanks.

Posted by Fraggs on 06-16-2004 02:21 AM:

go to:

<http://www.flash-db.com>

then map to the Library / tools tab, and choose the "JS Generator".

that will create the code for a new window, all you need to do is
customise it for your use.

Posted by smspringer on 06-16-2004 02:43 AM:

Thanks, man.

Appendix D

Script for *Billy Burkhalter, the Maltese Man*

BILLY BURKHALTER: THE MALTESE MAN

By Sean Springer

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

1 INT. MYSTERIOUS ROOM -- DAY

1

In the distant centre of a dark room sits a neon blue bean bag chair. Slouching within is the flaccid, almost lifeless body of a rudderless, middle-aged man. This is BILLY BURKHALTER. Illuminated by a spotlight and accompanied by soft, brooding jazz, he converses with a figure offscreen.

SOOTHING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Take us back to the beginning, Billy.

BILLY

Well, I got lost in a maze one day -- that sucked.

(beat)

Uh, my brother died. He was shot with a staple gun. As he was dying, he gave me this jock strap, which I kinda misplaced. Then, uh, I became a contestant on a reality TV show. Don't remember much of that, though. Later, some guys beat me up. These other guys drugged me. I did meet a really fine romantic partner -- named Vivian. A hooker -- someone else entirely -- was peripherally involved. Come to think of it, I was asked to invest in a prostitution ring. It went belly up, though.

(beat)

Uh...

SOOTHING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

I understand, Billy. It must hurt -- remembering.

BILLY

No, man. I had a killer time. Any memory loss is brought on by head wounds and excessive self-medication.

SOOTHING FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

Might your adventure have started here? Right inside your own apartment?

The background lights up, revealing an aesthetically uninspired decor of brown, chipped walls, a bookshelf piled

1 CONTINUED:

1

with old 35s and philosophy texts, and a poster of Jean-Paul Sartre, Karl Marx, and actor Jeff Bridges.

Looking as sparkling and radiant as ever, the obsequious DIANE SAWYER -- her head resting on her fist -- presses Billy. She's flanked by cameras, camera operators, a lighting director, and a producer.

DIANE SAWYER

Let's return to Sunday, May 18th.
The day tragedy struck the Burkhalter clan.

BILLY

Well... you're the interviewer. I'm
the interviewee -- so let's see...

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

2 INT. BILLY'S ROOM -- MORNING

2

This frame's composition is identical to the composition of his bedroom, with two exceptions: Billy is asleep and snoring -- loudly -- and the game's interface has emerged into view. At the screen's bottom are a series of commands, which THE PLAYER can click before clicking objects in Billy's environment or in his inventory. The inventory is to the right of the commands.

Across the screen's top are Billy's stress and self-esteem metres. The stress metre is divided into ten sections, the first six being CALM, the next three being ANXIOUS, and the last being DELIRIOUS. The self-esteem metre is also divided into ten sections, the first six being POISED, the next three being TIMID, and the last being WIMPY. His self-esteem and stress metres are both at nine.

BILLY (V.O.)

The morning was pretty ordinary. My self-esteem was steady, but my stress level was edging towards delirium. So, I took measures to reduce it to a state of serenity without killing my poise. FYI, Diane: When my stress level is calm and my self-esteem level is poised, I'm ready to face the world. But when I'm feelin' anxious or timid, I'm on house arrest until I'm relaxed. And if I ever get delirious or wimpy -- it's game over for me.

DIANE SAWYER (V.O.)

What stresses you out?

BILLY (V.O.)

Sex -- on account of my Catholic upbringing. Violence -- on account of being abused by my brother, Warren. But, really, anything that requires energetic self-assertion stresses me out.

(beat)

Fortunately, I find solace in drugs, booze, classic rock, and social avoidance.

DIANE SAWYER (V.O.)

How do you boost self-esteem?

BILLY (V.O.)

Trying to succeed in my professional and personal life. Being assertive. Withstanding the lashings of a brutal world.

DIANE SAWYER

Must be tough balancing your stress level with your self-esteem level.

BILLY (V.O.)

You've hit the snail on the shell.

SFX: ALARM CLOCK BUZZER.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Okay, I'm sure the first thing I did was turn off my alarm clock.

In order to turn it off, the player must click the verb TURN OFF and then the object ALARM CLOCK. IF the player does not do this within ten seconds, THEN Billy adds:

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Yo, lazy bones: Click TURN OFF and then click ALARM CLOCK.

Once Billy turns off the alarm clock, he says:

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Okay, uh... the rest is kinda hazy. I know I explored my pad, finding ways to chill myself out.

NOTE: IF the player's stress and self-esteem metres are not above and below their operative levels and IF the player clicks OPEN and the EXIT DOOR, THEN Billy pipes in:

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Two things.

(MORE)

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

One: I ain't going anywhere till I'm
chilled. Two: I ain't leavin' till
I'm feelin' like a worthy human bein'.

IF the player clicks LOOK and BOOKSHELF, THEN Billy rises and walks towards the bookshelf, which comes into full view, with three titles to choose from: Muscle & Fitness magazine, Marx's Capital, and Handy Dandy Zen Quotes. IF the player clicks READ and then the MUSCLE & FITNESS magazine, THEN Billy picks it up and flips through it, revealing images of beautiful, bulging men.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

What the fuck is this doing here?

Billy's stress metre rises by one point. His self-esteem metre falls by one point. (1,-1) [Note: from now on, changes to Billy's metres will be shown in brackets. For example, (1,-2) means his stress metre has risen by one point and his self-esteem metre has fallen by two points.]

IF the player chooses to read Capital, THEN Billy picks up the book and leafs through it, quoting at random:

BILLY (CONT'D)

"The possessor of money does find
such a special commodity on the
market: the capacity for labour. In
other words, labour power."

(flips a page)

"Centralization of the means of
production and socialization of labour
at last reach a point where they
become incompatible with their
capitalist integument."

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Nice knowing I won't be exploited
for much longer. The only question
is, when will my people be liberated?

(0,2)

IF the player chooses to read Handy Dandy Zen Quotes, THEN Billy picks up the book and leafs through it, quoting at random:

BILLY (CONT'D)

"To the mind that is still, the whole
universe surrenders." -- Lao Tzu.

(flips a page)

"Do not consciously seek
enlightenment." -- Muso Kokushi.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I totally dig that.

(-1,1)

IF the player clicks PICK UP and then the object REMOTE CONTROL, THEN the object enters Billy's inventory on the screen's right-hand side.

IF the player then clicks TURN ON and then the object TELEVISION SET, THEN the television set is turned on. The player is then given four channels to choose from: The News Channel, The Business Channel, The Nature Channel, and The Naked Channel.

IF the player selects The News Channel, THEN the television airs a brief news report:

ANCHOR
In Toronto, a precious artifact of the British Royal Family was recently uncovered by an area high school student. Historians had thought King Henry the Eighth's Royal Jock Strap had been lost to the ages, but were proven wrong when Kevin Breamer found the artifact buried under the school gymnasium. Shortly after the discovery was made, however, the jock strap allegedly disappeared from Mr. Breamer's locker. Police have no leads at this time.

(beat)
Turning to the world of sports...
(The channel is turned off)

BILLY (V.O.)
Watching the news is SO exhausting.

(1,1)

IF the player selects The Business Channel, THEN the television airs an advertisement, showing several businessmen climbing ladders.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
As you climb the corporate ladder, you'll need every edge possible.

One of the businessmen flashes his pearly whites, which curiously have tiny sparkles all over them.

2 CONTINUED: (4)

2

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
That's why there's new sparkling
teeth cleaner. Your teeth will not
only be white -- they'll sparkle!

He then climbs to the top of his ladder, stepping on people's
heads as he runs off to a clearing overlooking a mountain
range.

BILLY (V.O.)
That reminds me -- I gotta get to
the dentist.

(1,-1)

IF the player selects The Nature Channel, THEN the television
airs a earth music montage of butterflies fluttering about
over a meadow.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I totally dig that.

(-2,0)

IF the player selects The Naked Channel, THEN we watch a
montage of naked men and women running freely on the beach.
(-1,1)

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Sex. Brrrrrrrr.

The player can watch each show only once. When he's through,
he can click TURN OFF and then TELEVISION.

IF the player clicks the arrow marked "BAR," THEN Billy walks
over behind the bar.

3 INT. BAR -- CONTINUOUS

3

Billy is now standing behind the bar, which is equipped with
various bottles of liquor -- vodka, rum, gin, tequila, kahlua --
and glasses. A fridge is to Billy's right.

IF the player clicks POUR and then any bottle of liquor,
THEN Billy will pour a drink into a glass.

IF the player clicks DRINK and then the glass, Billy will
throw it back and grimace.

BILLY (V.O.)
(shudders)
Now that's a little rough on the
morning palate.

(0,1)

3 CONTINUED:

3

IF the player clicks OPEN and then the object FRIDGE, THEN Billy will open the fridge, revealing a large pitcher of sangria.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Huh. A large, refreshing pitcher of Sangria.

IF the player chooses to have Billy pour the sangria into a glass and drink it (as before), Billy will lick his lips and grin.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Quite the combo. Calms my nerves and smacks of fruit punch.

(-2,0)

IF the player clicks the arrow marked, "LIVING ROOM," THEN Billy returns to the main room.

IF the player clicks on the arrow marked "BATHROOM," THEN Billy walks over to the bathroom door, opens it, and enters.

4 INT. BATHROOM -- CONTINUOUS

4

Billy falls upon a dreary site: some wet towels lying on the floor; a rusty toilet; a drippy faucet; a grimy window; scattered toilet paper; peeled wallpaper and a shower with a torn curtain.

IF the player clicks TURN ON and then the object SHOWER, THEN Billy removes his clothes, turns on the shower, and jump in. He bathes for a few seconds, whistling a happy tune, before stepping out, getting dry, and dressing himself.
(0,1)

IF the player clicks LOOK and MIRROR, THEN we take Billy's POV: his mirror image morphing from his actual self into a beautiful Calvin Klein model.

BILLY (V.O.)

Lookin' good, Mr. Burkhalter.

(2,2)

IF the player clicks CLEAN and then either the SHOWER, the SINK, the WINDOW, or the FLOOR, THEN Billy gets down on his hands and knees and cleans. (2,2)

IF the player clicks OPEN and then MIRROR, THEN Billy opens the mirror-cabinet, inside of which is a bag of pot, some rolling papers, a lighter, and a drug prescription with scrawled, unreadable handwriting. The player can click TAKE ALL. At any point in the game, he can click ROLL JOINT, which produces five joints.

4 CONTINUED:

4

He can also smoke a joint at any point in the game, which has the effect of reducing his stress metre by two points.

IF the player clicks the arrow marked, "LIVING ROOM," THEN Billy returns to the main room.

IF the player clicks on the arrow marked "KITCHEN," THEN Billy enters the kitchen.

5 INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

5

Billy's kitchen comes with the usual appliances and furnishings: fridge, stove, cupboards, sink.

IF the player clicks OPEN and then FRIDGE, THEN Billy is greeted to an empty refrigerator.

BILLY (V.O.)

I hadn't been shopping in awhile.

(0, -1)

IF the player clicks OPEN and then CUPBOARDS, THEN Billy is greeted by a box of cereal. IF the player clicks EAT and then CEREAL, THEN Billy opens wide and pours cereal down his throat. (-1, -1)

NOTE: The player can perform any of the above activities only once. And, once the player's stress and self-esteem metres are below and above their operative levels (CALM and POISED), THEN Billy chimes in:

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I was feelin' pretty good, pretty confident. So, I decided to face the world. For starters, I plugged in my phone.

Billy walks over to the top wall and plugs in the phone. A split second later:

SFX: RING, RING.

IF the player clicks ANSWER and then the object PHONE, THEN Billy picks up the phone.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Yeah.

A slow, heavy English accent comes over the speaker.

VOICE (V.O.)

Billy B, my manservant. Hello.

BILLY

Hey, Bertie. What's going on?

5 CONTINUED:

5

BERTIE (V.O.)

The search for meaning, the search
for manhood -- uh...

BILLY

Yeah, yeah, yeah -- whaddaya want me
to do?

BERTIE (V.O.)

I want you to carry out your final
task. If you're successful, your
work with me shall be through and
you'll start earning a pension equal
to your current salary of three
hundred dollars per week.

BILLY

Far out. Look, uh, I gotta go
downstairs and meet Warren. Says
it's important. When that's done,
I'll be by.

BERTIE

You'll get over here quick -- and
you'll like getting over here quick.
Just be on your guard in my maze.
Got it?

BILLY

What the fuck are you talking bout?

BERTIE

It's a new security system. And
you're the guinea pig. For your
sake, I hope it fails.

BILLY

Yeah. Ciao.

The player can either hang around and work on Billy's metres
or he can click on the exit door, through which we

CUT TO:

6 INT. HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

6

At the far end of the depressing hallway is the elevator.
At the near end is the door to the stairwell. IF the player
clicks PUSH and then the object ELEVATOR BUTTON, THEN Billy
pushes it:

CUT TO:

7 INT. ELEVATOR -- CONTINUOUS

7

Billy presses the button for the first floor.

7 CONTINUED:

7

BILLY (V.O.)
The stairwell would've been a good
source of exercise. But -- what the
fuck...

(-1,-1)

When the elevator reaches the ground level, Billy exits and we cut to the foyer (next page, scene 9). IF the player has chosen instead to use the stairwell, clicking on the stairwell door, THEN:

CUT TO:

8 INT. STAIRWELL -- CONTINUOUS

8

As Billy descends, he says:

BILLY (V.O.)
I felt good about myself -- taking
the stairs and all. They were quite
the hike, nonetheless.

(1,1) OFF Billy's wheezy face:

CUT TO:

9 INT. FOYER -- CONTINUOUS

9

Billy enters the foyer to his apartment building. Sitting on a sofa and reading a novel is a sultry-eyed redhead.

BILLY (V.O.)
That's when I first laid eyes on
her. Tell you the truth, Diane, she
was just like every other person I'd
seen sitting in a foyer. Only
difference was, she was reading a
book.

(beat)
I took the seat across from her, as
I waited for Warren to show his face.

After Billy sits down, the player can click TALK TO and REDHEAD, which presents Billy with three opening lines to choose from:

A:

BILLY (CONT'D)
Hey there, my name's Billy Burkhalter.
Say, what's your name?

IF A, THEN the redhead briefly glowers at Billy before returning to her book. (1,1)

9 CONTINUED:

9

B:

BILLY (CONT'D)
Well, hey there, sweat pea. My
initials are BB -- some say it stands
for Billy Burkhalter; others say
"Babe Beacon."

IF B, THEN the redhead flips the bird and spits in Billy's
face. (3,3)

C:

BILLY (CONT'D)
Oh, um... h-h-h-hi!

IF C, THEN the redhead glances up and replies:

REDHEAD
Something on your mind?

BILLY
(shakes his head)

REDHEAD
Let me know when there is.

(-2, -2)

The redhead reads her magazine, ignoring Billy.

BILLY (V.O.)
She was makin' me nervous.

Billy's stress level starts rising, one point per five
seconds.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
So, I channelled my nervousness into
nervous tics.

In any order, the player must click CHECK WATCH, TAP FOOT,
SIGH, and FIDGET before his stress level reaches delirious.
After performing all four, Billy adds:

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I was running outta tics. So, I
thought I'd read the paper.

Billy picks up and spreads the newspaper.

REDHEAD
Paper's upside-down.

BILLY

(putting the paper
down)

Today's crossword was kinda tough.

REDHEAD

Name's Vivian -- Vivian Sullivan.
Ever been on TV?

BILLY

Once, when I was a kid. I was shown
watching a foul ball sail over my
head. But that was ages ago.

VIVIAN

This ain't no baseball game, but it
is the big leagues. How'd you like
to audition for the hottest reality
show on TV?

VOICE (O.S.)

(cheerful)

Don't do it, Billy!

A sanguine putz with boyish good looks ambles over.

BILLY

Hiya, bro.

WARREN

(aw shucks)

See you've met Viv.

BILLY

Name's Billy Burkhalter.

(to Warren)

So, this is the producer you've been
telling me about?

VIVIAN

Warren's the best cue card holder in
the business.

WARREN

My cards are never upside-down!

BILLY

So, what'd you wanna see me about,
man?

WARREN

Can't talk now. We're late for the
show!

BILLY

Shit, yeah. What's it called?

9 CONTINUED: (3)

9

WARREN
"Who's the Most Man?"

VIVIAN
(up and leaves)
You know, Mr. Burkhalter, I've a
feeling it's you. Perhaps, I'll see
you soon.

BILLY
Yeah, but not on television.

As Billy follows them to the exit, we

CUT TO:

10 GRAPHIC -- MAP OF TORONTO

10

The map of Toronto is marked with three destinations: Uncle Bertie's Mansion, Billy's apartment, the Drug Store. IF the player clicks DRUG STORE, THEN:

CUT TO:

11 INT. DRUG STORE -- LATER

11

We see a dopey, elderly man standing behind a counter.

CLERK
Heyyyyyy, William. Here for yer
meds?

BILLY
Good guess.

CLERK
You got yer prescription?

IF the player clicks SHOW and then the inventory object PRESCRIPTION, THEN the clerk says:

CLERK (CONT'D)
Looking good, pardner!

He turns around, fusses about, and turns back.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Here ya go! Boy, you sure must have
a problem with anxiety!

The player can select from among responses A, B, or C:

A:

11 CONTINUED:

11

BILLY

It sucks so bad. I can't sleep, I
can't eat! The very thought of sex
or violence makes me crazy!

(-2,-2)

B:

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hey man! Mind your own beeswax!

(2,2)

C:

BILLY (CONT'D)

Just call me the existential man,
man.

(-1,1) With his bottle of 10 stress-relieving pills -- each
of which can be used by the player at any time to reduce
Billy's stress level by two points -- Billy leaves.

CUT TO:

12 MAP OF TORONTO

12

The player can either head to Bertie's mansion or Billy's
place.

If the player clicks BERTIE'S MANSION, THEN:

CUT TO:

13 EXT. UNCLE BERTIE'S MANSION -- AFTERNOON

13

Rising up over the hill is Billy in his 1985 Cutlass Sierra.
He pulls up to the curb, gets out, and quizzically eyes
Bertie's front lawn: a labyrinth formed out of buildings
from the 1930s. A massive gate with sharp, pointy ends stands
in his way.

BILLY (V.O.)

Check out the renovations on Bertie's
pad.

The player must PRESS the BUZZER on Bertie's front gate.

SFX: BZZZZ!

BERTIE (V.O.)

Ready for the maze?

BILLY

No. Gimme a hint, man.

13 CONTINUED:

13

BERTIE (V.O.)

Be yourself. The maze is designed
to keep my friends in and my enemies
wandering aimlessly forever.

BILLY

And where are you?

BERTIE (V.O.)

At the end of the maze. I'll be
waiting with a bottle of sherry.

BILLY

No tricks, Bertie. My physician
warns me about stress.

As the gate opens, the player guides Billy inside. (Note:
The maze is broken down into eighteen sections. Billy enters
at C4, walking along Brick St.)

14 EXT. C4 -- CONTINUOUS

14

Billy appears to have entered a dark and seedy urban
landscape. Behind him lies the gate through which he has
entered. IF the player tries it, he finds it is locked. On
all other sides, he's enclosed by decaying, graffiti-laden
buildings. Trash is scattered everywhere. On the sidewalk
in front of the north building is a bench. Just up ahead on
the right is Kickboxer Lane. A little further to the left
is Huffhines St.

The player must click LIE DOWN ON and BENCH. Once Billy is
lying down, the player must then click SLEEP. Billy has ten
seconds worth of shuteye accompanied by intense snoring.
(-1,-1) He wakes and stands, rubbing his back.

BILLY (V.O.)

I would've slept longer, but my back
was killin' me.

The player must now click INSPECT and BENCH. Billy searches
the bench and unearths a PIECE OF CARDBOARD. The player
must click NAB and CARDBOARD. IF the player clicks READ and
CARDBOARD, THEN:

BILLY'S POV

In scrawled handwriting: "The combination is 15-4-42."

In order to figure out which way to go, the player must click
READ and GRAFFITI.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The road to hellville begins with
movies by Jean Claude Van Damme and
Sylvester Stallone.

14 CONTINUED:

14

IF the player clicks WALK TO and KICKBOXER LANE, THEN Billy heads for D4. IF the player clicks WALK TO and HUFFHINES ST., THEN Billy heads for B3.

15 EXT. B3 -- CONTINUOUS FROM C4, A3, OR B2

15

Billy enters screen right. A park on the south side is fenced off. A purple Camaro is parked in front of the fence. To Billy's immediate right is an alleyway. Just past the alleyway is Regan Way, heading north (to B2). Huffhines Ave. continues West (to A3). A leather-clad young man stands at the entrance to the alleyway.

BILLY (V.O.)

All this walkin' was killin' my back.
I needed a break.

IF the player clicks TALK TO and YOUNG MAN, THEN:

BILLY (CONT'D)

'Scuse me

YOUNG MAN

Piss off.

(1,1)

The player must click SIT DOWN and CURB. A car then drives by, splashing mud that covers Billy from head to toe. The young man shouts after the driver:

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Eh! That shit ain't civilized!

Feeling sorry for Billy, the young man approaches him:

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Eh mang, 'ere.

He removes his leather jacket and wipes the mud off Billy's body.

BILLY

Thanks, amigo.

YOUNG MAN

Say, mang, you want some brewskies?

BILLY

Do roosters sing cock-a-doodle-doo?

The young man hands Billy a six-pack:

YOUNG MAN

It's yours.

(MORE)

15 CONTINUED:

15

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Can't drink -- I'm behind the wheel.
By the way: avoid the alleyway.
There're sum bad muthafuckers
thattaway.

The young man hops in his Camaro and peels off. The toxic fumes of burning rubber billow into Billy's face.

Billy can walk down the alleyway (to C3), continue west along Huffhines St. (to A3), or head north along Regan Way (to B2).

16 EXT. D4 -- CONTINUOUS FROM C4, D3, OR F3

16

As Billy walks down Kickboxer St., a dog jumps out from behind a building, humps Billy's leg and sends Billy's stress metre into game-ending submission. (10,0)

SFX: HOWLS.

17 EXT. A3 -- CONTINUOUS FROM B3

17

Huffhines St. curves northward here. A busker stands on the sidewalk playing the classic ballad "Greensleeves." The player must click LISTEN, prompting Billy to walk towards the busker and tap his feet.

The player must then click CLAP, which prompts the busker to start singing. (Note: At any point in the song, the player can click "SHUT UP!" to stop the busker from playing.)

BUSKER

Alas, my love you do me wrong, / To
cast me off so discourteously. / For
I have loved you for well and long /
delighting in your company.

(beat)

Don't head north on Huffhines Street!
/ For you will reap only loss and
pain. / Do as I say-ay, retreat,
retreat, / and be sure to tay-ake
soh-ome cha-an-ange.

The player must click NAB and CHANGE, prompting to take change from the busker's hat.

BILLY (V.O.)

Two bucks in change. Nice.

Billy can head either North along Huffhines St. (to A2) or west along Huffhines (to B3).

18 EXT. A2 -- CONTINUOUS FROM A1, B2, OR A3

18

As Billy walks up Huffhines St., a gigantic rat jumps out from behind a building, waving a gun.

RAT

Gimme all yer cheese, tough guy!

(10,0) Billy's stress level shoots through the game-ending roof.

19 EXT. C3 -- CONTINUOUS FROM B3 OR C2

19

As Billy walks up the alleyway, he's tackled by dozens of scantily-clad women. They appear to be performers from a Las Vegas-type show, festooned in pink, breast-revealing, frilly outfits.

SFX: WOMEN SCREAMING.

WOMAN

Hellooooooh, sailor!

(10,0) Billy's stress level shoots through the game-ending roof.

20 EXT. B2 -- CONTINUOUS FROM B3 OR C2

20

Billy enters bottom-screen (from B3). Running north-south, Regan Way ends at Wallow Ave., which runs east-west. A busker stands on the northwest corner strumming the Spanish Sonata in C. IF the player orders Billy to LISTEN and CLAP, THEN the busker merely continues to play. The player must then also command Billy to THROW the other busker's CHANGE into the busker's hat, which prompts the busker to sing:

BUSKER #2

Oh -- there are three ways you can
go-oh! / South on Reg-an, west or
east on Wallow-oh!. / All! I! Can!
Say! Is don't you go Weh-est! / For
if you do, you'll be sure to meet
social unrest!

(beat)

And -- when you get to the end of
the may-aze! / Two goons will be
there to pummel you into a day-aze!
/ All! I! Can! Say! Is puke on
one's face! / At the ver-ry least,
they'll both make off in a haste!

Billy can go west on Wallow Ave. (to A2), east on Wallow Ave. (to C2), or south on Regan Lane (to B3).

21 EXT. C2 -- CONTINUOUS FROM B2 OR C1

21

Billy enters screen left (from B2). Billy can travel north along Wheeler Lane (to C1), which is to Billy's immediate left, south along Rambo Blvd. (to C3), which begins where Wallow ends, or east along Wallow (to B2). A teenage backpacker anxiously stands on the southeast corner of Wheeler and Wallow. When the player clicks TALK TO and BACKPACKER, Billy approaches and says,

BILLY

Hey kid, sumthin' wrong?

BACKPACKER

Well, actually, I was wonderin' if you could buy me some beer.

BILLY

What's in it for me, man?

BACKPACKER

How' bout my backpack?

Billy must GIVE the BEER he received from the Camaro guy to the kid.

BACKPACKER (CONT'D)

Aw, thanks dude. You're the man.

He hands Billy the backpack. (2,2)

BILLY

Don't sweat it, kid.

The player must, at some point in the maze, click INSPECT and BACKPACK:

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hmm...

BILLY'S POV

A box of pills, which read: "BARFING PILLS -- FOR THOSE DAYS WHEN YOU WANT TO STAY HOME FROM SCHOOL."

22 EXT. C1 -- CONTINUOUS FROM A1 OR C2

22

Billy enters bottom-screen (from C2). Wheeler Lane ends at Harrington St., which is bordered by an impenetrable shrub. Billy can travel west on Harrington (to A1), but in order to travel east (to D1) Billy must cross Wheeler Lane. Without the help of the CROSSING GUARD, who stands on the southeast corner of Wheeler and Harrington, Billy cannot cross. If he does, a bicyclist races out from the park and delivers Billy a game-ending collision. IF the player clicks TALK TO and CROSSING GUARD, THEN:

22 CONTINUED:

22

BILLY

Hey man, I need to cross the street.

CROSSING GUARD

Then cross. My services are for
schoolchildren only.

IF the player clicks WEAR and BACKPACK, THEN Billy puts it
on, making him appear much younger in age. The player can
now order Billy to speak with the crossing guard:

BILLY

Hey lady, I gotta get to school.

SFX: CROSSING GUARD WHISTLE!

The Crossing Guard creates a path for Billy, allowing him to
cross the street.

23 EXT. A1 -- CONTINUOUS FROM C1

23

Billy enters screen right (from C1). Harrington ends at
Huffhines, which runs south. Billy can either head south on
Huffhines (to A2) or head east on Harrington (to C1).

24 EXT. D1 -- CONTINUOUS FROM C1 OR D2

24

Billy enters screen left (from C1). Harrington ends at Linus
Ave., which runs south (to D2) and curves into Bloodsport,
which runs east (to E1).

25 EXT. D2 -- CONTINUOUS FROM D1 OR D3

25

Billy enters top-screen (from D1). Linus Ave. jogs southward
(to D3) and is bisected by Cobra Crescent, which runs east
(to E2).

26 EXT. E2 -- CONTINUOUS FROM D2 OR F1

26

As Billy walks across Cobra Crescent, he comes across a
bodybuilding competition. One of the contestants spots Billy,
laughing:

BODYBUILDER

Eh! Look at dee lit-till tooth-peek!

SFX: BODYBUILDERS LAUGHING.

(0,10) Billy's self-esteem level falls to the game-ending
ground.

27 EXT. D3 -- CONTINUOUS FROM D2

27

Billy enters top-screen (from D2). Linus Ave. continues
south (to D4) and is bisected by Billingsley Rd., which runs
east (to F3).

27 CONTINUED:

27

A nerdy tourist stands on the south corner, snapping photographs.

IF the player clicks TALK TO and TOURIST, or even IF the player attempts to make Billy walk past the tourist, THEN the tourist will call out:

TOURIST

'Scuse me, sir? Snap a photo of me
in front of the CN Tower?

BILLY

You can't see the CN Tower from here.

TOURIST

Well, how about this building?
(points to the decrepit
building behind him)

The player can click either SAY, CHEESE or GET LOST.

IF SAY, CHEESE, THEN Billy takes the camera, readies his shot, and snaps.

(1,2)

IF either GET LOST or SAY, CHEESE, THEN the tourist says,

TOURIST (CONT'D)

Hey, wanna see some photos?!?

BILLY'S POV

The tourist's hands flipping through a bunch of uninspiring photos of himself in Toronto. For every photo, Billy's stress level goes up by one point; however, IF he looks at five, THEN:

TOURIST (CONT'D)

Well, mister, I gotta make like a
banana split. By the way, you're
gonna need this --

He tosses Billy a BRASS KEY.

TOURIST (CONT'D)

-- if you wanna get outta here.
(walking away,
hollering)

And don't go south on Linus Ave. or
Redhill Rd.! They're SO boring!

28 EXT. F3 -- CONTINUOUS FROM D3 OR F2

28

Billy enters screen left. Billingsley ends at Redhill Rd., which runs north-south (to D4 and F2).

29 EXT. F2 -- CONTINUOUS FROM F3 OR F1 29

Billy enters bottom-screen. Redhill Rd. curves north (to F1) and is bisected by Cobra Crescent, which runs west (to E2).

30 EXT. F1 -- CONTINUOUS FROM F2 30

Billy enters bottom-screen, upon which he sees TWO INTIMIDATING MEN standing in front of a bar with a neon size that reads: "BERTIE'S PLACE!"

GOON #1
(Eastern European
accent)
Hey, how da we ged oudda 'ere?

BILLY
I thought you boys might know that.

GOON #1
Voytek -- make'em tawk.

The player has five seconds to click INGEST and BARFING PILL before Voytek pummels Billy into game-ending submission. By ingesting the barfing pill, Billy vomits all over Voytek.

VOYTEK
(disgusted)
Awwwww... you sick fuck.

GOON #1
Les come back latah.

As the goons depart, the room starts swimming. The door is still visible, but is now melting into a puddle of shapes and colours -- and is also very difficult for the player to click. IF the player manages to click OPEN and DOOR, THEN Billy attempts to open up, but finds it requires both a combination and a key to enter. The player must first enter the combination, 15-4-42, and then click INSERT and KEY. As Billy flails through the door,

CUT TO:

31 BILLY'S POV -- CONTINUOUS 31

Through Billy's POV, we see nothing but a blurry haze.

BERTIE (O.S.)
(distorted)
Billy. Hey. Hey, dipshit.
Hellooooh?

CUT TO:

32 INT. BERTIE'S BILLIARDS ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

32

Billy stumbles into Bertie's billiards room -- and flops in front of Bertie, who's sitting uncomfortably in a throne, his hands tied behind his back. Bertie is a pudgy, balding, middle-aged man, with a devilish and intense glare in his eyes. He talks slowly and monotonically, but with enough vocal tension to suggest a temper tantrum is imminent. A pool table lies in the center of the room and is surrounded by various games: a chess board, a dart board, a card table. As Billy finally lifts himself to his feet, Bertie blows cigar smoke into his face. Billy hacks for a few seconds, then finds a seat at the chess table.

BERTIE
(struggling)
Pardon me, William. Let's see...
It's tug, twirl, and thump.

Bertie triumphantly breaks free of the rope.

BERTIE (CONT'D)
Tug, twirl, and thump. It's the
technique Japanese POWs used to free
themselves from American twine. So.
How was the maze?

The player can choose from among three possible answers:

A:

BILLY
I should hang you by your scrotum.
I nearly got killed.

(1,1)

B:

BILLY (CONT'D)
Well, over here you have fun and
excitement and adventure. And over
there you have death. There may be
a few bugs to work out with respect
to the latter.

(-1,1)

C:

BILLY (CONT'D)
It was so scary, man. I thought I
was gonna die.

(-1,-1) In response to A, B, or C, Bertie replies:

BERTIE

(takes a sip of tea)

Dying is precisely the point. As I've said, the maze is designed to keep my friends "in" and my enemies "out."

BILLY

Enemies, like those two goons I threw up all over?

BERTIE

Precisely -- and nice touch.

BILLY

And what do they want, man?

BERTIE

To teach me a lesson on etiquette. I hired some friends of your brother's to steal a precious commodity from their boss, Dirty Larry. D.L. found out and was, uh, perturbed.

BILLY

Precious commodity...

BERTIE

The Royal Jock Strap. First worn by King Henry the Eighth, circa sixteen-thirty-eight. It was stored in a private collection until a few weeks ago -- when a chap gave it to Dirty Larry for some coke.

(hands Billy a book)

Read all about it -- and other historical undergarments -- in A HISTORY OF UNDERWEAR.

BILLY

Yeah, okay. So why tell me, man?

BERTIE

I thought, how nice it would be should you talk some sense into your silly brother, Warren. He's under the sway of his buddies, who've decided to keep the jock strap for themselves.

BILLY

I'll see what I can do.

(beat)

Now, how the hell do I get outta here?

32 CONTINUED: (2)

32

BERTIE
Take the back door.
(points to it)
Now, excuse yourself.

Billy rises to leaves.

33 INT. BILLY'S ROOM -- LATER

33

Billy walks into the middle of his apartment, which is lit only by the light coming in through the West window. He stretches his arms and yawns.

BILLY
Well. That was a month's worth of excitement.

The player can either make Billy explore his apartment, adjusting his stress and self-esteem metres as before, or he can tell Billy to lie down and fall asleep. IF the player clicks TAKE OFF CLOTHES, THEN Billy will slip into his birthday suit. IF the player clicks LIE DOWN ON and BED, THEN Billy will hit the hay.

As Billy drifts off into a deep sleep, the room dreamily dissolves into a black void.

DISSOLVE TO:

34 EXT. FOGGY STREET -- LATER

34

Warren kneels in a murky puddle, begging for mercy from a man cloaked in shadow.

WARREN
What's gotten into you? I thought we had something?

HUSKY MALE VOICE (O.S.)
This is business. Embezzlement to be precise. Hand over the panties.

WARREN
I don't know what you're talking about --

The mysterious man forces a metal object into Warren's stomach and fires twice.

SFX: CLAMP! CLAMP!

MAN / WOMAN / CHILD (O.S.)
Ahhhh! / Run! / Whatever you say!

34 CONTINUED:

34

The mysterious man tears off down the street, concealing the metal object inside his jacket, as Warren struggles to his feet.

WARREN

Ta -- xiiiiiii.

FADE OUT:

35 INT. BILLY'S APARTMENT

35

TITLE: A FEW MINUTES LATER...

SFX: DOOR KNOCKING.

The apartment emerges from the black void. Billy's eyes are wide open. The knocking continues.

IF the player clicks OPEN and then DOOR before turning on the lights, THEN the player fiddles with the door handle in the dark, muttering...

BILLY

Where the hell's the door handle?

(1,0)

IF the player clicks TURN ON and then LIGHT SWITCH, THEN the lights turn on. IF the player opens the door, THEN a bloodied and battered Warren staggers into the apartment clutching his stomach. He tumbles onto Billy's bed, his blood seeping into the sheets.

WARREN

(coughing)

I've... been... shot... with a...
staple gun.

Billy rushes to Warren's side.

BILLY

Hey man. Did you trip again?

Warren starts coughing.

WARREN

Take off... my pants.

The player must click TAKE OFF and PANTS. In so doing, Billy reveals a gleaming jock strap over Warren's underwear.

BILLY

Is that?

WARREN

The Royal Jock Strap.

35 CONTINUED:

35

Billy slides it off Warren's body.

BILLY

Hey man, we should totally look into
some medical treatment.

WARREN

And it's too late, baby, now it's
too late...

BILLY

Though we really did -- try to make
it.

(beat)

I love that song.

Warren's eyes slowly shut, as he emits a final gasp. Fade
to black.

DISSOLVE TO:

36 INT. MYSTERIOUS ROOM

36

Diane Sawyer's feigned look of concern.

DIANE SAWYER

That must have been -- devastating.

BILLY

It pretty much stunk. Bummed me out
for awhile. But hey.

DIANE SAWYER

What happened to the jock strap?

BILLY

Excellent question. I knew people
were gonna come lookin' for it. So,
I had to stash it somewhere.

DISSOLVE TO:

37 INT. BILLY'S ROOM

37

As Warren lies lifeless on Billy's bed, the player must find
a suitable hiding spot for the jock strap. IF the player
clicks STASH and clicks on random objects throughout the
apartment, THEN:

BILLY

Nah, too obvious.

(1,0)

IF the player clicks the object LAUNDRY HAMPER, THEN Billy
stashes the jock strap in the laundry hamper.

37 CONTINUED:

37

BILLY (CONT'D)
(sniffing)
Eew. Who's gonna look there?

(-5,5)

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

38 EXT. CEMETERY -- DAYS LATER

38

Billy places a bouquet of dandelions on top of his brother's gravestone.

BILLY

Sorry 'bout the dandelions, bro.
They were out of roses.

As a tear trickles out from under Billy's sunglasses, he hears a familiar voice.

FAMILAR WOMAN'S VOICE

Well, hello, Mr. Burkhalter.

Billy shifts his eyes, but doesn't turn around. The player is presented with three possible responses:

A.

BILLY

Hey babe.

VIVIAN

Get with the program -- it's Vivian.

(1,1)

B.

BILLY

Vivian?

VIVIAN

In the flesh.

(-1,1)

C:

BILLY

Mommy?

VIVIAN

Whatever you want, hon.

(-1,-1)

In any case, Billy turns around and faces Vivian.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

The offer still stands. TV Stardom.
And now, there's bonus: a chance to
find out who killed Warren.

38 CONTINUED:

38

BILLY

Cops say Warren fell on his own staple gun.

VIVIAN

Cops think JFK was killed by a pothole.

Again, the player can choose one of A, B, or C.

A:

BILLY

But who'd wanna see me on TV?

VIVIAN

Everyone who matters.

(-2,-2)

B:

BILLY

I play the sap for nobody.

(2,2)

C:

BILLY (CONT'D)

I'm immensely flattered. But I'd like to think about it for a few days. It just needs to simmer.

(-1,1) In response to A, B, and C, Vivian says,

VIVIAN

Maybe this'll ease your mind: You'll make more in the five days on our show than you will in a century. You'll have a starring role on the network's top-rated show -- and a room at the studio with a fully stocked beer fridge.

BILLY

I'll call ya back.

VIVIAN

Call me at 416-538-4484 -- by five o' clock tonight.

CUT TO:

39 INT. BILLY'S ROOM

39

Billy enters his apartment, finding it completely turned upside-down. Conspicuously absent is the laundry hamper.

BILLY (V.O.)

They'd taken my drugs, my booze --
and my collection of vintage pencils.
But they'd taken something else,
too.

(beat)

Uh...

DIANE SAWYER (V.O.)

The Royal Jock Strap?

BILLY (V.O.)

No, my laundry hamper. Within which
I'd hidden the Royal Jock Strap.

DIANE SAWYER (V.O.)

Why hadn't you given it to Bertie
yet?

BILLY (V.O.)

He wanted to wait until things cooled
down -- after Warren's murder.

IF the player clicks DIAL and then PHONE, THEN Billy walks over to the phone and picks it up, whereupon he will be prompted for a number. IF the player dials 416-538-4484, THEN:

SFX: RING, RING, <PICKUP>

VIVIAN (V.O.)

Vivian Sullivan.

BILLY

Yeah, hey. Uh...

VIVIAN (V.O.)

You've reconsidered my offer?

BILLY

Well, as it turns out --

VIVIAN (V.O.)

I'll send a car at once. Meet me in
the lobby.

CUT TO:

40 EXT. STREET OUTSIDE NETWORK -- LATER

40

Billy exits the cab and walks onto the sidewalk. The massive network building looms before him. A hooker stands on the far west corner next to a fire hydrant.

HOOKEE

Hey honey, you lookin' for sum action?

The player can choose from among three answers:

A:

BILLY

I, uh... um... ya know... uh...

HOOKEE

Just gimme a call when y'are.

(-1,0)

B:

BILLY

Yeah, baby, I'm looking for some action.

HOOKEE

How much you got?

BILLY

Fifty bucks?

HOOKEE

Shit, I ain't selling girl guide cookies.

(2,-1)

C:

BILLY

For your information, young lady: I stand by the belief that sex isn't a commodity.

HOOKEE

How noble of you.

(-2,-2) The player must click OPEN and DOORS.

D:

BILLY

Action? I prefer romantic comedies.

40 CONTINUED:

40

(-1,1)

41 INT. LOBBY -- CONTINUOUS

41

Billy enters the network's lobby. The secretary has apparently gone home for the day, as her desk on the left is unattended. There are some waiting chairs on the right. Some reading material is on a coffee table. There's a set of doors on the left wall, just in front of the desk.

IF the player clicks OPEN and then the object DOOR, THEN Billy walks over to the doors, only to find the doors locked.

BILLY (V.O.)

Rats. The doors were locked.

IF the player clicks SIT DOWN IN and CHAIR, THEN Billy walks over to the chairs and sits down. IF the player clicks LOOK AT and the MEMO on the coffee table, THEN Billy picks up the memo and reads:

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

To all GTC Employees:

(beat)

We regret to announce the passing of Warren Burkhalter, beloved cue card holder to all. In memory of his passing, there will be mandatory staple gun safety workshops in the cafeteria this week.

(beat)

Sincerely,

(beat)

Denise Alston, President, GTC.

Vivian enters through the east doors.

VIVIAN

Mr. Burkhalter.

BILLY

Call me Billy.

VIVIAN

William, your room is ready. Right this way.

BILLY

Cool.

As Billy stands,

CUT TO:

42 INT. BILLY'S NEW ROOM -- LATER

42

Vivian opens the door to Billy's new room, with Billy following behind. Interestingly, as Billy observes,

BILLY
It's identical to my old room.

VIVIAN
Yes, I took the liberty of
reconstructing your natural habitat --
to make your stay more comfortable.

BILLY
Far out.

VIVIAN
Get some rest. We shoot live to
tape at eight p.m. -- which, as I
understand it, is a little early for
you.

Vivian exits, leaving Billy all alone -- but only for a split second.

SFX: KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK.

The player must click OPEN and DOOR. Billy opens the door -- only to find no one there. As he steps outside,

CUT TO:

43 INT. STUDIO HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

43

The hallway runs east-west, with exit doors on both sides. Billy looks both ways before returning to his room.

BILLY (V.O.)
Hmmp.

CUT TO:

44 INT. BILLY'S NEW ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

44

Billy returns to find a surprise visitor: the hooker from outside the studio. She's lying on his bed (reminiscent of the scene from The Graduate). Billy stops firmly in his tracks.

IF the player clicks LOOK AWAY within 4 seconds, THEN Billy looks away and stabilizes his stress metre. IF the player does not click LOOK AWAY within 4 seconds, THEN Billy's stress metre increases by 3 points.

NAKED WOMAN

Hi foxy. Remember me? Name's
Peaches.

The contours of an erection in Billy's pants pop into view.

PEACHES

I'll make you a deal. You give me
what I want, and I'll give you what
you want.

The player can respond with one of A, B, or C.

A:

BILLY

What I want is for you to get the
hell out of here.

(2,2)

B:

BILLY (CONT'D)

Please, please, please -- go away!

(-2,-2)

C:

BILLY (CONT'D)

I don't follow.

(-1,1)

Peaches suddenly leaps out of bed and rushes towards Billy.
IF the player selects BACKTRACK within three seconds, THEN
Billy backs himself into the corner of the bedroom.
Otherwise, Billy's stress metre hits the game-ending jackpot.

Peaches reaches for Billy's pants.

PEACHES

Relax! I just want the jock strap!

She starts tearing off the pants, prompting Billy's stress
level to rise even higher. The player now has four seconds
to select POP PILLS before Billy has a game-ending heart
attack. After Billy downs the pills, his POV becomes blurry
and Peaches voice becomes distorted.

PEACHES (CONT'D)

Damn. Ain't nothin' here but a cock
n' balls. See ya, Billy B.

The door slams behind Peaches as we fade to black.

44 CONTINUED: (2)

44

FADE IN:

45 INT. BILLY'S NEW ROOM -- NEXT DAY

45

Vivian is standing over Billy, who lies where we left him -- in the corner of his new room with his pants around his ankles.

VIVIAN

Good day, sunshine.

The player can respond with A, B, or C.

A:

BILLY

Oh, hey man. What's for breakfast?

(-1,1)

B:

BILLY (CONT'D)

You've caught me in a rare moment.
I usually sleep with my pants on.

(-2,-2)

C:

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hey man, is it regular practice for hookers to molest game show contestants the night before their debut?

(2,2)

VIVIAN

No time for chatter. It's showtime.

CUT TO:

46 INT. SET -- MOMENTS LATER

46

Billy enters the studio. It's a harried atmosphere, with TV people running everywhere doing their TV things.

The set is divided into two offices -- one for Billy and one for BART, the clean-cut "office guy," who happens to be in there right now, chatting on the phone.

VIVIAN

Okay, Billy. Take your seat. The show's about to start. Remember: be yourself.

46 CONTINUED:

46

IF the player selects SIT DOWN, THEN Billy walks over to his desk and has a seat.

VOICE (O.S.)

In five, four, three, two
(beat)

MUSIC: WHO'S THE MOST MAN THEME SONG.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

And now, the host of Who's the Most
Man, Jeanie Stewart!

Perky and smarmy Jeanie Stewart emerges from the curtain and jogs down the red carpet into center stage.

JEANIE STEWART

Hey, hey, hey! Welcome to "Who's
the Most Man" -- the show where
America votes to see if our male
contestant --

ON SHIFTY-EYED BILLY

JEANIE STEWART (O.S.) (CONT'D)

-- unemployed video-game developer
Billy Burkhalter -- is more MAN than
our resident team of SUPERMEN!

ON CONFIDENT-LOOKING BART

JEANIE STEWART (CONT'D)

Who tonight are represented by Office
Guy, Bart Stevenson!

SFX: BART'S INTRO MUSIC.

JEANIE STEWART (CONT'D)

The object of tonight's game is --
SIMPLE! We put Bart and Billy through
a series of slippery scenarios from
a day in the life at the office!
So, without further ado, let's play...
(puts an ear to the
studio audience)

AUDIENCE

WHO'S THE MOST MAN?

SFX: CHEERING, APPLAUSE, APPLAUSE.

ON BART

JEANIE STEWART (O.S.)

Okay. Bart's boss has a beef! Let's
see how Bart handles it!

A surly, aging man barges into Bart's office and slams his fists down on Bart's desk.

BOSS

Ste-ven-son! Your department's responsible for maintaining efficiency -- and yet the boys down in engineering say they're three weeks behind on the new Palm Pilot design. I swear, I'm this close to a coronary!

BART

Sir,

(puts his hand on
boss's shoulder)

You're not going to have a coronary. That's because our boys will be working round the clock until these cellphones are in the hands of John and Jane Q. Public. They won't even take bathroom breaks -- I've got them wearing diapers.

BOSS

(warmly shaking Bart)

That's my guy.

ON BILLY

JEANIE STEWART (O.S.)

Now for Billy's turn.

A surly, aging man barges into Billy's office and slams his fists down on the desk.

BOSS

Burk-Hal-ter! Your department's responsible for maintaining efficiency -- and yet the boys down in engineering say they're three weeks behind on the new Palm Pilot design. I swear, I'm this close to a coronary!

The player can choose from among four possible answers.

A:

BILLY

Fuck you, I quit.

Dumfounded, the boss just looks at Billy.

(3,2)

B:

BILLY (CONT'D)

The delays in engineering are just a product of, ah, putting the bottom line before the line where people are, you know, happy.

BOSS

Just shut up and get the job done.

(-1,1)

C:

BILLY

Hey man, don't be angry with me. I was hired five minutes ago!

BOSS

Be a man, you pussy!

(-3,-3)

D:

BILLY

I'll get on it, sir. On the double!

BOSS

That's the ticket.

(2,3)

JEANIE STEWART

Ohhhhh-kay! Great job, white-collar workers! Let's see how you handle scenario number two! Here, your secretary -- 'scuse me, administrative assistant -- wants the day off. The twist is, you've heard through the grapevine she's planning on meeting a married man in a motel room. Ooooh!

ON BART

A timid, young woman with a sweet voice enters.

WOMAN

Mr. Stevenson? My friend Cynthia just called -- and she's real sick and all -- so I thought, well, if you didn't mind --

BART

You bang your boyfriend on your time, you adulterous floozy. Clean out your desk -- you're fired!

JEANIE STEWART

A hands-on approach. I like it.
Okay, Burkhalter. Take it away!

A timid, young woman enters Billy's office.

WOMAN

Mr. Burkhalter? My friend Charmaine
just called. She's in the hospital,
resting after an operation. Would
you mind if I took the rest of the
day off to visit her?

Billy has four possible responses.

A:

BILLY

Hey, do whatever you've gotta do.
Love life!

(-1,1)

B:

BILLY (CONT'D)

You're exploiting precious company
time, man. You dig?

(3,2)

C:

BILLY (CONT'D)

Yeah, well, that doesn't jive with
what I heard. So, the answer is --
no, you can't take the day off.

(2,3)

D:

BILLY (CONT'D)

(hides under his desk)

Hear no evil. See no evil. Leave
me alone.

(-2,-2)

JEANIE STEWART

Vous êtes très intelligent, mes
hommes. Okay, let's see how you
handle --

(giddy)

an inter-office romance!

46 CONTINUED: (5)

46

ON BART

A woman wearing a power suit enters his office and hops up on his desk.

EXECUTIVE

Bart, even though you are my subordinate, I still want to make wild, passionate love to you.

BART

Crystal, if we do this, you realize one of us has to quit. So, I propose I hand in my resignation today -- and then tomorrow morning you rehire me. Do we have a deal?"

SFX: AUDIENCE GOES "WOOOOH!"

JEANIE STEWART

All right, settle down. <Growl!>
Billy, you're on.

A woman wearing a power suit enters his office and hops up on his desk.

EXECUTIVE

Billy, even though you are my subordinate, I still want to make wild, passionate love to you.

How will Billy respond?

A:

BILLY

Diane, this is, uh, sexual harassment. What we've got here is an, uh... unequal power relationship.

(-2, -2)

B:

BILLY (CONT'D)

Gee. Uh... I... ah...

(-1, 1)

C:

BILLY (CONT'D)

You're the boss, boss.

(2, 2)

D:

BILLY (CONT'D)

Diane, I think you're very nice, but
do you really think I'd have sex
with you?

(3,3)

JEANIE STEWART

Very interesting, boys. Okay! Now,
for the serious side of our show --
the boys must help out a friend with
a drinking problem.

ON BART

A man half in the bag waltzes into Bart's office.

DRUNK

Shay, budd-he. What shay me and ewe --
oh gawd --

The man stuffs his face inside Bart's wastepaper basket and
convulses.

SFX: WUU-ECHHH!

BART

(picks up his phone)

Sally, it's Bart. Yeah, Stevie fell
off the wagon again. Yeah. No, you
sit tight. I'll call the clinic.
And -- don't worry -- I'll tell the
boys upstairs that our man's taking
a few months sick leave. Yuppers!

JEANIE STEWART

The clinic! Nice touch, Bart. Billy?

A man half in the bag waltzes into Billy's office.

DRUNK

Whash happenin'? I cahn't find my
car keesh -- whoa. One sec --

The man stuffs his face inside Billy's wastepaper basket and
convulses.

How does Billy respond?

A:

BILLY

Frank, you're too drunk to drive to
the bar! I'll call us a cab.

46 CONTINUED: (7)

46

(2, -2)

B:

BILLY (CONT'D)
Frank, this kind of behaviour is
UNACCEPTABLE at a fortune 500 company.
Diane will have a full report in the
morning.

(2,2)

C:

BILLY (CONT'D)
This is heavy, man.
(lights up a joint)
Go have some coffee and chill.

(-1,1)

D:

BILLY (CONT'D)
No one's going anywhere. We'll drink
here.

(-3,0)

JEANIE STEWART
Nice work, boys. And now, let's say
hello to our panel of masculinity
judges!

ON THREE JUDGES

A young man and two young men dressed in stylish suits.

BILLY'S POV

The judges melt into a haze of colours.

BILLY (V.O.)
According to the judges, I wasn't
much of a man at all. But the
audience felt differently.

The haze of colours melts back into Jeanie Stewart.

JEANIE STEWART
Okay, we're back from the commercial
break. And we've tallied your votes --
which conclude that Mr. Billy
Burkhalter is MORE MAN than Bart,
the office guy, by a mere THREE
PERCENT!

46 CONTINUED: (8)

46

ON BILLY'S STARTLED EXPRESSION

JEANIE STEWART (CONT'D)

That means, tomorrow night, Mr. Billy Burkhalter will come back to face Bobby, the gym guy. Till then, boys and girls. Good night!

VOICE (O.S.)

And... we're out!

The Office Guy runs over to Billy's desk and rams a staple gun into Billy's groin area.

BART

No sudden moves, Burkhalter. And that includes erections.

BILLY

Hey man, chill!

BART

We want the jock strap, Burkhalter. Otherwise, we'll blast your scrotum with staples.

Vivian approaches Billy's desk.

VIVIAN

Is there a problem, boys?

BART

Nah, no problem. We were merely discussing the underwear industry. Billy tells me all his money's in jock straps.

BILLY

Speaking of which, I should go call my broker.

Billy exits and returns to his room.

CUT TO:

47 INT. BILLY'S NEW ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

47

Three cops are there to greet Billy: two young, uniformed officers and a wizened, formally-dressed detective.

BILLY (V.O.)

Although I was glad to get away from the office guy, trouble seemed to follow me wherever I went.

DETECTIVE
Nice job on the TV, Burkhalter.

BILLY
Thanks -- uh, I didn't catch your
name.

OFFICER #1
You don't recognize him?

OFFICER #2
Only the world-famous Slappy Street.

BILLY
(thinks for a second)
Fuck -- right! You hosted that TV
show in the '50s -- uh...

OFFICER #1
The Slappy Street Show.

BILLY
Right. So what's happening, Slappy?

DETECTIVE
Murder, Burkhalter -- that's what.

BILLY
Cops tell me Warren's death was an
accident.

DETECTIVE
We believe otherwise.
(beat)
Burkhalter, we want to see your
underwear.
(to officers)
Boys.

Officer #1 pins Billy down while Officer #2 whips down his
pants, revealing a pair of tighty whities.

OFFICER #2
He's clean.

(2,0)

DETECTIVE
(fanning the air)
So to speak.
(to Billy)
Burkhalter. I'll be straight with
ya.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

We're puttin' my show back on the air -- Sal here'll produce and Sam'll be my sidekick -- but we're a little short on the funds a Royal Jock Strap would reap. I know you're plannin' on deliverin' it to Bertie, so I'll save you some bus fare by tellin' ya -- Bertie's dead.

BILLY

Dirty Larry?

DETECTIVE

Mnmm. If you hand it over to us, we'll do our best to call off Dirty Larry's dogs -- on you -- 'cause they're comin' for you next.

The player must click OPEN and DRAWER, then GET and UNDERWEAR, and then GIVE and UNDERWEAR. Billy hands the Detective a pair of dirty underwear.

BILLY (V.O.)

They were the smelliest pair of underwear I owned. They were also the only pair of underwear I owned that I wasn't wearing. But... I thought they might keep the detective off my case -- for awhile.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Here you go.

DETECTIVE

I thought it wuz supposed to be encrusted with jewels or some shit. This smells like it's been 'round your gitch for eight days.

If the player doesn't do anything within ten seconds, the detective says,

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

You trying to sell us a fake, kid?
We're callin' Dirty Larry.

Billy's stress metre goes through the game-ending roof.

But IF the player clicks READ and then HISTORY OF UNDERWEAR, Billy rescues himself:

BILLY

Actually, it states here in my history of underwear book that the original Royal Jock Strap was --

47 CONTINUED: (3)

47

DETECTIVE
Shaddup. We'll check with our expert
down at the museum. Shower up and
sleep tight.

After the cops leave, Billy turns off the light and hits the hay.

BILLY (V.O.)
I started empathizing with TV stars,
for it seemed everyone wanted a piece
of me.

TIME CUT TO:

48 INT. STUDIO -- THE FOLLOWING EVENING

48

The set has completely transformed into a massive workout facility. Bobby, the gym guy, stands on the far right curling some weights. Billy is on the far left sitting on a bench. As the show begins, with Jeanie Stewart sprinting down the red carpet dividing the two men, Billy reflects.

BILLY (V.O.)
I was dead tired, and here I was
supposed to show off my body using
some creative workout routines.

JEANIE STEWART
Okay, Bobby, time to strut your stuff!

Bobby goes to work on the bench press.

BILLY (V.O.)
So, I decided to prepare for my
workout routine.

The player has two minutes to scan his immediate area to see what he can do for his workout routine.

IF the player clicks LOOK IN and then clicks BIN, THEN Billy peers into the bin and we take his POV. We see RUBBER BANDS, A BEER-DRINKING HAT, A HULA-HOOP, and A YO-YO.

The player must TAKE ALL objects. IF he does not, THEN he will be unable to beat Bobby.

Once Bobby's set is completed, Jeanie pipes in:

JEANIE STEWART
Let's pump some iron, Billy!

In any order, the player must perform the following commands:

Clicks STRETCH and RUBBER BANDS, which prompts Billy to stretch rubber bands between his fingers.

48 CONTINUED:

48

Clicks DRINK and BEER HAT, which prompts Billy to put on the beer hat and demonstrate his straw sucking ability.

Clicks PULL DOWN and PANTS, and then PULL UP and PANTS, which prompts Billy to pull up and down his pants.

Clicks SPIN and Yo-YO, which prompts Billy to spin a yo-yo.

Clicks SPIN and HULA-HOOP.

Once Billy has performed each exercise, he then swings like Tarzan from a hanging rope and crashes into the mirror.

JEANIE STEWART (CONT'D)

Ooooooooooh-kay! Take it away,
judgeroos!

TIME DISSOLVE TO:

JEANIE STEWART (CONT'D)

And the winner is... by fifteen
percent! Biiiiiilly Burkhalter!
See you tomorrow night!

Everybody instantly disperses.

IF the player clicks LEAVE, THEN Billy starts walking towards the exit

CUT TO:

49 INT. STUDIO HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

49

The detective and his lackies are standing at the other end of the hall, leaving Billy with two seconds to make a dash for the door.

IF the player fails to click OPEN and DOOR within two seconds, THEN the detective cries --

DETECTIVE

Get 'em, boys.

-- and Billy has a game-ending heart attack.

IF the player clicks the buttons within two seconds, THEN Billy and the cops both dart for the room, with Billy narrowly beating them out.

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Burkhalter, don't go in there!

As Billy slips inside his room, we

CUT TO:

50 INT. BILLY'S NEW ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

50

Billy slams the door, shuts it, and sighs in relief.

SFX: BANG, BANG, BANG.

DETECTIVE (O.S.)

(muffled)

Burkhalter! We're trying to warn
you!

Billy turns to see a recognizable pair of faces:

BILLY'S POV

Stone-faced Voytek and seething-faced Lucash -- the two goons
from the maze.

LUCASH

Where's dee jacques strap, Burkhalter?

As Voytek and Lucash slowly approach Billy, Voytek pulls out
a bat.

LUCASH (CONT'D)

No vomiting dis time -- play fair.

BILLY

Morons, I don't have the jock strap.

LUCASH

You don't mind if vee knock you upside
dee head while vee turn your place
upside-down?

SFX: CLUNK!

CUT TO:

51 INT. DARKNESS -- LATER

51

Everything's pitch dark, with the exception of a tiny spot
of light in the distance.

BILLY (V.O.)

I wasn't sure what'd happened.
However, I do remember feeling a
little woozy.

IF the player clicks PEEK THROUGH and then the object HOLE,
THEN we take BILLY'S POV:

Bart, the office guy, begging for his life, as a gangly-
looking man, draws a pistol and points it at Bart's head.

BART

It wasn't my fault! We swapped
underwear. These things happen!

GANGLY MAN

Tell me, Bart, would you prefer to
be buried in boxers -- or briefs?
(giggles)

SFX: BLAM! BLAM!

ANOTHER VOICE (O.S.)

Let's ged outta here.

The player has exactly three seconds to click TURN AWAY before
the gangly man says,

GANGLY MAN

(pointing his gun at
Billy)

I spy with my little eye -- a spy.

Which causes Billy to have a game-ending heart attack.

IF Billy does turn away in time, THEN:

BILLY (V.O.)

I wanted to get outta there -- and
fast -- but my hands were all tied
up. Fortunately, I remembered
Bertie's key to squirming free.
What was it... SQUIRM, TWIST, and
PULL? No... PULL UP, PULL DOWN, and
TWIST?

IF the player clicks TUG, TWIRL, and THUMP, THEN...

SFX: GRUNTING, TOSSING, TURNING.

BILLY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Just about there. C'mon...

SFX: BANGING AGAINST A DOOR.

BILLY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Jesus!

A ray of light suddenly hits Billy's face --

SFX: DOOR SQUEAKING OPEN.

-- as the door opens. Billy's contorted body is now visible.

BILLY'S POV

Vivian quizzically staring at him.

51 CONTINUED: (2)

51

BILLY (CONT'D)
(gagged)
Mmmph! Mmmph!

CUT TO:

52 INT. VIVIAN'S BATHROOM -- LATER

52

Billy's in Vivian's tub getting relaxed.

VIVIAN (O.S.)
(muffled, behind the
door)
How are you feeling, William?

BILLY
Wicked. Thanks.

IF the player clicks STEAL and ANCIENT DANCE MOVES, THEN
Billy grabs the book and stashes it in his pile of clothes.
The door then opens, revealing the silhouette of a naked
woman on the far wall

VIVIAN (O.S.)
Rub-a-dub-dub.

BILLY (V.O.)
For some strange reason, my stress
metre wasn't off the chart. I did
pass out, nonetheless.

Billy passes out.

VIVIAN (O.S.)
William!

Vivian rushes to Billy's rescue and pulls him from the tub.

BILLY
(hacking)

BILLY (CONT'D)
Sorry. The water's real hot.

VIVIAN
How about a back rub? You'll need
to be loose for tomorrow's match
against the club guy?

BILLY
Sure. But let's start with you,
crumpet.

DISSOLVE TO:

53 INT. STUDIO -- EVENING

53

We're at the set once again, which has been transformed into two dance floors -- one for Georgio, the club guy, and one for Billy. Georgio's warming up on his, while Billy's smoking a joint on his.

VOICE (O.S.)

In five, four, three, two --

TIME CUT TO:

54 INT. STUDIO -- LATER

54

Jeanie Stewart stands on the red carpet.

JEANIE STEWART

Oooooh-kay! Of course, we all know that all great men are great dancers. King George the fourth did the waltz. President Eisenhower could do the twist. And now, we'll see how well two-time winner Billy Burkhalter shakes it against our club guy... Georgio Sassoon!

(cues the music)

As Georgio shakes his body to pulsating techno music, we turn to Billy, who's deep in thought.

BILLY (V.O.)

I'd never danced before in my life, but I had time during Georgio's dances to figure out a routine.

The player has two minutes to learn some new dance moves. First, he must click READ and then the inventory object DANCE MOVES OF THE '50S. IF he then clicks MEMORIZE, THEN Billy will falter during the contest. BUT IF he then clicks LEARN, THEN Billy will kick some serious butt.

JEANIE STEWART

Georgio, THAT was whack.

(to conductor off-stage)

Maestro? Some music for Mr. Burkhalter?

(music starts)

Billy, time to shake that body!

Billy runs through a series of ridiculous and outdated dances:

BILLY (V.O.)

The Ancient Egyptians!

(MORE)

54 CONTINUED:

54

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(changes move)
The Mesopotamians!
(changes move)
The Phoenicians!
(changes move)
The Mongols!

TIME CUT TO:

55 INT. STUDIO -- LATER

55

JEANIE STEWART
By a margin of fifty percent! Billy
Burkhalter!

The lights suddenly go out.

SFX: SCREAMS! JOSTLING! PUNCHES!

BILLY (O.S.)
Hey! Ow!

CUT TO:

56 INT. UNDERGROUND LAIR -- NIGHT

56

ON BILLY

Tied up in a chair and slowly emerging from a concussion.

BILLY'S POV

Bobby, the gym guy; Georgio, the club guy; the gangly man
who shot Bart; and a fourth man dressed in black. Billy
scans their faces, one by one.

BILLY
(slightly delirious)
Hey, you're the guys from that TV
show. Who's the Most Man? I like
that show.

GANGLY MAN
Way-oh! He's cuckoo for cocoa puffs!

FOURTH MAN
Vare's zee jock strap, Burk-how-ter?

BILLY
I don't play baseball.

FOURTH MAN
Bobby, rah-move eez pantz.

56 CONTINUED:

56

Bobby hikes down Billy's pants. From behind, we see his ass -- and the five male typologies laughing.

FOURTH MAN (CONT'D)

Ahh, ha ha. Ve're going to cut off
yer peeper, Burk-how-ter.

(beat)

Bobby.

Bobby flashes a knife and approaches.

GEORGIO

Put dat away, mang. It ain't like
it'd make mucho difference.

The four typologies share a laugh.

BILLY

Hardy-fuckin'-har.

FOURTH MAN

Ewe are zo rahght. Okee. Instead,
vee make you a lee-tle deal. Ewe
give us zee jock strap -- and vee
let you join our lee-tle club.

BILLY

Aren't I a little virile for your
type?

FOURTH MAN

And a sah-ense of humah! Ha ha ha!
Come, come! Let us show you zee
place!

DISSOLVE TO:

57 INT. UNDERGROUND LAIR -- LATER

57

With the fourth man driving them around in a golf cart, the fourth man and Billy tour the network of an organized crime lair. Bobby sits in the back, with a gun to Billy's neck.

FOURTH MAN

Zo, you see, Bill-ee, on the left
vee have crystal meth manufacturers --
working twenty-seven-four.

(beat)

And on zee right... zere's our lair
of aspiring actresses. We feed them
the crystal meth and they feed us
the resources for the best celebrity
hooker service in town.

Billy recognizes Peaches passed out in bed, along with
literally dozens of scantily-clad women.

BILLY

(softly)

Oh, shit. Peaches?

FOURTH MAN

She cahnt hear you, Bill-ee. Sheez stoned outta her mind. Plus! Sheez behind a glass vindow.

BILLY

So she's hooked on crystal meth -- and you supply her in exchange for her body?

FOURTH MAN

Ewe are smart boy. And if you tell anyvun -- vee don't care! With our show zee number one in television, the network and zee cops are on our side.

GANGLY MAN

You said it! They're our best customers!

BILLY (V.O.)

A number of crimes were being perpetrated right before my eyes: kidnapping, prostitution, rape, bribery.

(beat)

Dear.

The fourth man stops and parks in front of the gangly man and Georgio.

BILLY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It was time to split. The only question was -- uh... how.

FOURTH MAN

Zo, Bill-ee. Do vee have a deal? Vee get zee jock strap. You get cut of our profits and a spot on zee show. No more "Bart, zee office guy." Vee had to let him go. Now, it's "Billy, zee slacker guy."

Billy has three possible answers:

A:

BILLY

Hey man, count me in! Only thing, I'd rather be called "Billy, the guy for all seasons."

57 CONTINUED: (2)

57

IF A, THEN Billy's stress level skyrockets to game-ending proportions.

B:

BILLY (CONT'D)

I'm going to have to pass. Nothing personal, but you boys seem to be suffering from a severe psychosis.

(patronizing)

Nothing to worry 'bout though, 'cause I know my share of shrinks -- and I can swing each of you a free appointment.

C:

BILLY (CONT'D)

Wow, you know, fellas -- this is a great little thing you've got going. Sorry, BUT, I can't join. I just... can't. I bowl three nights a week. There'd never be enough time.

IF C, THEN Billy's self-esteem takes a game-ending dive.

IF B, THEN:

FOURTH MAN

Once again, Burk-how-ter, you are rah-ght. Vee are clazy, yes! Quick, call zee doctah before we slit your throat!

Bobby locks Billy's arms from behind. The fourth man flashes a knife.

FOURTH MAN (CONT'D)

I love performance art.

(he starts shaking
his hips)

How 'bout vee paint a line along
your rah-ght cheek?

The fourth man swipes his blade across Billy's face, leaving a red streak on his right cheek.

BILLY

Whaaaaaaaaaaaaa!

FOURTH MAN

Unlike Denny, zee funny guy, vee are
not joh-keen 'round here.

(MORE)

57 CONTINUED: (3)

57

FOURTH MAN (CONT'D)

You'll find us zat jock strap -- or
else vee kill you -- and your new
girlfriend.

(to Georgio)

Denny -- give Mr. Burk-how-ter a
cigar.

Denny, the gangly man, plants a fat cigar into Billy's mouth,
and lights it. Billy takes a big puff back, exhales, and is
then sent into mental oblivion.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

58 INT. PEACHES' CAR -- LATE NIGHT

58

Peaches coolly smokes a cigarette, as her other hand steers the car. In the back seat, Billy wakes up discombobulated.

IF the player clicks CHAT UP and PEACHES, THEN Billy will say,

BILLY

So, what's crystal meth like?

PEACHES

I'm not really on crystal meth. I work for these guys to get back at my dad -- Dirty Larry. He's such an asshole. I can't BELIEVE he's my dad.

BILLY

Oh right, the guy everyone keeps telling me about.

PEACHES

The Male Syndicate asked me to steal the jock strap from my dad -- so I did, not knowing what the hell it was or anything.

(beat)

Well, everyone wanted their hands on it. These guys felt that if they wore it, they'd become imbued with superman qualities. They'd take turns, and when it came to be Bart's turn, he had an affair with your brother, Warren, and they accidentally swapped underwear. The rest we know. Warren gave it to you -- and now you're acting coy.

(beat)

So, where is it?

BILLY

I'm not being coy -- it's been stolen.

PEACHES

You're one tough customer, Billy B.

CUT TO:

59 INT. BILLY'S NEW ROOM -- DAY

59

With Billy fast asleep, Vivian barges in and straddles the sound sleeper.

VIVIAN

William.

BILLY

(incoherent)

Wh-what? Hmm?

VIVIAN

The ratings are in.

BILLY

And?

VIVIAN

We're in last place.

BILLY

Sorry, man.

VIVIAN

Don't be sorry. I only took this job as producer to recruit the one man capable of unseating these male typologies and of killing the ratings. It's you -- and I love you for it.

Vivian plants a kiss on Billy's lips.

BILLY

Uh-huh.

VIVIAN

Don't you see? By the time it's time to vote each night, the mainstream fans have turned off their sets, leaving your loyal fanbase to vote in! The best part is, by Friday, the show'll be cancelled -- and we'll be rid of the Male Syndicate -- once and for all.

BILLY

Speaking of whom. Uh... I had a bit of a run-in with them last night. And let's just say, uh, they're going to kill both of us unless I come up with this thing called the Royal Jock Strap.

SFX: PHONE RINGING.

BILLY (CONT'D)

'Scuse me.

(picks up)

Yeah. Oh, hey, Vern. It's where?

(MORE)

BILLY (CONT'D)

Shit, right! That was laundry day.
Ciao.

(hangs up)

VIVIAN

William, why am I involved?

BILLY

Forget I said anything -- problem
solved. I know where the Royal Jock
Strap is -- and those goons can have
it.

VIVIAN

Whatever. See you out there in two
minutes.

Vivian closes the door behind her -- upon which is stuck a
little note.

IF the player clicks LOOK AT and then the object NOTE and
then clicks READ, THEN --

BILLY (O.S.)

(reading)

Billy B, meet me behind the alley
after the show tonight. We have
stuff to discuss.

(beat)

Peaches.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Hmmph?

The player must prompt Billy to leave his room.

CUT TO:

60 INT. STUDIO HALLWAY -- CONTINUOUS

60

Next to the west doors, a man is putting up a poster of a
monkey peeing out of a toilet. The player must click TALK
TO and MAN:

BILLY

Far out.

MAN

Billy Burkhalter! You're the best
thing since Elliott Gould!

BILLY

Don't mention it.

60 CONTINUED:

60

MAN

Hey, you like this poster? Take it.
It's yours!

BILLY

Far out.

61 INT. STUDIO -- MOMENTS LATER

61

The studio has been transformed into an artist's studio, which, again, is divided by the red carpet into two partitions. The fourth man from last night is busy at his canvas, while Billy is looking bored and lacklustre at his.

TIME CUT TO:

62 INT. STUDIO -- LATER

62

SFX: APPLAUSE, CHEER.

JEANIE STEWART

Okay! Down boys -- and girls.
(chuckle)

Three men down -- two to go for Billy
Burkhalter!

SFX: APPLAUSE, CHEER.

JEANIE STEWART (CONT'D)

But not just any men. Today, Billy must prove himself the better man on the canvas, and he's going up against the 2001 American painter of the year, Sherwin Von Frankenhouer!

(to players)

Now, men. You've got your canvases in front of you. You've got your paints, your brushes. But don't let us restrict you. Create whatever visual art YOU want to make!

(to Sherwin)

Sherwin, our Leonardo da Vin-chee --
let's see some art!

As Sherwin dabs a bit o' paint here and a bit there, Billy thinks to himself:

BILLY (V.O.)

I'd never painted anything before in my life. But... it was now or never.

TIME CUT TO:

SHERWIN

Fini.

62 CONTINUED:

62

Sherwin turns his masterpiece towards the audience for all to see -- a blossoming tree in the shape of a penis.

JEANIE STEWART

Oooooh-kay! Tell us all about your artwork, Sherwin!

SHERWIN

Vell. Zee verk should speak for itzelf. Baht, I vill say dis: Zee peeper should be like a tree: hard, sturdy, and long.

JEANIE STEWART

How modern of you. Oooh-kay, Billy -- take it away!

By clicking TRACE and then the inventory object MONKEY POSTER, the player prompts Billy to trace the poster of a monkey peeing out of a toilet.

BILLY

There.

ON SKETCH OF MONKEY

TIME CUT TO:

63 INT. STUDIO -- LATER

63

JEANIE STEWART

By a landslide, Billy Burkhalter!

ON BILLY'S PROUD GRIN

CUT TO:

64 INT. BILLY'S NEW ROOM -- LATER

64

The player must guide Billy through the hallway, through the lobby, and then outside.

CUT TO:

65 EXT. STREET OUTSIDE NETWORK -- MOMENTS LATER

65

It is dark outside, with the only light coming from a flickering streetlight. The player must click WALK and ALLEYWAY. When Billy reaches the alley,

CUT TO:

66 EXT. ALLEY -- CONTINUOUS

66

As Billy tiptoes into the dank, dark alley, he's tackled by VOYTEK and LUCASH.

66 CONTINUED:

66

PEACHES (O.S.)
Bring 'em 'ere.

ON BILLY

Bewildered by what he sees before him.

BILLY'S POV:

Peaches, smirking.

BILLY
I thought you were pissed at yer
dad.

PEACHES
I was, but we made up -- bought me
some ice cream. Fellas, take 'em to
the car.

CUT TO:

67 INT. DIRTY LARRY'S LIMOUSINE -- MOMENTS LATER

67

Billy sits between VOYTEK and LUCASH and across from Peaches
and a huge, fat man, whose upbeat demeanour betrays his
sinister style.

DIRTY LARRY
(eating nuts)
Hey there, Mr. Burkhalter! I'm Dirty
Larry.
(crunch, crunch)

BILLY
Look man, I just found out where the
jock strap's being kept: My landlord
accidentally took it to the
Laundromat. The big one on College,
near Bathurst.

DIRTY LARRY
(to his limo driver)
Stefan, hit it.

TIME CUT TO:

68 INT. DIRTY LARRY'S LIMOUSINE -- LATER

68

Voytek's fishing through Billy's laundry.

LUCASH
Anything?

Voytek shakes his head.

LUCASH (CONT'D)
(to Dirty Larry)
It ain't dere.

Billy grabs the laundry bag and starts fishing through it.

BILLY
What the hell?

As Billy continues to fish through the laundry bag, Diane Sawyer comes back:

DIANE SAWYER (V.O.)
What was going through your mind,
Billy?

BILLY (V.O.)
That I had a terrible itch.

DIANE SAWYER (V.O.)
Your life's on the line and you're
thinking about an itch?

BILLY (V.O.)
I know, life's so crazy. But I had
this terrible itch.

IF the player does not click PULL DOWN and PANTS within ten seconds, THEN Billy feels Dirty Larry's game-ending wrath.

DIRTY LARRY
Gee, well I hate to do this, Billy,
but we're gonna have to kill ya!

But IF Billy does remove his pants in time, THEN --

DIRTY LARRY (CONT'D)
Good idea. No need to stain a fine
pair of pants.

The player has five seconds to click ITCH and BILLY'S LEGS, which prompts Billy to frantically itch his legs. In the process, he dislodges the one, the only -- Royal Jock Strap.

ON ROYAL JOCK STRAP

Sparkling. Radiant. Glowing.

DIRTY LARRY (CONT'D)
Beautiful.

Everyone has a moment of gushing over it.

DIRTY LARRY (CONT'D)
Well, that's that.
(MORE)

68 CONTINUED: (2)

68

DIRTY LARRY (CONT'D)
Goodbye, Mr. Burkhalter.

CUT TO:

69 EXT. STREET OUTSIDE NETWORK -- CONTINUOUS

69

The limousine slows down just enough for Billy to avoid killing himself, as Voytek tosses him out the door.

PEACHES
(out the window)
Goodbye, Billy B!

DISSOLVE TO:

70 INT. STUDIO -- THE NEXT NIGHT

70

Looking incredibly beat, Billy stands in the last of the five sets -- this one a simulated stand-up night club.

He stands under a spotlight on the far left; Denny, the funny guy, stands on the far right. A red carpet divides the pair.

VOICE (O.S.)
In five, four, three, two -- cue
audience, cue music, cue announcer!

SFX: APPLAUSE, APPLAUSE!

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Live from Toronto! It's the season
finale of WHO'S THE MOST MAN?
Starring....

Jeanie Stewart leaps out of the curtains and sprints down the red carpet.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Jeanie Stewart!

SFX: APPLAUSE, APPLAUSE!

JEANIE STEWART
Thank you, Rick -- our announcer.
Oooh-kay! Billy Burkhalter has proven
himself the most man where?
(counts)
In the office, the gym, the club,
the artist's studio. But is he the
most man -- in the comedy club?
Luhhhhht's see if he matches the
acerbic wit of comedic legend, Denny
Rivendale!

SFX: APPLAUSE, CHEER!

JEANIE STEWART (CONT'D)

So -- stick around!

VOICE (O.S.)

Back in two minutes!

The player has two minutes to click READ and JOKE BOOK. IF he does:

BILLY (V.O.)

These jokes really stunk. But... I had no choice.

VOICE (O.S.)

Back in three, two --

SFX: APPLAUSE, CHEER, STANDING OVATION.

Jeanie Stewart claps, turning to Denny.

DENNY

All right folks, check this out: I have a friend who's a masseuse. So, I said to him -- "HEY! you're getting screwed, man. Whatever happened to that saying, 'I scratch your back -- audience?'"

AUDIENCE (O.S.)

YOU SCRATCH MINE!
(laughs)

DENNY

Right! Not that way no more. Now it's "I scratch your back -- AND I get to jerk you off!"

SFX: AUDIENCE LAUGHTER.

DENNY (CONT'D)

The health and beauty industry is weird, man. The other day, my girlfriend pays this guy sixty bucks to give her a facial. I said, sixty bucks? For nothing I'll give you a facial right now!

SFX: AUDIENCE LAUGHTER.

DENNY (CONT'D)

So, I broke up with that chick. The other night, I was out on a date with someone other broad, and it didn't look like it was gonna go anywhere sexually 'cause I'd forgotten the chloroform and rags.

Off audience's laughter --

TIME CUT TO:

JEANIE STEWART
(holding his sides)
Stop, gimme a chance to breath.
Denny, you sure saved your best for
the final episode.
(turns to Billy)
Billy -- upstage THAT.
(claps)

IF Billy hasn't read the joke book during the break, he stands under the spotlight until he passes out under the game-ending weight of his stress metre. IF he has read the joke book, THEN:

BILLY
So, I'm eating at this restaurant
the other night. I ask for a bottle
of the house red. And the waiter
brings me a bottle of ketchup.

SFX: GROANS, BOOS, HISSES.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Ha ha. Oh, did you know that grass
is nature's way of saying, "hi"?
That's H-I-G-H.

SFX: GROANS, BOOS.

BILLY (CONT'D)
And, hey, I was sitting on an airplane
the other day, watching this terrible
movie, but I decided not to leave
the theater -- I didn't have a
parachute.

SFX: HISSES, "YOU SUCK!"

TIME CUT TO:

JEANIE STEWART
Funny, funny, funny! And now, the
moment you've all been waiting for.
According to you, the home viewers,
the most man for 2004 is... Billy
Burkhalter!

ON BILLY

Impressed, but not elated.

70 CONTINUED: (3)

70

As the credits role, a female network exec walks over to Vivian.

NETWORK EXEC

Viv -- the show's been a complete disgrace. Burkhalter here's so fucking boring he's scared off our core demographic. The only reason why this scumbag won is because the audience is his entire fanbase -- non-consumers not within our key demographics. The show's cancelled -- clear out your office.

Detective Street and his uniformed thugs walk onto the set. Along with the other three male typologies.

NETWORK EXEC (CONT'D)

(turns to male
syndicate)

That means no more protection for the four of you. Detective Street here's got some questions about a prostitution ring.

As Billy and Vivian watch Detective Street and his uniformed thugs round up the male syndicate, their attention is distracted by a news report on one of the monitors.

ON TV

ANCHOR

The alleged Royal Strap Jock was recovered earlier today, when a limousine slipped on ice and plowed into a strong and sturdy tree. Four occupants were killed instantly. The only survivor was the driver, who attributed the crash to his inability to take his eyes off the undergarment. As for the authenticity of the jock strap, archaeologist Roy Steeles examined it and concluded that the relic is a fake. The band read, "Calvin Klein," for one. And for two, he added, British historians confirmed long ago that Queen Mary -- or Bloody Mary, as she was branded -- sold off the jock strap's precious jewelry. She then defecated on the actual jock strap and burned it.

DETECTIVE

Ohhhhh, shit.

(MORE)

70 CONTINUED: (4)

70

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

(to network exec)

Say, Ms. Norman, now that, uh, this show's off the air, can we talk about the free slot? Have you given more thought to The NEW Slappy Street Show?

NETWORK EXEC

Who are you?

OFFICER #1

The one --

OFFICER #2

The only --

DETECTIVE

Slappy Street.

NETWORK EXEC

I could see a reality cops show in your future. Yeah... My office, tomorrow morning, eight o' clock. Wait for me. I'll probably be a few hours late.

CUT TO:

71 INT. MYSTERIOUS ROOM

71

Diane shakes her head in bedazzlement.

DIANE SAWYER

Isn't life funny?

BILLY

Yeah, life is kinda funny.

DIANE SAWYER

What happened to Vivian?

BILLY

We're married. With three kids. Great for me, 'cause I get to be a stay-at-home Dad, while Vivian earns the bread. Speaking of which, she's producing the new Slappy Street Show -- and working hard to get it off the air.

DIANE SAWYER

Terrific. Thanks SO much Billy.

CUT TO:

72 PROMOTIONAL TRAILER FOR THE SLAPPY STREET SHOW

72

ROLL CREDITS OVER TRAILER

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

Appendix E

Sketches of the Main Characters

