

Pushing Daisies
"Rube Goldberg Machine"
by
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ACT ONE

INT. YOUNG NED'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Young Ned is setting up a train set that circles his bedroom.

NARRATOR

*At this very moment, Young Ned was
9 years, 24 weeks, 2 days and 13
minutes old.*

Young Ned finishes laying the train tracks. He carefully sets the train on its rails.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Of Young Ned many toys, his
particular favorite was the
Rambling Prospector Spirit of
America Express,*

He puts on a conductor's cap, pulls an imaginary train whistle. All Aboard!

INT. YOUNG NED'S LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK - CHRISTMAS MORNING

Young Ned, his FATHER and MOTHER around the Christmas tree.

Young Ned is unwrapping a present.

NARRATOR

*given to him at Christmas by his
loving family.*

INT. YOUNG NED'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CAMERA FOLLOWS the train cab as it races along the tracks, CHUGGING UP and DOWN simulated hills, SPEEDING around the room.

NARRATOR

*While many of Ned's toys were as
fun or interesting, no others
brought the vicarious thrill of
danger and uncertainty.*

The train cab RUSHES DOWN A DARK TUNNEL.

CAMERA passes the train. Far in the distance of the tunnel is Young Ned's Eye.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Looking back on his days with the
train set, Ned would wonder if it
had been a sign of things to come.*

PULL BACK from NED's Eye (NO LONGER YOUNG NED's EYE). We are:

INT. NED AND CHUCK'S DINING ROOM / KITCHEN - MORNING

Ned and CHUCK have just finished breakfast. Chuck sits at the dinner table. Ned regards her from over the counter as he does the dishes. Chuck is reading a magazine.

CHUCK

Look at this.

NED

Already am.

CHUCK

Not at me.

(smiles. Shows an article)

"The One : How to know if your
boyfriend is manx or mouse." Let's
try it.

NED

You go ahead.

CHUCK

(you silly ...)

It's a test for two.

NED

And you're testy enough for the
both of us.

(beat. Astonished)

No I really didn't mean-

CHUCK

No, I really know you didn't. And
I'll even let you off the hook. If
you take the test . . . for me?

(bats eyes)

NED

(relief. But ...)

I just don't think we should gauge
our relationship based on arbitrary
test results from some magazine?

(beat)

Alright.

CHUCK

"Question One: If you were an
animal ..."

Chuck's voice murmurs on as she reads the questions.

Off Ned's face:

NARRATOR

Looking at Chuck, Ned felt both bemused and blissful to have such a perfect relationship with the girl from across the street. Even if he had killed her father.

INT. YOUNG NED'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Young Ned's Mother dies, and
a PIE she held SLOWLY FALLS to the floor.

NARRATOR

Young Ned hadn't meant to kill Chuck's father. But Ned had a gift for bringing dead things back to life, and when his mother died

Young Ned catches the Pie, sets it down carefully.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

he did not yet know that - while one touch from him brought life -

He looks down on his mother.

Touches her - she breathes again.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

within one minute a second touch would have to take it away. If not,

EXT. CHUCK'S FATHER'S FUNERAL - EVENING - FLASHBACK

YOUNG CHUCK looks down into her father's grave.

NARRATOR

another would pay the price.

INT. YOUNG NED'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Young Ned's mother is helping him into bed (without touching skin)

NARRATOR

Ned paid that evening for Chuck's father's death.

Young Ned's mother kisses his forehead. She falls over, dead.

INT. NED AND CHUCK'S DINING ROOM / KITCHEN - PRESENT

We only see Ned's face. He's sweating, and his hands are nervously wringing a glass he's been drying for minutes now.

NARRATOR

Now, 20 years, 2 weeks, 5 days and 3 minutes later, Ned wondered if he was being asked to pay again.

NED

Blue. No - Yellow!

We see Chuck. She's finishing up the test, and looks very flustered. The transition is astonishing.

CHUCK

Did you just say that because it's my favorite color?

NED

No, I just said it because it's my favorite color. I did know it was your favorite color, but I thought that if it was your favorite color and my favorite color then maybe it could be our favorite color.

(beat)

Can it be our favorite color?

CHUCK

If that's true ...

NED

(relieved)

It is.

CHUCK

then we have the same answers.

Ned looks puzzled.

NED

Didn't I just say -

CHUCK

I mean, all of our answers! We agreed on every single question in the test. According to this, we're perfectly compatible!

NED

Oh. Good.

Ned notices his glass and dishrag. He puts them down.

CHUCK

Good!?

NED

... not good?

CHUCK

No, it's good. It's just -

NED

Yes?

CHUCK

It's just ...

She's building up to something, has really got her worries up. She finally lets it out:

CHUCK (CONT'D)

It's the quiet ones, they say, that are always going out with a bang? The old lady down the street says, "He was so pleasant, he never could have hurt a fly" ... when the reporters come by to find out why he had fifteen bodies fertilizing his petunias! We're like that perfect, quiet relationship, just sitting around, happy as anything, and suddenly - wham! -

NED

Wham?

CHUCK

Wham! Something trivial comes along, and it all falls apart.

NED

I think you're mixing ... things.

INT. PIE HOLE - MOMENTS LATER

Ned chases Chuck into the store. EMERSON is at the counter.

NED

It just seems like a lot of weight to put on a little test.

Chuck rushes into the back room. Ned yells to her from behind the counter.

CHUCK
Yeah, it's little. See: Trivial!

NED
But-

CHUCK
I don't want to talk about it.

NED
But-

CHUCK
Not yet. Not now.

Emerson finishes his coffee.

EMERSON
You two love birds done squawking?
'Cause there's some bait waiting
for us, down at the morgue.

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Emerson, Ned and Chuck are standing over the body of WARREN WODEHOUSE ("wood-house") (50's). He's a big man, but we don't see his face.

NED
His face looks kind of

EMERSON
concave.

CHUCK
Think he'll be able to talk?

NED
Only one way to find out.

Ned sets his watch, touches Warren. POP! Warren sits up. His face is now flat, like it's smushed against a sheet of glass.

WARREN
Wow!

Warren touches his face. Looks at Ned.

WARREN (CONT'D)
Ah!

NED
Ah?

WARREN -AND- NED

Ah!

CHUCK

Shut up!

NED

Sorry.

CHUCK

(beat. Misunderstanding,)
I said we're not talking about that
now.

NED

I didn't mean-

EMERSON

You two need a room? 'Cause me and
the dead guy could give you ... let
me see ... forty seconds!

NED

Sorry.

CHUCK -AND- EMERSON

Stop saying that!

WARREN WODEHOUSE

(to Ned)
Yoowa nod Sanda Kloz.

CHUCK

Sanda Kloz?

EMERSON

(to Chuck)
Shut!
(beat)
Santa Claus did this to you?

Warren shrugs, and begins his tale. Over his voice:

NARRATOR

The facts were these:

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - FLASHBACK

WILMA WODEHOUSE and Warren are standing together in the doorway of their toy store. Warren holds a toy pitchfork - it's like a Disney version of American Gothic. Wilma (50's) is a sickeningly sweet older lady, and Warren an elderly, balding businessman in a tweed suit.

NARRATOR

7 years, 23 weeks, 8 days and 12 minutes earlier, Warren Wodehouse and his wife, Wilma, opened Wodehouse Wonders to will their wildest whimsies into winning whoppers for whippersnappers: They opened a toy shop.

ROGER SHANTLEY (40's) enters, a stopwatch in one hand. He's an excitable, wiry man wearing arrogance like shoulder pads. Roger shakes Warren's hand as Wilma pats him on the shoulder.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Roger Shantley joined them in this venture, as head Toy Engineer and factory lineman.

INT. MORGUE - DAY - PRESENT

Warren shakes his head vigorously. His face POPS into shape.

WARREN

It must have been him: I made him a partner just a month ago.

NED

He's Santa Claus?

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - FLASHBACK (NIGHT BEFORE)

There's a RUBE GOLDBERG MACHINE here. Like the board game called Mouse Trap, this is made from a succession of gizmos that are each set to trigger the next, seemingly by accident, until coincidence is stretched far beyond the breaking point.

This one is made of toys. It starts at a large button in one display window, passes along a narrow ledge around the perimeter of the store, over the back door, and ends in the second display window. At its terminus is a head-sized target like a helicopter pad - It's wired to a player piano. Over the target hangs a heavy basket.

NARRATOR

Every Christmas season, Warren created a new festive display.

Warren, standing in the second display window, is putting the final touch on the machine. He's whistling a happy tune.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

There, in the midst of his devilish contraptions, Warren satisfied his three greatest passions:

The last piece is perfectly placed.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
his curiosity for puzzles, his love
of toys - and his desire for money.

Warren cleans his hands off on his pants, and smiles.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
Two days before Christmas he would
set off his device.

Warren regards the sweep of his creation. It's pretty dark.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
This event always brought in large
crowds of holiday shoppers,

He hears a shuffling sound. He looks around. Curious now.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
but not as large as the crowd that
would show up after his death.

The Rube Goldberg Machine is running.

Warren's worried eyes follow the toy train, chugging through above the back door. It runs into a wooden duck, which pokes its beak down in response.

Its beak pokes into a bowl of water - the excess sloshes into a test tube. The weight of the water tips a set of scales, and starts another toy rolling along . . .

WARREN
Who's there?

HO HO HO! A human-sized clockwork version of Santa Claus LUNGES towards Warren. He falls backwards.

His head LANDS on the target. The bottom of the basket FALLS open.

A giant steel ball DROPS on his head.

INT. MORGUE - DAY - PRESENT

Ned touches Warren. Warren is dead.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. PIE HOLE - EVENING

Ned, Chuck and Emerson are holding down a booth. OLIVE SNOOK, busy with a client, passes by.

CHUCK

Whoever wound up that clockwork toy

NED

must have killed Warren.

Beat. Chuck stares at Ned, annoyed he could finish her sentence.

NED (CONT'D)

Sorry-

Olive ploughs in beside Chuck.

OLIVE

Did someone say 'toys'? I love toys. When I was ten, every night I dreamed I was a toy-maker.

(beat)

Emerson, you didn't go to the toy store without me?! I told you-

EMERSON

And I told you: We're going there after you close up here. I wasn't gonna leave you out of it.

OLIVE

Oh Emerson, you're sweet. Isn't he sweet? He's sweet.

EMERSON

Practical. I don't need you yapping at me tomorrow. Got enough on my nerves, these two squabbling ...

OLIVE

Anything I can do?

EMERSON

Yeah: don't get 'em started.

(beat)

Now then. The police didn't find any evidence - just followed the bouncing ball right upside Warren's head. They're calling it a suicide.

NED

And Warren thinks Roger did it.

EMERSON

He's probably right; his wife offered a sweet reward.

Emerson smiles.

CHUCK

And you're saying that because you want the money.

EMERSON

Don't you start on me now too.

(beat)

Yeah I want the green. But Warren doesn't seem one to have many friends outside his job; there's probably only a couple suspects.

NED

(offers)

And Roger's the first.

Emerson checks his watch.

EMERSON

Closing time.

OLIVE

Toy time!

EMERSON

Just go get your coat.

EXT. / INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY

It's a very small factory. The store is attached and facing the street.

Entering the factory from the parking lot,

EMERSON

Roger said he'll meet us upstairs.

NED

We ought to view the crime scene.

CHUCK

I'll go.

The NIGHT CLEANUP WORKER is mopping in the entrance-way between the factory and the store.

Chuck heads towards the Worker. Ned starts off after her.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
Come on, Olive.

Ned halts in mid-step; it's plain he's not welcome.

Chuck stalks over to the Worker, and Olive skips after. Off Ned's wounded look

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY, UPSTAIRS - EVENING

Emerson and Ned are climbing up a ramp from the factory floor. They reach a deck that contains: a work space for the handyman, and Roger's small office (plywood walls and long horizontal windows). From the deck they can view the entire factory floor.

Emerson raises his hand to knock on the door. The moment he does, ROGER STANTON opens it. He's still holding a stopwatch.

ROGER
Hi there.

EMERSON
Mr. Stanton, my name is -

ROGER
(like a machine gun)
Emerson Cod. He's Ned. You're 43
seconds late, but I'm still glad to
meet you.

He gives Emerson's hand one decisive shake up, then down. The man is a machine. He points them at chairs.

ROGER (CONT'D)
There! There!

Roger hasn't sat down, so Emerson and Ned remain standing.

EMERSON
We came to see you because-

ROGER
Sit!

They sit. And so does Roger.

ROGER (CONT'D)
I know why you've come. You're
wasting time: I didn't kill him.

Emerson takes a moment to match up with Roger's speech.

EMERSON
Why believe you?

ROGER
No wasted words: good!

Roger stands up, leans forward over his desk

ROGER (CONT'D)
Believe me because:

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY - FLASHBACK

FROM THE CAMERA'S VIEW, Roger is posing for a photograph. He smiles before what sounds like a smooth-running, fully-mechanized, assembly line.

NARRATOR
*Roger Stanton had only time in life
for his one great love: efficiency.*

Roger's smile fades, he checks his watch, and starts tapping his foot on the ground impatiently.

He points at the camera, preparing to yell.

FLASH! The image FREEZES, but the perfectly regular machine sounds continue.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*From the day he was born, 43 years,
9 weeks, 2 days and 15 minutes ago,
Roger craved*

THE IMAGE IS A PHOTO TACKED ON A CORKBOARD. We PAN around to various images of Roger's life:

In high school, timing the runners at a track meet

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
speed,

and playing the drums in band.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
consistency,

We reach an image of Roger as a baby, grabbing at the same stopwatch hung over his crib.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*and the kind of organization found
only in the finest of prisons.*

Baby Roger clutching his crib prison bars. Big smile.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*At 18 years of age, Roger joined
the military,*

Roger at boot camp. He's spotless, but useless. The other cadets despise him.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
was fast-tracked to drill sergeant,

Roger as drill sergeant. His cadets look twenty times worse off than the others.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*and for 23 years, 5 weeks, 1 day
and 47 minutes, there he stayed*

Roger, with a WEDGIE, hangs from a flagpole by the back of his underwear. The other drills sergeants mock-salute.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*until the other drill sergeants
washed him out.*

PULLING AWAY from the corkboard, we are:

INT. ROGER'S OFFICE - EVENING - PRESENT

ROGER
Warren made my future. We
disagreed, but: he gave me work.

EMERSON
That-

ROGER
Meaning!

NED
Could you-

ROGER
Purpose!

Beat. Can we speak now?

EMERSON
(flustered)
That's a ... terse story there,
Roger.

NED

(bolder than he feels)

We need a list of everyone at the company.

ROGER

Factory is automated, and store's family run. There's me, Wilma in the store, and Bartleby.

NED

And Bartleby is ...

ROGER

Heh. Simple.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE

The Night Cleanup Worker is BARTLEBY FINCH, holding the back door open for Chuck and Olive. Up close it's obvious: Bartleby's autistic, a Rain Man who keeps his own apartment.

OLIVE

(eyes only for toys)

Incredible!

CHUCK

Go ahead and look around.

OLIVE

You betcha!

CHUCK

And mind the crime scene! I'll ask this nice young man ...

Bartleby is shuffling off. Chucks steps in front of him.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

Bartleby, was it?

BARTLEBY

Yes. Well, yes - Bartleby Finch, if you need all of it. My name, that is. Bartleby.

(beat)

Bartleby's fine.

CHUCK

Bartleby, then. Are you the janitor for both the factory and the store?

BARTLEBY

And handyman. I'm ...
(shrugs)
good with my hands.

CHUCK

I'd really like to ask you a few
questions. Would you- Hello?

BARTLEBY

Yes? Yes - yes I'm here! Sometimes
people say I don't seem to be here,
but-. I am.

CHUCK

Alright. Why don't we sit together
over here?

Chuck points at a group of bean bag chairs.

BARTLEBY

Roger doesn't like it when I take
too long to mop the floors.

CHUCK

I promise to be quick.

BARTLEBY

He likes quick.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY - ROGER'S OFFICE

Emerson has recovered his usual confidence. He's pacing back
and forth.

EMERSON

So you got reasons to feel loyal
towards Warren - but as for maybe
killing him, you've still got

ROGER

motive - yes - but not more than
Wilma! She's majority stockholder
now. The police investigated her.

NED

(just to confirm ...)
Not you?

Roger shakes his head. Then nods. Then shakes his head.

ROGER

Not me. She wasn't speaking to Warren when he died. Of anyone, she killed him.

EMERSON

You really don't like her, do you?

ROGER

Always sweet ... too sweet.

EMERSON

She set a reward for if someone finds the killer. Could be she did it to cover her tracks ...

ROGER

If she killed him, I'll pay instead.

EMERSON

How much?

NED

Emerson!

EMERSON

I'm just asking: How much, money-wise, did your buddy mean to you?

ROGER

I'll match her.

Emerson studies him. Roger might be alright.

EMERSON

Fair enough.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE

Olive, robed in toys, in the display window. Chuck meets her.

Olive quick-draws two water guns.

CHUCK

Oh, don't!

OLIVE

You're no fun. So:
(gestures at Bartleby)
He do it?

CHUCK

(beat: Yeah, right.)

Warren was already setting up this thingie when his shift began, and Warren was still working when he left late at night. I don't think he even knows that Warren's dead.

OLIVE

You didn't tell him?

CHUCK

He's so nervous with Warren gone, imagine how he'd react.

OLIVE

I suppose it's not our place - but someone ought to tell him.

CHUCK

Did you find any clues?

OLIVE

Just that this
(indicating the target)
is a button. I wonder what it does?

Olive pushes on the helipad. The player piano begins:

CHUCK

Is that?

OLIVE

"Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer"

CHUCK

That's terrible!

OLIVE

(nods, misunderstanding)
As clues go, not so useful.

We start to PAN the circumference of the Rube Goldberg Machine - now lit, this is our first really good look.

Halfway along, Bartleby's mop knocks one of the pieces out of place. He catches it, puts it back into place - expertly - before the Machine starts running.

Chuck and Olive didn't notice; They are looking at toys in the ocean themed section of the store.

CHUCK

My aunts would love these!

INT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - FLASHBACK

LILY and VIVIANE CHARLES watch an old video of themselves as the Darling Mermaid Darlings.

NARRATOR

*Chuck could no longer visit her
shut-in, previously champion
synchronised-swimming aunts.*

Olive is at the door, holding a pie. She's welcomed in, shown a seat. They watch the video and eat pie together.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Olive believed this was because
Chuck had faked her own death, and
so Olive had gone seeking answers.*

INT. PIE HOLE - FLASHBACK

Chuck adds drops of homeopathic mood-enhancers to a pie.

NARRATOR

*Instead of answers, she found
friends. Now she tries to draw the
aunts back into the bright wider
world through homeopathic mood-
enhancing pies and her own, always
sunny, disposition.*

Olive takes the pie, and heads through the front door.

INT. / EXT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - FLASHBACK

Olive and the aunts limbo line dance towards the front door.

NARRATOR

*And while either might have
lightened the aunt's spirits,*

As Olive steps outside, Lily slams the door behind her. The aunts wave happily at Olive through a front window.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*neither had changed their feelings
towards the outside world.*

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - PRESENT

Olive looks at a pair of flippers. A light bulb flips on inside her head.

NARRATOR

Olive had run completely out of ways to encourage the aunts to unlock their cell. But now - by combining her love for toys with their love for swimming - she wondered if she might pick this particular lock on her own.

NED AND EMERSON ENTER from the factory. They pass Bartleby, who has mopped his way out of the store.

Olive dramatically slides over the newly mopped floor to meet them. Chuck is studying the crime scene.

OLIVE

No haps, paps.

They're walking towards the display window.

EMERSON

What did you say?

OLIVE

Couldn't find a clue.

EMERSON

(sniff)

Yeah, you couldn't.

OLIVE

Hey! There's just nothing to see.
And be careful, the floor's slip-

Emerson SLIPS on the just-mopped floor,

Trying to CATCH HIMSELF, he grabs a piece out of the Rube Goldberg Machine,

SETTING OFF THE MACHINE.

Emerson GRABS Ned, who CATCHES ONTO Olive, and they all SLIP and SLIDE, tripping their way up into the display window.

The Machine IS SPIRALING OUT OF CONTROL,

and, again, Emerson KNOCKS INTO Ned, then

NED FALLS TOWARDS CHUCK.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - EVENING

Ned PINWHEELS his arms, his fingers NEARLY TOUCHING Chuck's arm,

but INSTEAD he FALLS into Olive -

the basket is starting to move -

Olive knocks into Chuck, who FALLS OVER. CHUCK'S HEAD IS ON THE HELIPAD TARGET.

The player piano begins "Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer."

The bottom of the basket DROPS OPEN.

Emerson grabs onto Chuck, pulling her out of the way.

And a large, harmless tropical beach ball misses her head.

Beat.

Emerson is holding Chuck, and Olive is holding Ned. Everyone looks confused and uncomfortable.

EMERSON

That's just-

OLIVE

Such a cool contraption!

Of all the things to say. Chuck stare at Olive, who misunderstands, thinking: Oh yeah - Ned.

Olive drops Ned - head-first on the display window ledge.

OLIVE (CONT'D)

Ned, I'm so sorry!

NED

Can we go home now?

INT. PIE HOLE - NIGHT

At the customary booth. Olive is applying bandages to Ned's forehead. Chuck is hovering over them both. Emerson eats pie.

OLIVE

How does that feel?

NED

It hurts - but not because of the bandage.

CHUCK

I wish I could box your pain up and wrap it in twine like one of your pies. Except in a box that you wouldn't give anyone to open up later on.

NED

Just knowing you want to box up the pain makes it feel much smaller.

CHUCK

Well of course I'd want to.

The doorbell rings. A woman is at the door.

OLIVE

I'll tell her we're closed.

NED

I was worried you were angry at me.

CHUCK

No. I'm just ... not sure ...

NED

(anxious again)

Not sure. Not sure of what? What is there not to be sure of?

CHUCK

That's just it; you're so sure, so I'm not. But I am glad you're safe.

Chuck lightly places fingertips on Ned's bandage. He relaxes.

EMERSON

I'm not surprised Warren died in that store. Place is a death trap.

WILMA

I hope it's not really that bad.

Olive had let Wilma through the door.

WILMA (CONT'D)

I told Bartleby to make the store extra clean for you.

EMERSON

You must be Wilma.

OLIVE

Please take my seat. We're closed,
but there's meringue in the fridge.

WILMA

Thank you so much, dear. Lovely
meeting young ones with manners.

NED

Mrs. Wodehouse, what brings you by
this late at night?

WILMA

I would have come earlier, but I
teach a toy making class every
evening - I was held back.

Olive returns with the meringue.

OLIVE

Did you say 'toy making'? Every
night when I was ten I dreamed
about being a toy-maker.

WILMA

Then perhaps you'd join our class?

EMERSON

Don't you have cleaning up to do?

OLIVE

Right now I'm serving Wilma.

CHUCK -AND- NED

I could do the clean-up.

Jinx! Chuck is annoyed again, and Ned is nervous.

Before they can get up, Wilma gives Olive a card.

WILMA

There is the location. Feel free to
drop by if you'd like.

EMERSON

Shoo!

(to Wilma)

Now: What's your story?

NARRATOR

The facts were these:

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - FLASHBACK

Wilma and Warren are at their identical desks, marking in their identical ledgers. There's a lot of red numbers listed.

NARRATOR

While Wilma and Warren Wodehouse had a great love for toys, both also had a poor head for business.

They walk to the front doors, welcome Roger in. Roger shakes Warren's hand as Wilma pats him on the shoulder.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

With profits plummeting like a house of cards in the hands of a three year-old, they decided to make the always efficient Roger a partner in their business affairs.

PAN to and PULL IN on a white board behind Warren's desk, showing a graph with two lines: profits and expenses over time. The lines get longer as we watch. The profits drop ever lower . . . but the expenses go up much faster.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But within weeks, their finances began to drain even faster than their purchases could justify.

INT. PIE HOLE - PRESENT

WILMA

Warren thought Roger was skimming funds. But we had no proof.

EMERSON

So he was looking for proof

CHUCK

and Roger killed him for it.

WILMA

Or it really was an accident. I do not know, and it is killing me.

CHUCK

Wilma, we'll get your husband's killer. If there is one.

Wilma sniffs, holds back tears, stands up.

WILMA

Here is your starting fee, Mr. Cod.

Emerson takes the money, walks her towards the door.

EMERSON

Not to look a gift horse in the mouth, but: look - if your company's so poor, where's this money coming from?

WILMA

I have some personal savings, from my first marriage. It's not much, but it's yours if you settle this case to my satisfaction.

EMERSON

We'll look into all options.

WILMA

All that I ask. You're a good boy.

Wilma pinches Emerson's cheek, then exits.

EMERSON

So: thoughts?

CHUCK

Roger did it.

NED

It was Wilma.

CHUCK

Roger's a jerk.

NED

Roger likes things contained, so he can understand them. Wilma is pretending to be nice, and that only makes things more complicated.

CHUCK

No, she's just sweet! Just a nice old lady. It's not her fault that things are often more complex than we'd like. Sometimes things are just ... overwhelming.

EMERSON

You still talking about the case? I'm only staying if you're talking about the case.

NED

Are things really so overwhelming?

Beat.

CHUCK

No.

NARRATOR

She lied.

CHUCK

It's late, and you're hurt.

NED

I'm fine.

CHUCK

I mean your head.

NED

(to Emerson)

I don't know who did it.

CHUCK

But if Wilma did, we should check her desk. And Warren's too.

NED

And, in case Roger did it, we should check his office.

EMERSON

We'll have to go tomorrow night. If Wilma's right, Roger did it. If Roger's right, Wilma did it. Either way, we'll need proof.

NED -AND- CHUCK

We'll get it.

Jinx again! They wince.

Off Ned and Chuck's strained reactions,

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. NED AND CHUCK'S BEDROOM - LATER

Ned and Chuck in their separate beds, both of them awake, facing each other but pretending to sleep.

NARRATOR

Neither Ned nor Chuck slept easily. Like the Christmas display they'd faced earlier that evening, a number of things in their minds were running into each other.

Chuck looks over at Ned, whose eyes are closed. She opens her mouth to speak.

Then she closes her mouth and rolls over.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

While Chuck cared for Ned, she was frightened that their love was too perfect to be lasting.

Ned looks over at Chuck, her back to him. He rolls onto his back, staring at the ceiling.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

And while Ned loved Chuck, he was terrified that she was too scared to stay.

Chuck rolls onto her back. They both stare at the ceiling.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Though their fears were different, one thought was the same: How lucky they were to have someone in their lives that was so perfect for them.

Chuck and Ned reach towards each other, grab a handful of blanket material and hold it tight. It is as if from across the room they are holding each other's hands.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

This united them - and eventually, together, they fell fast asleep.

Chuck and Ned's eyes close simultaneously.

EXT. PARKING LOT - THE FOLLOWING NIGHT

Just hidden from the toy factory is another parking lot.

Ned and Chuck drive quietly in.

EMERSON

Okay. You too all right?

Ned and Chuck smile cautiously at each other.

CHUCK

We're fine.

EMERSON

You better be. Here's the plan:

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY - MOMENTS LATER

It is darker inside this evening. There are pools of light every few steps, large areas of semi-darkness in between.

The factory door CREAKS open.

Bartleby walks toward it.

"Grandma Got Ran Over By a Reindeer" STARTS PLAYING.

BARTLEBY

Who's there? Wilma? Warren?

Bartleby sounds frightened, but turns around and walks into the store.

Emerson SNEAKS through the factory door and into shadow.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE

Bartleby sees the beach ball near the helipad target.

BARTLEBY

Must have fallen out. Bad ball ...

Bartleby replaces the ball, exits the store.

Ned and Chuck sneak out from behind a toy stand.

NED

I'll check Warren's desk

CHUCK

And I'll get Wilma's.

NED

So . . . are we really fine?

CHUCK

Ned, I-

NED

(in a rush)

I know you said before you didn't want to talk about it - and then I didn't talk about it - but it kept coming up, and then we didn't talk about it all day today, but I know it'll come up again - probably soon - and at some point we'll have to talk about it, and I'd rather we talk about it now, than later, because I'd rather have it hurt less now than more later.

(beat)

Though I'm still not certain exactly what "it" is that we aren't talking about.

He looks miserable. Chuck sighs.

CHUCK

"It" is perfect. We're too perfect.

NED

So why are we fighting?

CHUCK

Because we -

NARRATOR

Chuck thought hard and deep about what Ned had just said.

CHUCK

Oh. I guess we are.

NARRATOR

They were fighting - and, if so, their relationship must not be so truly perfect after all.

CHUCK

Well.

NARRATOR

Strangely, this imperfection warmed her, so that it felt as everything might - someday - be perfect again.

She really smiles at Ned.

CHUCK

Thank you! That helped.

NED

I'm glad. Thank me for what?

CHUCK

Just for being you.

NED

Did I miss something?

CHUCK

Did I not miss something?: Here are Wilma's financial records.

Chuck drops her ledger on Warren's desk. Ned glances at them.

NED

Here are Warren's.

He goes back to searching the desks.

Chuck starts reading.

CHUCK

Wait - Wilma's ledger is a copy.

NED

How can you tell?

CHUCK

The handwriting for both is the same, but Warren's book shows expenses that aren't listed in Wilma's.

NED

Warren must have copied it for her.

CHUCK

And Wilma was wrong. Things did get worse post-Roger, but the extra expenses came from the store, not the factory. Roger's not involved.

NED

Roger was wrong about Wilma too.

Ned drops an insurance policy on the desk.

CHUCK

Warren took out a million dollar life insurance policy just before he died.

NED

But he took it out on Wilma.

CHUCK

But Warren is the one who died, not
Wilma

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY - MEANWHILE

Emerson SLOUCHES out of Roger's office.

NARRATOR

*Meanwhile, Emerson Cod found
nothing useful in Roger's office.*

Emerson closes the door - a LITTLE TOO LOUDLY.

He WAITS a moment, but hears no other noise.

EMERSON

Man's like a Filing Nazi...

NARRATOR

*But Emerson would soon wish that he
too had taken out a million dollar
life insurance policy*

Emerson SNEAKS towards the ramp. It's dark, so he's feeling
his way along quietly. He bumps something, hears something:

HO HO HO! Clockwork Santa Claus IS ATTACKING EMERSON!

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

on himself.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY - NIGHT

Clockwork Santa Claus falls on top of Emerson. He YELLS.

He YELLS some more. SCREAM A BIT, even. Then:

EMERSON

Wait a minute ...

Santa hasn't moved. It's just a toy.

Emerson pushes it off himself.

Clockwork Santa's head flops open - it looks broken.

INT. PIE HOLE - MORNING

Olive and Chuck, Ned and Emerson at the booth.

CHUCK

We checked on you, but you'd
already gone. I can't believe
Bartleby didn't hear you.

EMERSON

Guess Rain Man left for the night.
Or maybe he's gone forever ...

NED

What do you mean?

EMERSON

I found Robot Santa hanging out in
Bartleby's work area.

NED

So he did it.

CHUCK

But he didn't! Bartleby wouldn't
kill a fly. Not even an especially
large fly.

NED

Not even an especially large fly
who was also skimming company
funds, and was possibly even
planning to kill his own wife?

Olive whispers in Chuck's ear.

EMERSON

Did I miss something?

CHUCK

(to Ned)

Do you mind explaining? Olive wants to have a girl talk.

Chuck and Olive get up and head behind the counter.

CHUCK (CONT'D)

What are you so excited to show me?

OLIVE

My duck.

Olive takes from under the counter a beautiful wooden duck. Chuck moves its wings. It's head turns, and it QUACKS.

CHUCK

Wow, Olive! You're great at this.

OLIVE

Thanks! Wilma said I'm a natural. Lily wasn't that happy with it though ...

CHUCK

You showed her? When?

EXT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - FLASHBACK (NIGHT BEFORE)

OLIVE (V.O.)

Last night.

Olive knocks on the door. Lily, the feisty and suspicious aunt, opens the door. She has an eye patch over one eye and a shotgun pointed at Olive. Vivian hangs back, fearful.

Olive uses the duck as cover. She nervously moves one of the duck's wings - it turns its head at Lily and QUACKS.

INT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - FLASHBACK

Olive shows off the ducks to Aunts. She brings out a pair of them, places one into their aquarium.

OLIVE (V.O.)

I thought if I brought them something connected to their old life - something connected to the water - then maybe they'd remember how much they had loved it. Maybe they'd go back.

EXT. CHUCK'S AUNTS' HOUSE - FLASHBACK

Olive steps out of the house, one of the ducks clutched in her arms.

The aunts slam the door. They wave through the window again.

OLIVE (V.O.)
They didn't.

INT. PIE HOLE - PRESENT

CHUCK
It means a lot to me that you tried. And maybe it will work.

OLIVE
They did take one of the ducks. Or they forgot it in the aquarium ...

CHUCK
Trust me, they didn't forget it - This is beautiful work. With one of these around, they'll at least have to think about swimming again. Lovely ...

Chuck tries to hand back the duck.

CHUCK (CONT'D)
Here.

OLIVE
Oh, you keep it.

CHUCK
Oh oh, I couldn't.

OLIVE
I made it for them - And you're as good as them. I mean, since you're related.

CHUCK
... thank you.

Chuck admires the duck again, sees Olive's reflection in its varnished surface.

NARRATOR

As Chuck regarded the perfect mirror shine on the beautiful mallard, she wondered at her friendship with Olive, who - having accepted her second place standing in Ned's heart - seemed so content.

Chuck sets duck in front of the pie display behind the counter. Now she views Ned's reflection in its surface.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Chuck also considered how

INT. AUNT'S HOUSE

The duck in the aquarium, Vivian's hopeful face reflected.

NARRATOR

- just as the matching mallard in her aunts' aquarium might encourage them to let their inhibitions wash away like water off its back -

INT. PIE HOLE

Chuck gazes at Ned's reflection. Smiles.

NARRATOR

So too might she need to wash away her own fears, and be content.

She touches Ned's reflection, as if stroking his face.

PULL IN to Ned's reflected eye, PULL OUT from Ned's real one.

Ned waits on Emerson, who's on the phone.

Emerson hangs up.

NED

What's wrong?

EMERSON

Wilma offered me twice my usual fee if we get Bartleby convicted.

NED

You should be happy. Emerson with money is always happy.

(beat)

So now you think she did it?

EMERSON

Don't know who I think did it anymore. All I know is: we've got a killer connected to that toy store. That money disappearing is just one coincidence too many.

NED

And too many people know about that money now.

CHUCK

If there is a killer,

NED

we've got to stop them

EMERSON

before they go killing someone else. Someone who might know they took the money.

OLIVE

What's the plan?

EMERSON

We check out Bartleby first.

CHUCK

He didn't do it.

(beat)

He's too nice.

EMERSON

Yeah, so's Wilma.

Beat.

NED

If Bartleby's innocent, he's the easiest to remove from the list of suspects.

CHUCK

But how?

EMERSON

It's time our resident toy maker put together a contraption of her own.

The others all turn to Olive.

Off Olive's nervous smile,

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY - NIGHT

Bartleby closes the factory door. He's whistling as he waddles over toward the utility closet.

He notices a line of toys. This Rube Goldberg Machine trails from up the ramp, down and across the factory, into the store.

BARTLEBY

What's going-?

A sound of dominoes falling over: the Machine IS RUNNING.

BARTLEBY (CONT'D)

Oh no.

Bartleby RUNS up the ramp. A small steel ball is ROLLING DOWN towards a cup that would catch it.

Bartleby KICKS the ball, which falls off the ramp. The machine is DEACTIVATED.

Bartleby relaxes.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY, UPSTAIRS

Bartleby, with mop pointed out like a spear, cautiously enters his work space.

BARTLEBY

Roger? Wilma? You - you're great practikan-. Practiker-. It was a funny joke, okay? Ha ha! You can come out-

Bartleby notices: The Machine began at the clear space on the floor where the Clockwork Santa had been standing.

THE CLOCKWORK SANTA IS MISSING.

Bartleby DROPS his mop.

Below he can hear a ball FALL into a cup. The Machine IS RUNNING AGAIN.

He TRIPS DOWN the stairs.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE

Bartleby STUMBLES into the store, HITS a stand of toys, nearly tipping it over.

HE'S TOO SLOW TO STOP THE MACHINE.

Each toy activates the next, all the way UP AND OVER in to the display window. The machine continues on its devilish inexorable course until

A woodpecker toy KNOCKS ITS HEAD AGAINST

the foot of the Clockwork Santa Claus.

Knock, knock.

Bartleby walks over.

He picks up the woodpecker toy.

The toy continues to nod its head up, drop it back down. Like it's trying to tell him something.

Bartleby looks down.

The Santa Claus stands on the target, where Warren died.

Bartleby backs away.

BARTLEBY

Wilma? Roger? Are you-? I didn't-!

He TRIPS OVER the edge of the display window.

His foot KICKS a toy up at the Santa figure. The toy HITS Santa Claus, and KNOCKS IT OVER.

BARTLEBY (CONT'D)

Please don't ... NO!

It FALLS TOWARDS HIM. HO HO HO!

He lands, HARD, on the ground,

"Grandma Got Ran Over By a Reindeer" is playing.

Bartleby scrambles up and away. As he stands, he POKETS A PISTOL from a nearby table.

Except the music, all is suddenly quiet.

Bartleby swings around one direction, then another.

Far too very quiet.

There's a LARGE SHADOW inching towards him from the depths of the store.

BARTLEBY (CONT'D)

It- it wasn't me!

Bartleby scampers toward the factory door.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE / FACTORY

In the short tunnel between store and factory,

Bartleby SKIDS to a HALT. A SHADOW is in front of him.

BARTLEBY

It really wasn't me really! It
shouldn't ever have happened, but-

The Shadow draws silently towards him. Bartleby steps back.

BARTLEBY (CONT'D)

Okay, alright, it was me! I di- I
died it - I mean, I killed him. But
I didn't mean it! Didn't mean to!

The Shadow, still moving forward, gives no reply. Bartleby
steps back again, into the store.

He PULLS OUT THE GUN.

BARTLEBY (CONT'D)

Don't come closer! Don't! I'll-

The Shadow progresses steadily towards Bartleby.

Bartleby's gun hand is TWITCHING DANGEROUSLY. Sweating.

BARTLEBY (CONT'D)

I don't want to shoot you!

NED

Then don't.

Ned is standing at Bartleby's side.

Bartleby SWINGS around.

NED's P.O.V.: Bartleby POINTS THE GUN DIRECTLY AT HIS FACE.

NED (CONT'D)

Please don't.

Sweat drips off Bartleby's gun hand.

END OF ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - NIGHT

Bartleby stands before Ned, A GUN AT HIS FACE.

NED
Please don't.

Bartleby's arm still drips. It's not sweat - it's water.

Ned looks at the gun, relaxes.

NED (CONT'D)
Wait a minute. Is that a-?

The SHADOW from the factory IS DIGBY, Ned's golden retriever.

Digby leaps at Bartleby.

From the store, CHUCK LEAPS OUT TO SAVE NED.

NED (CONT'D)
Chuck, don't-

Bartleby snaps around to shoot at

Digby, and FIRES

water. THE GUN was a WATER PISTOL.

Chuck pushes Ned's shirt. He falls over.

Digby TAKES Bartleby DOWN.

Emerson and Olive emerge from the shadows.

CHUCK
All you alright?

NED
(groans)
Fine.

Everyone gathers to surround Bartleby.

Digby shakes himself off. Bartleby IS ALL WET.

NARRATOR
*And in fact he was "alright" - as
was Bartleby. The facts were these:*

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Bartleby is amidst a cropping of human-sized clockwork toys. One of them is the Clockwork Santa.

NARRATOR

Every evening, after Bartleby Finch finished his cleaning, he would take a toy back to his workspace.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY, UPSTAIRS - FLASHBACK

Bartleby playing with the Clockwork Santa in his office.

NARRATOR

There he would "repair" them, before returning the toy the next evening. He loved the clockwork toys the best.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Bartleby sets the Clockwork Santa back in place, looks over the other clockwork toys.

NARRATOR

Bartleby had done this every evening for a year ... until, 3 days and 7 minutes ago, when Warren stopped him.

WARREN

That part's ready. Tomorrow, then, I'll set the bait ...

Bartleby stumbles over, brushing his hand against the Rube Goldberg Machine. His worried eyes follow the toy train, chugging through above the back door. It runs into a wooden duck, which pokes its beak down in response.

Its beak pokes into a bowl of water - the excess sloshes into a test tube.

NARRATOR

All good things come to an end.

Bartleby SCRAMBLES over, RUNNING to stop the Machine. His FOOT KICKS BACK into the Clockwork Santa Claus.

WARREN

Who's there?

HO HO HO! Clockwork Santa Claus falls at Warren. Warren, startled, slips and falls backwards.

Warren's head LANDS on the target. The basket FALLS OPEN.

A giant steel ball DROPS at Warren's head.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY, UPSTAIRS - FLASHBACK

Bartleby is repairing the damaged Clockwork Santa.

NARRATOR

*For, while Bartleby might fix the
Clockwork Santa Claus, he greatly
regretted that he could not fix
Warren.*

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - PRESENT

The lights are up. Bartleby leans on Warren's desk.

BARTLEBY

I wanted to tell, I tried to tell -
but I thought everyone would think
I did it. And I did it. I didn't
mean to, but I did it.

Bartleby slumps down to the floor.

BARTLEBY (CONT'D)

Warren was so nice to me. No-
Nobody else wanted to hire me. But
he said I was special - and he
didn't mean it that way either. And
now he's dead, and I killed him,
and it's my fault, and then you
show up, and I fall over and
there's a gun, and then a shadow
and a dog and I don't know what to
do! Don't know at all, don't know,
and everything's my fault!

Bartleby is crying. Chuck and Olive drop beside him.

CHUCK

Now, Bartleby, there, there ...

OLIVE

Look - you didn't mean to hurt
anyone, right?

BARTLEBY

Yes ...

OLIVE

And none of us are hurt.

CHUCK

The worst that happened tonight is,
you got a little wet.

BARTLEBY

I smell like dog.

OLIVE

And Digby smells like you.

BARTLEBY

His name's Digby?

OLIVE

Go ahead and pet him.

CHUCK

Could you tell your story to the
police now?

BARTLEBY

If you listen ...

EXT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The police are taking Bartleby's statement. Chuck, Digby and
Olive provide support.

PULL BACK to Emerson and Ned, walking.

NED

Then Warren-

EMERSON

Must have thought the company's
chestnuts were roasted.

NED

So he took out a policy on his
wife,

EMERSON

And got ready to kill her.

NED

But he didn't count on Bartleby.

EMERSON

Or his Santa slayer. Virginia,
there really is a Santa Claus.

They've walked up to Wilma, holding out a big roll of cash.

CUT TO:

BARTLEBY IN A PRISON JUMPSUIT

NARRATOR

*Bartleby pled guilty to interfering
with a police investigation,*

Except he's smiling. We PULL BACK: He's in community service,
making toys.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*and was given community service
making toys for the needy.*

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - DAY

Bartleby shakes hands with Wilma. He picks up a mop, but she
takes it away and leads him up behind the cash register.

NARRATOR

*After completing his service, Wilma
set him to work - as a salesman.*

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - DAY

Bartleby, whistling, builds a new Rube Goldberg Machine.

INT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY - DAY

Wilma passes the financial ledgers to Roger, who salutes her.

NARRATOR

*Wilma passed control of all
finances over to Roger*

INT. WILMA'S TOY MAKING CLASSROOM - EVENING

Wilma points at a blackboard, which displays a wooden duck.

NARRATOR

*and refocused on her toy making
lessons, where she was happiest.*

EXT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS FACTORY - DAY

The factory gets a paint job, gains a second wing.

NARRATOR

*Roger reorganized the factory to
make toys for both animals and
children.*

INT. / EXT. WODEHOUSE'S WONDERS STORE - DAY

Children with their parents, dogs with their owners, are purchasing toys from Bartleby.

NARRATOR

His concern for efficiency was richly rewarded.

Olive and Digby reach the front of the line.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Olive, in turn, discovered how much more fun it was to dream about toy making, rather than actually make them.

Olive takes a walk with Digby, who carries a chew toy duck.

She waves at Ned and Chuck, who enter the store together.

NED

I'm still so ...

CHUCK

Scared?

NED

Amazed. You could have died. Again.

CHUCK

And I'm relieved you're still alive. I don't know how I could manage without you.

Ned and Chuck each put on a hand puppet.

NARRATOR

And, in their relief, both Ned and Chuck decided that - if life is a crazy train ride of coincidence - they could do worse than to enjoy every minute of it that they had together.

Their hand puppets kiss.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW