



COLD OPEN

EXT. MALCOLM'S FRONT YARD - DAY

We are close up on MALCOLM who looks resigned (shoulders drooping, hands thrust deep in pockets), as if things have happened over which he has no control (as usual). At first we don't hear background noises, but they build in volume as he speaks. (SFX: background noises growing in volume: coughing, retching and spitting, with occasional moans, and the sound of two distant fire engines' sirens, coming closer.)

Malcolm speaks to camera. He says: "In the few short years that I've inhabited this Earth, I have managed to make some personal observations. For example: for every family there is a day of the week they can't quite handle. In the case of this family, it's Wednesday. I was born on a Wednesday, and if I live to be a hundred, more of my birthdays will fall on a Wednesday than on any other day. I worked it out.

(BEAT)

And I don't exactly know why, but every time something bad happens, it's on a Wednesday.

(BEAT)

And it's usually my fault. Everything's my fault. It's not fair."

We then widen to reveal that the front door of the house is open and thick gray smoke is billowing out of it. The rest of the family (LOIS, HAL, REESE, DEWEY) are in a loose group behind Malcolm, holding on to each other for support, bent over coughing and retching, eyes closed tightly, red and streaming with tears, mucus pouring from their respective noses. They wipe everything on anything they can find - hands, sleeves, each other, whatever. It's as if they have been attacked with Mace.

Oddly, Hal is wearing full makeup (because of his tears the eyeliner has run) and lipstick, and is also wearing some of Lois' clothes (frizzy black wig, stockings, boustier, heels). Lois is dressed in Hal's tuxedo, without makeup.

Malcolm continues to speak (shrugging his shoulders in resignation): " And today is Wednesday, so what do you expect?"

Two fire engines (water carriers) arrive noisily at the driveway. (SFX: loud klaxons (horns), tires skidding on gravel, compressed air released by brakes.)

We cut to:

EXT. THE FIRE ENGINES - DAY

A total of seven firemen jump out and unfurl hoses, etc. FIREMAN #1 and FIREMAN #2 don breathing apparatus and run one hose into the open front door and the smoke. The hose fattens visibly as water is pumped into it. FIREMAN #3 and FIREMAN #4 - without breathing apparatus - run another hose down the side of the house towards the back. It too fattens as water is pumped into it. FIREMAN #5 - the captain - surveys the scene, hands on hips. FIREMAN #6 - a paramedic - pulls out a medical kit and walks swiftly toward the family group.

FIREMAN #7 grabs an ax and starts to run with it past the family group towards the house, but Lois, despite her obvious physical distress, suddenly reaches out and grabs him very firmly by the arm. Lois says (coughing, but with firmness): "Not in my house, you don't."

As she grabs the fireman's arm the sudden restraint causes him to swing round and fall. We go to SLOW MOTION: Fireman #7 - as he falls - lets go the ax, which arcs in slow motion towards Malcolm's head. (SFX: the whipping sound of the handle of the slowly-spinning ax.)

We cut to Malcolm, who ducks in a matter-of-fact manner - like this kind of thing happens to him all the time - and the ax sails past him and off screen. (SFX: the ax embeds itself with a loud metallic thud in the passenger door of the family car.)

The camera swings to show the ax embedded in the passenger door and then swings back to Malcolm as he straightens up. Malcolm speaks (with exasperation): "See what I mean? Whose fault do you think that is? It's just not fair!"

We cut to ROLL CREDITS.

FADE IN

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY

Lois is cooking - pans are boiling on the stove with unidentifiable 'things' in them. She has a cookbook open, close to her face, as she looks at it and touches each of the ingredients arranged on the table in front of her - as if

checking that she has everything. Hal is sat at the far end of the kitchen table, hiding behind a newspaper. The back door opens.

The three boys walk into the kitchen from the back yard. They dump their backpacks just anywhere. Lois is still behind the cookbook but she doesn't miss a thing. Lois speaks, firmly: "AWAY! Put those away. Don't leave them out for me to tidy up. I'm not your slave and this is not a hotel."

The boys look at each other but don't move to obey. Malcolm speaks to camera: "Whoever heard of a hotel with slaves? It doesn't make sense.

(BEAT)

No wait, it does.

(BEAT)

Mom? Can I have a burger?"

Reese looks warily at the pans on the stove, then speaks: "Yeah, me too." Dewey looks at both Malcolm and Reese. He's not going to miss out. Dewey speaks: "Can I have one too, Mom?"

(BEAT)

Please?

All three head for the refrigerator even as Lois begins to respond. She lowers her cookbook, slightly exasperated, then says: "But I'm cooking ...Oh, yes, all right, but only one each and one bun each - I don't want you using up all the buns again. Hal, remind me to get a giant bag of sesame seed buns from work. We can freeze them and they'll last longer.

(BEAT)

And vegetables or salad. You boys make sure you eat something green with those burgers."

She raises the cookbook back to her face. Hal responds to her absent-mindedly from behind the newspaper. He says: "Yes, dear."

The boys ignore her. They work as a smoothly-oiled team - they have done this before, many times. Malcolm pulls three unfrozen burgers from a pack and throws them into a pan that Reese has put on a spare hob on the stove. Reese splashes in some olive oil,

Malcolm turns on the gas, Dewey pulls six sesame seed buns out of a pack, takes them apart and spreads them out on the table.

Malcolm speaks to camera and explains: "This is neat. We worked out that if you use two buns for each burger, you can put on twice as much relish – or ketchup – and you get points for eating more bread and sesame seeds, which are good for you – I think. Is that cool or what?"

Dewey spoons large quantities of hot dog relish (which has a green color, thereby satisfying Lois' requirement that they eat something green) onto each bun as the burgers begin to sizzle in the pan.

Malcolm continues to speak to camera: "And as long as we use olive oil we're eating healthy, so who's gonna complain?"

(BEAT)

Did you know that one burger gives you twenty five grams of protein? That's like over half my daily requirement. I looked it up.

Malcolm turns back to the task of cooking the burgers. He and Reese jostle for control of the pan handle, and Reese wins, grinning briefly at Malcolm. Malcolm scowls briefly at Reese, picks up a spatula and pokes at the burgers. Dewey continues to heap relish onto the buns until he has emptied the jar.

Lois lowers her cookbook again briefly in order to look at Hal. She says: "Hal? Make sure they get something other than just a burger."

Hal replies, still absent-mindedly from behind the newspaper: "Yes, dear."

Dewey gets three large plates from a cupboard and places them on the table. He clumsily picks up the relish-laden buns from the table and dumps them onto the plates, leaving piles of relish on the table.

Dewey then goes to the refrigerator and picks out three cans of soda. He looks around to see if anyone is watching and then briefly but vigorously shakes two of the cans.

Malcolm and Reese collaborate on moving the hot pan to the table: Reese handles the pan, Malcolm uses the spatula to put the burgers onto three of the relish-laden buns.

Reese puts the pan back on the stove (the hob is still on full), Malcolm dumps the spatula on the table, and each of the boys piles their buns together to make a mound of dripping food. They carry the plates and one soda each off to the living room and drop onto the couch. The camera follows them.

Dewey grabs the remote and switches on the TV. (SFX: cartoons on the TV.)

The boys balance the sodas precariously on the couch and begin to stuff the food into their mouths, much of which falls back out again.

We cut to:

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Dewey's soda can manipulation makes itself felt off-screen. (SFX: faint sounds of cartoons on the TV followed by the sounds of cans of soda being opened and ejecting their contents (over Malcolm and Reese - they complain loudly).)

Off-screen we hear an annoyed Malcolm say: "Urgh! Dewey! I'm gonna get you for this!"

Then off-screen we hear a menacing Reese add: "And then I'm gonna get you for this!"

Hal is still reading the paper and Lois is turning the pages of her cookbook. Without moving her gaze from the book, she reaches out, pulls the now empty but smoking pan off the hob and turns the hob off.

Hal speaks to Lois, still from behind the newspaper, sounding intrigued: "Lois? Did you ever ... go to see the Rocky Horror Picture Show?"

Lois responds from behind her cookbook: "No. Why?"

Still from behind the newspaper, Hal answers her, nonchalantly: "Oh, just wondered. They're showing it at the movie theater less than a week from today. Next Thursday at 2am."

Lois pauses, lowers her cookbook and then says: "Why on earth are they showing it at that time? Sounds like a misprint."

(BEAT)

Why? Are you interested? I didn't think you liked musicals."

Hal lowers his paper, and says: "Oh, I don't. But this is ... different. People go to the movie ... ah, dressed up. They throw things and shout and stuff." He pauses, then raises his paper again, and continues to speak: "You know we once discussed ... ah, dressing up. I ... ah, thought it might be ... ah, fun."

Lois' jaw drops, she looks slightly surprised then smiles almost shyly. She says: "Why, Hal. Yes, I agree. It might be fun. Why don't we go? We haven't been out in weeks. We could do with some time off for good behavior."

Lois narrows her eyes - while still smiling - as she looks past Hal to the living room, as if checking on the boys.

Hal clears his throat from behind his newspaper. He says: "OK. If that's what you want."

Lois continues to smile and says: "Do you think you can get into some ... ah, clothes?"

Again Hal clears his throat from behind his newspaper. He says: "Ah, yes, OK. If that's what you want."

Lois raises her cookbook again and speaks from behind it. She says: "Shouldn't you make sure they fit OK? This evening, maybe?"

Yet again Hal has to clear his throat before speaking from behind his newspaper. He says: "Yes, OK, good idea."

(BEAT)

After the boys have gone to bed."

We cut to:

INT. THE BATHROOM - NIGHT (LATER THAT EVENING)

Malcolm, Reese and Dewey are preparing for bed. They are already in their pyjamas (or whatever substitutes for them) and are jostling for position at the sink.

Malcolm speaks to Dewey: "Dewey, I think I saw a big spider crawl into your bed."

Dewey pauses in his brushing. His eyes widen but he pretends not to be affected. He attempts to nonchalantly continue brushing his teeth, and responds only with: "Uh-uh?"

Reese realizes what Malcolm is doing. He follows up Malcolm's statement: "Yeah, I saw it too, Dewey. Big and scruffy with long hairy legs."

At that moment Hal walks by the open bathroom door, wearing boxers and a tee. He hears Reese's remark and looks down at his own legs. He says to no-one in particular: "That's a point - I'll need to shave." He walks on past the bathroom door.

The boys finalize getting ready for bed. They continue to jostle and fight and generally cause each other problems as they finish brushing their teeth.

Malcolm and Reese continue to tease Dewey about the big spider they supposedly saw earlier.

Malcolm tells Dewey: "Really big spiders make a kind of scratching sound as they climb up walls and into beds."

Reese confirms this: "Yeah, and really big nasty hairy spiders also have big teeth like that kid in your class with the fangs and they can give you a nasty bite if you move suddenly when they're walking over you."

We time cut to:

INT. THE BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

Dewey's eyes are still wide when Hal comes in to the bedroom to tuck the boys in and read Dewey a bedtime story. Dewey clutches at the bed covers and pulls them up over his nose so only his wide eyes are visible.

Hal doesn't notice - his thoughts are elsewhere (on preparations for the evening) - and he picks up one of Dewey's bedtime story books, doesn't notice it is upside down and proceeds to read a short, completely made up story that makes no sense and ends with "... and they all lived happily ever after, the end."

Hal kisses Dewey good night, says good night to Malcolm and Reese (who consider themselves too old to be kissed good night), switches off the main bedroom light and closes the door.

In the moonlight we can see Dewey's wide eyes widen still further as Malcolm and Reese surreptitiously scratch their fingernails against the bedroom wall.

We cut to:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

We see Hal going through Lois' drawers, pulling out various items of lingerie and holding them against himself, looking in a mirror to see how they fit. Although he has shaved his legs he has not shaved anything else and his chest is hairy.

We cut to:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

Lois is sitting on the couch watching the weather report on the television. The weather girl reports a heavy rainstorm heading into the area. Lois gets up and opens the door leading to the hallway and the bedrooms. She calls softly to Hal: "Hal? Make sure all the big windows are closed. There's a storm heading this way tonight." She goes back to the couch and puts her feet up.

We cut to:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

Hal has on Lois' slinky black lace underwear, stockings, suspenders and frilly black boustier. He grins and says in a low voice: "Better and better. Lois always gets a little scared by storms." He continues to look for items of clothing.

We cut to:

INT. THE BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT (SOME TIME LATER)

The camera pans over the three boys in their beds. Reese is lying on his back and has a large plastic sword clutched to his chest. He is asleep with a big smile on his face.

Dewey is invisible beneath all the bedclothes and where his head lies on the pillow, all we can see is a large brown paper bag with two eye holes cut in it, facing to the side away from Malcolm and Reese. The camera moves closer to the holes and we can see Dewey's eyes inside, still wide open.

When the camera moves to Malcolm, he turns over in bed restlessly and awakens. He licks his lips - he is thirsty - so he gets out of bed and the camera follows him as he walks out to the bathroom to get a drink.

We see him pour and then drink a large glass of cold water, and the camera follows him back to the bedroom. As he passes the master bedroom, the door is ajar and we can see Hal's reflection in a full length mirror.

We cut to show Malcolm's face at an angle.

Malcolm's eyes widen in amazement, his jaw drops. He turns to look directly at the camera and whispers hoarsely: "Am I dreaming? I must be dreaming. Wait a minute." He pulls his ears, ruffles his hair, pushes his nose upwards hard with one finger, crosses his eyes and sticks his tongue out. His tests for being awake complete, he says softly to camera: "No, I think I'm definitely awake. He turns back to look through the bedroom door at his father, now sporting a large frizzy black wig.

Malcolm turns back to the camera and says: "No-one will believe this! Unless...". He scurries back to the boys' bedroom, followed by the camera, and quietly looks through various drawers and piles of things, making sure not to wake the others, until he finally finds what he is looking for: a Polaroid camera.

The camera follows him back to the master bedroom. Malcolm crouches down low at the open door and aims the camera at the mirror, in front of which his father is still posing. He fires off a shot and the flash temporarily blinds Hal. Malcolm scurries back to the boys' bedroom and quietly closes the door.

We cut to:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

Hal is still blinking from the flash. He says to no-one in particular: "Gosh. That was fast. I never saw a storm move in so quickly." He goes to check the windows behind the curtain.

We cut to:

EXT. THE VIEW OF THE MASTER BEDROOM WINDOW - NIGHT

We see Hal in drag checking the windows as two elderly ladies walk by with a small dog. They turn as they see the curtain move, showing Hal in the light from the bedroom. ELDERLY LADY #1 turns to ELDERLY LADY #2 and says haughtily: "I think someone should tell Lois about Epilady..." They walk on.

We cut to:

INT. THE BOYS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Malcolm is sat on his bed checking the development of the photograph. He has to tilt it to look at it in the available light. We look at the photograph over his shoulder. He has caught the reflection of Hal full frontal and posing.

We cut to:

INT. THE LIVING ROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

Lois switches off the TV, turns out the living room light and goes out of the door into the hallway leading to the bedrooms. The camera follows her as she goes to the boys' bedroom door, opens it and checks inside.

Malcolm is in bed, eyes closed, but we can see a corner of the photograph sticking out from under his pillow. Lois doesn't see it. She crosses to the window and checks that it is closed, then quietly leaves the room, shutting the door on her way out. The camera moves down to the eye holes in Dewey's brown paper bag. His eyes are closed.

We cut to:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

Hal is posing on the bed, disporting himself in drag in front of Lois. Lois laughs loudly then clamps her hand over her mouth.

Hal says: "That storm moved in quickly. There was a huge flash of lightning a few minutes ago - but I haven't heard any thunder yet." He looks a little puzzled.

Lois climbs onto the bed and lies fully dressed facing Hal. She says: "I've had a thought."

Hal grins mischievously and replies: "Oh, yeah?"

Lois smiles back and says: "Not that. Who are we going to get to babysit the boys for this weirdos night out? Everyone we know won't come near us.

(BEAT)

Especially if they could see you now." She grins and moves her eyebrows up and down.

Hal grimaces and agrees. He looks thoughtful for a minute and says: "I could try the German accent again. It worked on Mrs Forbes. I'll give her a call tomorrow.

(BEAT)

Are you ... going to get ready for bed now?"

Lois answers: "Are you?"

Hal replies: "I'm ready if you are."

Lois pulls at some of the hair on his chest. She says: "The least you could do is wax your chest. Hang on a minute - I think I have a sheet somewhere."

Lois gets up off the bed, and goes in search of her waxing kit. We see her apply some of the material to Hal's chest.

We cut to:

EXT. THE VIEW OF THE MASTER BEDROOM WINDOW - NIGHT (A FEW MOMENTS LATER)

We hear the sound of the wax sheet being pulled sharply and Hal's reaction (SFX: tearing sound followed by a loud scream of pain.)

We time cut to:

INT. THE CLASSROOM AT MALCOLM'S SCHOOL - THE FOLLOWING DAY

Malcolm and Stevie are next to the school computer, talking. Malcolm tells Stevie about his father's apparent fetish and shows him the Polaroid. Stevie says in his usual breathless way: "I...can give you...a better picture...than this. Watch."

He places the photograph in a flatbed scanner attached to the computer, calls up some photo editing software, scans the photo and enlarges it. Hal appears larger than life on screen. Stevie improves the brightness and contrast and then saves the file. He prints a large copy on the color printer and hands it to Malcolm.

Malcolm protests. He says: "Don't leave the file on the computer - I don't want everyone knowing my Dad's a - whatever he is."

Stevie sighs and deletes the file. At that point a teacher enters the room. Malcolm clasps the printout to his chest. The teacher shoos the boys out, and in their haste they leave the Polaroid behind in the scanner.

The camera stays with the teacher, who lifts up the flatbed scanner cover and discovers the Polaroid.

We cut to:

INT. THE TEACHERS' COMMON ROOM AT MALCOLM'S SCHOOL - DAY - LATER

There are numerous teachers present, in small groups, drinking coffee or tea, sitting reading newspapers, talking. Enlarged prints of the photograph of Hal in drag are circulating rapidly among them. The principal enters the room and sees the prints. She recognizes Hal from her many dealings with the boys' parents. She is not amused however by the sight of him in drag.

She snatches one of the prints and marches out of the room.

We cut to:

INT. THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE AT MALCOLM'S SCHOOL - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

The principal picks up the phone, dials the home number (she knows it by heart) and Lois answers (SFX: we hear her voice off-screen). The principal says: "Is this Malcolm's mother?"

(SFX: we hear Lois' voice responding.) The principal says: "I should be very much obliged if you and your husband could be in my office at 8.30 sharp tomorrow morning." She hangs up without waiting for a reply.

We time cut to:

INT. THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE AT MALCOLM'S SCHOOL - DAY - THE FOLLOWING DAY (WEDNESDAY)

We see the principal showing Hal and Lois the printout of him in drag. Hal squirms, pink with embarrassment, Lois is almost purple with anger. We hear the principal say: "I'm sure that this is permissible in today's moral climate but I do not think it appropriate for you to circulate such material in my school. Please do not let it happen again. Good day."

She stands up and gestures to the door. Hal and Lois (spluttering) leave the office. The camera follows them out into the hallway where a couple of relatively young women teachers look at Hal and their eyes and mouths widen in recognition. They walk by, trying hard to suppress their giggles which erupt as

soon as they are past Hal and Lois. The unhappy parents try to escape from the school without further embarrassment.

We cut to:

INT. THE FAMILY CAR - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Hal has a pained expression on his face. He says: "What I don't understand is where the hell that picture came from in the first place. He starts the car and asks: "What day is it today?"

There is a pause and both their faces show recognition at the same time. They turn to face each other and almost shout in unison: "MALCOLM!"

We cut to:

EXT. THE PLAYGROUND AT MALCOLM'S SCHOOL - THE SAME DAY

It is still Woeful Wednesday. The Krelboynes (LLOYD, DABNEY, ERASERHEAD) are meeting with Malcolm and Stevie to discuss the photograph.

Eraserhead speaks: "I think you're getting off lightly. My Dad wears a diaper and a baby bonnet and my Mum has to spank him with some sticks of celery".

Lloyd speaks: "Yours too? I thought I was the only one who had...special parents."

Dabney chips in: "No, I think we're pretty much in sync as far as that goes. Malcolm's the odd one out."

Stevie says: "And I...used to...like celery."

Eraserhead brings them back to focus on more important matters. He says: "How are we doing on components for the Fartalyzer?"

Malcolm has been out of the loop. He says incredulously: "The what?"

Dabney explains: "The Fartalyzer. An instrument to analyze farts as a way to classify the lesser elements in the school." He adds proudly: "It was my idea."

Malcolm isn't usually that enthralled with their nerdishness, but in this case he thinks it's a laugh and he goes along with it: "Sounds cool...if somewhat elitist."

Lloyd takes up the story: "We have a sample provider who will make available control materials on demand. It's Raymond 'The Cheese' Cutter – you remember when everyone came pouring out of the classroom and they thought the drains had backed up? That was The Cheese."

Dabney pipes up: "I know someone who can get us an atomic absorption spectrophotometer."

Eraserhead adds: "I know someone who can get us an oxyacetylene cylinder."

Stevie rouses them to action: "Then let's...get into...gear and ...do it!"

We cut to:

INT. HAL'S OFFICE AT HIS PLACE OF WORK – DAY (WEDNESDAY)

Hal looks around a little furtively and then picks up the telephone. He dials a number that he reads from a small piece of paper, and we hear the voice at the other end of the phone (SFX: distant voice of an elderly woman.)

He says, in a stage German accent: "Hallo? Iss ziss Mississ Vorpss?" We hear the voice respond (SFX: elderly woman's voice, muffled).

He continues: "Fee haffn't met before, but a friend off mine tellss me zat you are eggssellent viss chiltren ass babyssitter. I foss funterink iff you coot possibly babyssit mine kitties for me tonight, chust for a few hourss?"

He looks up to see his boss standing in the doorway looking puzzled. Hal coughs and gestures that he will be free in a moment, and his boss walks out of the doorway, leaving the door open.

The voice on the end of the phone gives a muffled response that sounds like 'OK' (SFX: elderly woman's voice saying muffled 'OK'.) and we time cut to:

INT. LOIS' PLACE OF WORK – DAY (WEDNESDAY)

Lois is in her uniform but close to ending her shift. She is using the last few minutes to shop for her family, using the meager staff discount available. Craig is following her around like a puppy.

Craig watches as Lois picks up a jumbo size bag of sesame seed burger buns and drops it into her trolley. He senses that she is preparing for a barbecue. He says wistfully: "Do you know, I can't remember the last time someone invited me to a barbecue. Did I tell you I was second runner up to Southern County Wiener Schnitzelling Champion, three years running? The ladies used to gather round in droves to watch me schnitzelling my wiener."

Lois looks at him slightly askance. She says: "Craig, your social life never ceases to amaze me. I'm surprised you haven't featured on Sixty Minutes."

Craig doesn't get the sarcasm at first and initially beams as he basks in what he thinks is a compliment. Then the penny drops and so does his face as he says: "Oh." He stomps off in a fit of pique, leaving Lois to complete her shopping.

We cut to:

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - LATER THAT SAME DAY

Lois struggles in through the back door with armfuls of bags of shopping. She sets them down on the table, pulls out the enormous bag of burger buns and proceeds to stuff it, with some difficulty, into the freezer. Lois hears a noise (SFX: the sound of something heavy falling, off-screen) and shouts: "Hal? Is that you? You're home early."

The camera follows her as she walks through to the master bedroom. Hal is partially dressed again in her lingerie, on his hands and knees on the floor. He looks apologetic, and as he gets to his feet he says: "Sorry, hun, I haven't quite mastered the knack of getting into these stockings."

Lois looks at her watch and says: "You're getting ready way too early. We aren't due to leave until almost midnight. I hope you realize that after ruining all my clothes you're going to have to replace them."

Hal says: "Ah. I managed to arrange the babysitter somewhat earlier. I thought we could maybe manage a meal somewhere where they don't know us, before the show. You know, make a full evening of it."

Lois looks pleasantly surprised and pleased. She says: "Yes, OK. I'll have to get a move on though." She pauses for a moment. She says: "What will you tell the boys? We haven't dealt with Malcolm properly yet."

Hal has thought of that. He replies: "Ah, I had an idea about that. We'll tell the boys that it's fancy dress - which it is, in a way, sort of - and that way we don't have to deal with anything because it's all been just a tiny misunderstanding."

Lois grimaces as she replies: "Hah! I might swallow that but I don't think the boys will and nor will that principal. I still haven't worked out what I'm going to do about that, but I suppose your idea is just as good as any other crack-brained solution."

(BEAT)

Come here and let me fix your makeup."

We cut to:

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The three boys also come home early. Malcolm can see the bags of groceries on the table and he shouts out: "Mom? Can I have a burger please?"

We cut to:

INT. THE MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Lois is putting mascara on Hal's eyes. She pauses as she shouts back to Malcolm: "Yes, all right, but use the buns in the freezer. You'll need to thaw them in the microwave for about twenty seconds each. Don't forget to have some greens with it."

(BEAT)

Your father and I are going out to a movie tonight so Mrs Forbes has agreed to come and babysit. I want absolutely perfect behavior all night this time.

(BEAT)

Oh, and if she asks you anything about Germany say you don't know much English."

Hal laughs. He says to Lois: "It worked like a charm. She didn't even remember the address. There's something to be said for having a poor memory after all."

(BEAT)

Now my boss wants me to do it for him too. His kids are even worse than ours."

We cut to:

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Malcolm begins preparation for the usual double-decker burger. This time he takes command. He tells Reese: "Reese, you're in charge of Dewey. It's your job to safeguard the sodas."

Dewey and Reese obtain three sodas from the refrigerator, and the camera follows them as they take them into the living room and sit down on the couch, to watch TV while the buns are taken care of by Malcolm (who is going to come through with the fare).

Reese looks to see if Malcolm can see him, raises his eyebrows at Dewey, and vigorously shakes the can of soda he has brought through for Malcolm.

We cut to:

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Malcolm begins to set everything in motion, and then realises he still has to thaw the frozen buns in the microwave.

He places six still-frozen buns on a plate in the microwave, and goes to put them on for twenty seconds each (1 minute 20 seconds) - but miskeys and enters 12 minutes just as the Krelboynes arrive and knock at the back door. Malcolm doesn't see his error and hits the START button on the microwave, then goes to answer the back door. The camera follows.

STEVIE, LLOYD, DABNEY, and ERASERHEAD greet him. Stevie has an enormous contraption balanced precariously on his wheelchair - you can barely see him behind all the junk that goes to make up the FartAlyzer.

Eraserhead pulls into view someone who was hidden behind the group. It's THE CHEESE. Eraserhead introduces him to Malcolm. As Malcolm nods in greeting there is a slight but unmistakable sound (SFX: a small farting noise).

Lloyd says to The Cheese: "Not yet! Not yet! We're not set up."

Dabney says to Malcolm: "Do you have an external tap for a garden hose? We need a source of water to work the vacuum so the control sample can be sucked in."

Sidetracked, Malcolm says: "Yes, it's just around the side here", pulls the pan off the hob and heads out into the garden with the Krelboynes, forgetting the buns in the microwave. The camera moves towards the buns. They are already beginning to smoke.

We cut to:

EXT. MALCOLM'S BACK GARDEN - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

They connect the behemoth to the garden hose. The Cheese provides a generous sample into the funnel attached to the input line. Malcolm sees a piece of string attached to the side of the contraption, and pulls on it as he asks: "What's this for?"

The Fartalyzer works by sucking in some gaseous material and burning it in a mixture of oxyacetylene gas and air to produce a colored flame, through which light from a special lamp shines onto a detector.

By pulling on the string Malcolm has suddenly increased the flow of oxyacetylene gas dramatically, producing a large ball of flame and igniting The Cheese's trousers in the process. The oxyacetylene cylinder hose disconnects as the pile of junk nearly blows up. Stevie, a prisoner behind the machine as it sits on his wheelchair, is wide-eyed with uncertainty.

Stevie says: "Ow...ow ...ow ...ow ..."

Malcolm, with some presence of mind, pulls the hose connected to the water tap and turns the spray on the group, effectively putting out the flames on The Cheese's trousers and drenching everyone. The group look menacingly at Malcolm and he backs away with an uncertain smile on his face, disappearing around the side of the house.

We cut to:

INT. THE FAMILY KITCHEN - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Receiving no food, Dewey and Reese come back into the kitchen to find out why. Reese notices the smoke in the microwave, which is beginning to work its way out into the kitchen. Foolhardily, he opens the microwave door.

The smoke and fumes rush out from the microwave, instantly engulfing both of them, and the camera follows the pair as they run back towards the living room just as Hal and Lois - now fully cross-dressed - enter the living room from the hallway.

They too are immediately affected by the toxic smoke and fumes, and they dash with the two boys outside to the front yard, where they all cough and splutter, their eyes streaming with tears. The camera follows them outside as smoke begins to pour out of the open front door.

We cut to:

EXT. THE HOUSE OF A NEIGHBOR OPPOSITE - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

We see the neighbors look out through their living room window as they make the call to 911 - as they have so many times before - and then shortly afterwards they come out into their front yard to stand and watch the spectacle as it unfolds.

We cut to:

EXT. THE SIDE OF MALCOLM'S HOUSE - DAY - A FEW MOMENTS LATER

Malcolm walks - hands in pockets - around the side of the house to the front yard, having totally forgotten about the food, since he hears the fire engines in the distance and he's curious. He speaks to camera: "There's no way the Fartalyzer triggered a call to the fire station. I wonder what's going on?" He's almost knocked off his feet by two firemen rushing past him with a hose.

We time cut to:

EXT. MALCOLM'S FRONT YARD (CONTINUING FROM THE OPENING) - DAY

FIREMAN #6 is tending to the family group, squirting water from a washbottle into their eyes. FIREMAN #1 wearing breathing apparatus emerges from the front door of the house (where water is gushing out of the open door) carrying a microwave cooker, the door ajar, from which gray smoke is still pouring from the now blackened buns. He walks up to his captain, who is standing hands on hips, overseeing the operation.

FIREMAN #1 speaks, his voice muffled by apparatus: "This is what caused it. There was no real fire. Someone put sesame seed buns in here, left it on too long and the oil in the seeds caught fire. That's like Mace, that is."

He turns to Hal and Lois, who by now are beginning to recover and are able to see better.

FIREMAN #1 speaks admonishingly to Hal and Lois: "You want to be more careful. Smouldering sesame seeds are like tear gas. You

don't want to leave sesame seed buns in the microwave unattended. That's asking for trouble."

He looks at the house, then back to Hal and Lois. He continues: "It'll take about six hours for the smoke to clear before you can go back in there. It'll take several days for the smell to go away. But you were lucky."

Lois snaps FIREMAN #6's arm away as he continues trying to administer first aid. She shouts angrily at FIREMAN #1: "Excuse me?! Lucky?! You call this lucky?! We're nearly gassed to death, you've just drenched my home with water when there was no fire and you're telling me we're lucky?!"

FIREMAN #1, the captain (FIREMAN #5) and FIREMAN #6 all back away uncertainly. Lois – who knows the firemen weren't the real cause of it all – swings around, peering through red, swollen, watery eyes, looking for the obvious culprit.

She speaks in a low, growling voice: "Malcolm? Where's Malcolm?"

The remaining firemen are already rolling up the hoses, preparing to leave. FIREMAN #7 cautiously approaches Lois. He wants to retrieve his ax from the car door.

He asks Lois nervously: "Er... May I go get my ax back, please?"

Lois snaps back: "NO! I need it..."

She strides towards the car door, Hal following her, attempting to calm her down. Hal stammers: "Er...Honey? Sweetie? These things happen. Er...You wouldn't do anything rash, would you?"

Lois wrenches the ax out of the car door and then looks around with a slightly crazed look in her eyes. She doesn't really want to hurt Malcom, just scare him a little, and teach him a lesson.

She calls out to him in a slightly menacing tone: "Malcolm? Oh, Malcolm? Where are you, Malcolm? I want to have a word with you..."

We cut to:

THE CAMERA GOES OVERHEAD

We see Malcolm hightailing it out of the garden and up the street, as the camera rises into the air, looking down on a chain of people as they run up the street: Malcolm at the head,

followed a good way behind by Lois carrying the ax, Hal stumbling in high heels, Reese, Dewey and FIREMAN #7.

FIREMAN #7 wails: "Please let me have it back. They'll make me pay for it if I don't get it back.

(BEAT)

And please don't get any blood on it..."

FADE OUT

THE END