

THE WORKAROUND

The computer's got a mind of its own, the coffee machine needs a serious reboot and that idiot at security won't stop calling in unwanted food deliveries. Gene's the boss on this graveyard shift but Bobby's on a rampage, hopped up on a dietary supplements, with nothing left to lose. These two old friends might be able to workaroud the technical problems but what about the personal?

THE WORKAROUND is a play about surviving, subsisting and finding solutions when all hope seems lost.

FROM ACT 1, SCENE 1

BOBBY and GENE in THE OFFICE. Gene's computer monitor show what is commonly referred to as the "blue screen of death." Bobby plays an online computer game. Gene seethes.

GENE

Can you look at this please?

BOBBY

They'll come on in a minute.

GENE

Yeah fine but in the meantime...would you just--

BOBBY

--Why would you want an idiot who doesn't know anything about anything to try to fix your computer?

GENE

I didn't call you that.

BOBBY

Close enough.

GENE

I'm asking nice. I'm being polite.

BOBBY

Sure. NOW you are. Now that you NEED something.

GENE

(reluctant)

I'm sorry I yelled at you.

BOBBY

Don't apologize.

GENE

No, I want to. I feel badly.

BOBBY

I mean, don't waste your breath. You're a supervisor now. People are gonna hate you whether you apologize or not.

GENE

Nobody's going to hate me.

BOBBY

They already do.

GENE

No they don't.

BOBBY

Truth of going perm, buddy. More power, more visibility, higher consequences, three strikes and you're out.

GENE

Yeah, well three strikes are better than one.

BOBBY

Really? You wouldn't rather lose your head than your balls? I'm much rather be killed than tortured.

GENE

No one's losing balls on my shift.

BOBBY

Then you'd better start supervising.

GENE

HELP ME!

BOBBY

No.

GENE

Why not?

BOBBY

Cuz this is YOUR shift. I'm just a *guest* here. Find a solution. Workaround it.

GENE

But you're the lead-op.

BOBBY

Sure, on my shift.

GENE

And apparently, you're a big immature baby on all shifts.

BOBBY

Damned straight.

GENE

OK but could you maybe just, as a favor to me, be a lead-op right now?

BOBBY

I solve formatting problems, Gene. I fix margins, strip bad styles from corrupt excel files. Talk bankers down from window ledges. I don't deal with this shit.

GENE

And what shit would that be?

BOBBY

Whatever kinda shit this is. Stupid...fucking...bitch-ass monkey.

GENE

(standing)

What are you doing?

BOBBY

Playing Tek-Monkey.

GENE

I told you—

BOBBY

--I know what you told me. GOD DAMMIT!

GENE

--I told you if you wanted to stay, you were gonna have to do as I said. You're not to play games, you're not to surf the web and you're to provide your higher-ups with technical assistance whenever and wherever they need it.

BOBBY

Just let me win this round. Monkey mother-fucker!

GENE

No. Turn it off.

BOBBY

Fucking BITCH!

GENE

Or I'm gonna have to ask you to leave.

BOBBY

No way. I need the dough.

GENE

GOD DAMMIT BOBBY HELP ME WITH THIS THING!

BOBBY

Fuckin reboot, ya' whiney bitch and everyting'll be fine.

(Bobby's screen and the screen on the counter top go to blue. Pause. The musak plays. Bobby stands.)

BOBBY

What did you do?

GENE

Nothing.

BOBBY

I'm serious.

GENE

I didn't do anything. I wasn't touching anything.

BOBBY

Do you know how close I was to beating that game?

GENE

Maybe it was the game causing the problem.

BOBBY

Tek-Monkey doesn't crash computer.

GENE

It might.

BOBBY

IT DOESN'T.

GENE

We don't know that for sure.

BOBBY

...No. You're right. We don't.

GENE

We don't know anything for sure.

BOBBY

You're right. (beat) Oh wait, no. You're wrong.

GENE

No, I'm not.

BOBBY

I'm pretty sure that downloading files with weird extensions off of emails sent by folks we don't know personally DOES have the tendency to crash computers.

GENE

..Why are you telling me this?

BOBBY

In fact, it is such small errors in judgement that bring down massive international corporations, crash entire electronic infrastructures, obliterate intelligence networks and leave thousands upon thousands of innocent workers jobless, homeless and alone. Which is why, I think, corporate communications at THIS firm decided to eliminate access to internet email accounts two weeks ago.

(Long pause. Muzak.)

GENE

You're suggesting that I was checking my email?

BOBBY

You were. I saw you.

GENE

Firewall! *Hello.*

BOBBY

Hello! POP account filtered through a third party.

GENE

Mother...FUCKER!

BOBBY

Who the hell do you think figured it out and told everyone?

GENE

You should keep your eyes on your own machine.

BOBBY

Sorry, I was curious.

GENE

About?

BOBBY

What it is that supervisors do when there's nothing to supervise.

GENE

But there is something to supervise, isn't there?

BOBBY

What's that?

GENE

YOU.

BOBBY

You're the one breaking bank rules, buddy.

GENE

Like you've never broken the rules before.

BOBBY

OK, first of all, I'm still a temp. I get paid specifically to break the rules. Second of all, I know better than to download bullshit.

GENE

It wasn't bullshit.

BOBBY

Then what was it?

GENE

A picture. Totally harmless.

BOBBY

What are you, a moron? PORN STAYS IN THE HOME!

GENE

Not that kind of picture. This freak in Ohio makes these Photoshop pics of animals like...frolicking together in human-type ways. (beat) Like cats with their arms around each other and hamsters lifting weights and shit. They have

captions. "Hold on to your friends!" "Good things happen to good people!"

BOBBY

I'm embarrassed *for* you.

GENE

I don't get them to sent to ME! Gabby gets 'em.

BOBBY

You were in Gabby's account?

GENE

Yes, I was.

BOBBY

How?

GENE

I have her POP address.

BOBBY

Why?

GENE

Because she gave it to me.

BOBBY

So you could what read her emails?

GENE

No.

BOBBY

But that's what you're doing.

GENE

Uh huh.

BOBBY

Why?

GENE

I had suspicions.

BOBBY

About?

GENE

Certainly not you but here we are.

(Another pause. Musak.)

FROM ACT 1, SCENE 1

After a massive breakdown at the end of scene 1, Gene has returned from an hour of "quiet time" in the bathroom. During this scene the boys investigate the past and strategize for the future.

GENE

I suppose what's done is done.

BOBBY

Right. Are you OK?

GENE

Yeah. Can we please forget I said anything?

BOBBY

Um...NO.

GENE

I really need this not to be an issue.

BOBBY

But it's a huge issue.

GENE

Listen to me, it can't be.

BOBBY

But it is.

GENE

It can't be with *Gabby*.

BOBBY

(beat)

She doesn't know.

GENE

No.

BOBBY

Of course.

GENE

And I'd like to keep it that way.

BOBBY

(beat)

OK. But you should probably hide your wallet when she's around. And all your bills. Bank statements. Pay stubs. She's been known to go rifling through peoples' shit while they're in the shower. (beat) Her dad ran a credit check on my ass.

GENE

Fine. Then that's what I'll do. Hide it all.

BOBBY

You shouldn't have to do that.

GENE

Yeah, but obviously I do.

BOBBY

Look, I'm not saying she isn't a great girl...she's cute, she's smart, she cooks for you, she's got no tits but she lets you fuck her in the ass-

GENE

--she let's me...pardon?

BOBBY

Doesn't she?

GENE

(beat)

Of course she does.

BOBBY

And that's all fantastic. But the girl's a materialist of the highest order. The guy she winds up with-it's gonna have to be a smooth transition, you know? From father to husband.

GENE

I'm dealing with it all right.

BOBBY

She needs someone who can take care of her.

GENE

I'M DEALING with it.

BOBBY

How? I mean, if you don't feel comfortable telling her something this major how can you have a future together?

GENE

As long as I keep my eye on the prize--

BOBBY

--There are other girls.

GENE

I don't want any other girls. I want Gabby. We have something very special. It might pain you to hear that--

BOBBY

--Doesn't pain me at all--

GENE

Well good. Then you won't have any trouble keeping your mouth shut.

BOBBY

I just think you should be really honest with--

GENE

--You want honesty? Here it is: Gabby is the only thing right now keeping me from jumping off the Brooklyn Bridge.

BOBBY

There he goes again with the drama--

GENE

--Do you wanna kill me?

BOBBY

(beat)

No, of course not.

GENE

You have to promise then. Promise me you won't say anything.

BOBBY

If you need money--I mean, I don't pay rent so--

GENE

--I don't want your money. I'm not gonna take the 14 bucks you got in your checking account.

BOBBY

Twenty-eight actually. I been good.

GENE

You don't owe me anything. I'm not asking you to bail me out of this mess. I was the one walking around New York City without health insurance for three years. I was the one too afraid to fight you for the car keys.

BOBBY

I can be kind of scary.

GENE

I need you to promise me, Bobby.

BOBBY

She's not worth it.

GENE

You don't seem to understand what happened to me that night. Up until that night, I'd been walking through life thinking I was invincible. Cream of the crop, you know. So positive everything was gonna work out. So certain that I'd land another commercial, I just stopped showing up for auditions. So my agent stopped sending me out. Then suddenly I didn't have an agent. Before I know it, I haven't been ON a stage in close to ten months and this job isn't so much about subsidizing my acting work, it's about subsidizing my *life*. My life, as I knew it, friends and all, was OVER.

(beat)

But then there she was. This fucking girl that... I was never attracted to her when you were dating. Physically, emotionally. After the accident though, something clicked between us. And it wasn't just a unified hatred of you. Yeah, traumatic events do bring people together but once we were together, it became really apparent, really fast that it was big. Gabby and I are just...BIG. I can't explain it any other way. And all those feelings, all that intensity, even months later. It hasn't gotten any smaller, it's gotten...well... BIGGER. Which is how I KNOW. (beat) My life is Gabby now. That's my life. She is what I do. She is what I am. (beat) You were right. I gotta be realistic here, I gotta be honest with myself. I am not...

(pause, this is a struggle for him)

I am not...fuck. (beat) I am...not an actor. Anymore.

BOBBY

Oh, Jesus, Gene. I was just trying to get a rise out of you. You can't take me seriously when I say shit like that.

GENE

It's true! I haven't done shit in the last five years.

BOBBY

What about Grand Central Chicken?

GENE

One of the Worst Commercials Ever Made.

BOBBY

It is not.

GENE

No, seriously, it was on a show. Top Fifty Worst Commercials Ever Made. Number 15.

BOBBY

Well they don't know what they're talking about. That was a great fucking ad and you were great in it.

GENE

Bobby, it's a joke for me to call myself an actor. How can I expect people NOT to laugh at me? I'd laugh at me and I'm me! And when you're you, laughing at yourself something's gotta give.

BOBBY

I just think it's dangerous to define who you are based on somebody else's specifications.

GENE

It's what we do here, isn't it?

BOBBY

Maybe you do. I don't.

GENE

You have a job description just like everyone else.

BOBBY

But it doesn't define me.

GENE

And what does?

BOBBY

I'm trying to figure that out. And I think you should too.

GENE

I already know.

BOBBY

It's not her.

GENE

It is.

BOBBY

No it isn't. Look, you're smitten--

GENE

--I am not smitten. I am in love.

BOBBY

OK, but you feel stuck then, you can admit that right?

GENE

...Sure.

BOBBY

You feel trapped, which in turn makes you feel frustrated. Depressed. Lonely. She's an escape from all that.

GENE

Yeah, so?

BOBBY

So, what if you weren't stuck? What if you didn't feel trapped? What if you could get the fuck out of here?

GENE

I CAN'T.

BOBBY

But what if you could?

GENE

And do what?

BOBBY

Travel. See the world. Learn new things about yourself. About other people. Get out there and live. Contribute to the greater good. Emerge into life.

GENE

It sounds great. Really. It does. But right now.

(pointing to computers)

I've got responsibilities.

BOBBY

(stating)

Beyond your capacity as a computer graphics supervisor.

GENE

Calling I.T. is not beyond my capacity.

BOBBY

Calling I.T. is God damned un-American at this point.

GENE

That's pretty funny. Alan then.

BOBBY

But if you fucked up-

GENE

--I'll suffer the consequences.

BOBBY

Third strike.

GENE

I'll grovel, OK? I'll get down on my hands and knees. I'll beg. Or I'll find another mind-numbing corporate subsistence job.

BOBBY

So you're gonna give up? Just like that?

GENE

It's not giving up when you're doing it for someone else.

BOBBY

Gene, Gene...you're too young for this.

GENE

You're wrong. I'm not young. I'm old. Very old. Too old. And so are you. (beat) Our friendship is so important, I don't see why it should be this difficult for you to make a promise.

(Pause. Bobby removes his disc of Skoal and stuffs another wad into his left cheek.)

BOBBY

God save my sinning soul, but I am an addict.

(He offers the disc to Gene, who just stands there. Beat.)

BOBBY

OK. I won't say anything. But I think you're making a mistake.

GENE

Duly noted.

BOBBY

Sometimes you just gotta make your own opportunities..and FUCK everyone else.

FROM ACT 2, SCENE 1

At 5AM, GABBY, Gene's "current" and Bobby's "ex" has shown up at the office for reasons that Bobby does not entirely believe.

BOBBY

Oink, oink. Your business is done here. Shove off.

GABBY

I'm not leaving until I see him.

(He grabs her by the arm and starts to lead her towards the door.)

BOBBY

Oh Jesus fine. Come on, I'll show you where I stuffed the body.

GABBY

That's not funny.

BOBBY

But you can't tell anyone.

GABBY

Get offa me.

BOBBY

Cuz I got a bright future ahead of me and I don't want nobody fucking it up.

GABBY

(pulling away)

Oh, I heard *all* about your bright future.

BOBBY

Pretty good, huh?

GABBY

I should punch you in the chest.

BOBBY

What for?!?

GABBY

You wanna break my heart, well I'll break yours too.

BOBBY

A little late but OK, for old time's sake. Go for it.

GABBY

You've had months to say something. If you didn't like the idea of us being together, you should have mentioned it in one of the emails!

BOBBY

But I didn't really KNOW you were together did I?

GABBY

You knew we were spending time--

BOBBY

--I knew you'd been in an accident and that traumatic events make people grow closer. I knew that cuz that's what you told me. I did not, however, know you were fucking until last week. And how did I find that out? I ran into Trendkamp at Shea's and he told me he saw you guys going at it in a booth at LaCatch. Public displays, Gabby, are out this season. You read Teen Vogue, you should know that.

GABBY

First of all, I don't owe you shit.

BOBBY

No you don't.

GABBY

Second of all, we are not *fucking*.

BOBBY

Oh what, you haven't slept with him?

GABBY

Of course I have but it's not some fuck thing.

BOBBY

Was I a *fuck* thing, Gabby?

GABBY

NO. You were a big fat waste OF MY TIME.

(She heads for the pantry. He blocks her path.)

BOBBY

Hypothetically, just for kicks and grins, if I *had* said something, if I had said, "You know what, your dating, kinda bugs me." Would you have respected that?

GABBY

Well does it? Bug you?

BOBBY

I told you it didn't.

GABBY

Then why are we having this conversation?

BOBBY

What do you see in him exactly?

GABBY

Which question do you want answered first?

BOBBY

You pick.

GABBY

I see a nice guy in him. I see a guy who cares about other people. I see a guy with a sense of responsibility.

BOBBY

So you like him.

GABBY

He treats me the way I deserve to be treated.

BOBBY

You see a future together. White picket fence and what not.

GABBY

There are absolutely NO fences of any kind in MY future.

BOBBY

But if I had said something-

GABBY

--I'd have told you to blow off.

BOBBY

You should both go with God then and be happy.

(He walks away from her, massages his jaw. A moment.)

GABBY

You suggested he sign himself up for three to five years of indentured servitude as far away from me as he could possibly get.

BOBBY

Nothing to do with you.

GABBY

Then what'd it have to do with.

BOBBY

Gene's life.

GABBY

I am Gene's life.

BOBBY

That's scary.

GABBY

I KNOW! But it is what it is.

BOBBY

You're angry! Once again, I'm an asshole.

GABBY

Oh Jesus Christ, here we go--

BOBBY

--You wanna beat me up, do it. Even out the eyes. I hate this, I hate anything unsymmetrical. It's the Libra in me.

GABBY

It'll take more than a beating from me to balance you out.

BOBBY

Maybe not.

GABBY

Never worked before.

BOBBY

Maybe I'll surprise you. Go for it.

GABBY

No.

BOBBY

But you said-

GABBY

--I know what I said, I said it for effect.

(He squares off in fighting stance, dukes up.)

BOBBY

Come on hot shot, give it to me.

GABBY

No.

(He moves around her, bobbing and weaving. She wants none of it.)

BOBBY

You going to the Gloves this year?

GABBY

No--Stand still!

BOBBY

You should.

GABBY

I know I should. Quit it.

BOBBY

You'd win. I've seen that 125 outta Crunch, she's got nothing.

GABBY

Yes I--OK, I don't weigh a hundred and twenty-five pounds.

BOBBY

Sure you do, Big girl. Come clean.

GABBY

I'm in at 110, Bobby. The last three fights.

BOBBY

Maybe that's why you keep losing. Gain a little, the girls get slower.

GABBY

That's not why I keep losing.

BOBBY

COME ON! Put up your dukes, Patty!

GABBY

I'd flatten you.

BOBBY

I know you would. I felt that hook once.

GABBY

More than once.

BOBBY

It's a doozy.

GABBY

STOP IT!

(Quick as lightening, she slaps his hands down. Winded, he stops moving and lets his arms drop to his sides.)

GABBY

I am not going to the Gloves this year because every time I hit a heavy bag, it hits me back twice as hard. OK? I keep *losing* because I can't take a *punch* anymore.

BOBBY

Now I gotta feel guilty about your shitty life too?

GABBY

Works for me.

BOBBY

You didn't have to come back into the city. You could have stayed with your fuckin' stupid friends.

GABBY

But I wanted to come back.

BOBBY

Why?

GABBY

Because you were my boyfriend and I wanted to be with you. Stupid me, now I have no amateur career. I coulda' been somebody Bobby.

BOBBY

Stop it.

GLENNY

I coulda' been a contender.

BOBBY

You're still fast.

GENE

Yeah well, when you're drunk, your reflexes go right out the window.

BOBBY

I'm not drunk.

GABBY

Oh, I don't even care.

(Gabby makes for the pantry again. He stands in the doorway.)

BOBBY

Yeah you do.

GABBY

No. I really don't.

BOBBY

You came here to stop me. Admit it.

GABBY

You listen to what I'm about to say and you retain this information for future reference, OK? I don't care what you do with your life so long what you do doesn't affect me. This affects my life.

BOBBY

He's not gonna go, Gabby.

GABBY

You don't think I know that? The guy's got a plastic kneecap for Christ's sakes. You're both a couple of morons!

(Pause. Bobby contemplates.)

BOBBY

He could still sit behind a desk.

GABBY

Oy vay, Bobby, please stop. You're giving me a migraine.

BOBBY

But he's not even man enough to do that. So no worries.

GABBY

Yeah, there are worries. Big ones. About his mental state.

BOBBY

How do you mean?

GABBY

He says he wants to go.

BOBBY

What?

GABBY

Yeah, he said, "I dunno Gab maybe it's the kick in the pants I've been waiting for."

BOBBY

He said that?!?

GABBY

I was more than a little surprised as well. Not really Gene's thing. "The WAR," you know.

BOBBY

(quiet)

Unbelievable.

GABBY

Believe it, baby. Now get outta my way.

BOBBY

He's fucking with you.

GABBY

Yes, I know when I'm being manipulated thank you.

BOBBY

What did you do to him?

GABBY

...Excuse me?!?

BOBBY

I know you. I know how you operate. (beat) Did you cheat?

GABBY

Fuck you!

BOBBY

Tell me what you did.

GABBY

Nothing. *I* didn't do anything. You did.

BOBBY

ME?!? What did I do?

GABBY

You never should have emailed in the first place.

BOBBY

YOU never should have given out your POP information.

GABBY

Forgive me for trusting him not to read my private shit.

BOBBY

You're tech savvy enough to know you don't give passwords out to anyone.

GABBY

Well, as soon as I get my DSL back, I won't need him to check my email for me will I?

BOBBY

Why'd you get rid of your DSL?

GABBY

Because I ran outta money, genius. I've been out of work for nearly a year now. HELLO?!?

BOBBY

But your father—

GABBY

--Isn't paying my way. That's right. Little Gabby ain't in Daddy's pocket any longer. Shocked?

BOBBY

Who is?

GABBY

What?

BOBBY

Paying your way? If you're not making any money?

GABBY

(beat)

You know what, this is none of your business.

BOBBY

Are you fucking kidding me?

GABBY

Don't you DARE turn this around on me. This is YOUR fault. You're the one trying to work your way back into my life. If I'm at fault for anything it was being nice enough to respond to your sorry ass. I could KICK myself. I'm so damned stupid sometimes.

BOBBY

When it comes to me.

GABBY

Don't even play yourself, Bobby. I'm stupid with every man I meet. Because every man I meet is a fucking crack-pot. You don't understand how his mind works. He sees one email, he's convinced I'm still in love with you--

BOBBY

--Still--

GABBY

--HAVE *feelings*. I'm *just* talkin' here. This is all off the record. (beat) So now he's trying to make me get down on my knees and beg because apparently with *Gene*, that's what he needs in order to feel needed. Attractive quality in a man, I know. Now, let me through.

(Long pause. She looks up at him. A stare down.)

BOBBY

Make me.

GABBY

(beat)

Get out of my way.

(Pause. He moves to the side and she walks passed him, disappearing into the pantry. He watches her through the door.)