

The Beaver Effect (2002)

by Mark Stubbings

More than once, Walterdale has produced plays that problematize the criteria on which Canada's cultural nationalism has been built. Including George Ryga's *Nothing But a Man* and a number of other plays presented in this collection (*The Canadian Fact*, [ice land], and *Chief Shaking Spear Rides Again*), they represent one half of a dialectic current that flows through the identity of many longstanding amateur theatres. As official federal policy turned in earnest toward painting a national character for Canada in the two decades leading up to the country's Centennial, many amateur theatres sought to redefine a portion of their fare in order to support not only the federal agenda (which had often shared with these theatres Eurocentric tendencies) but also growing public and artist interest in Canadian content. The foreign, often colonial, fare that had won these theatres an audience base was, as the Centennial approached, sharing the stage with homegrown works at nonprofessionalized theatres. Notably, a selection of these homegrown plays dealt outright with questions of Canada's national character. Mark Stubbings's *The Beaver Effect* follows this tradition.

Many of these works, like Stubbings's play, are not blindly nationalist. Many express a general skepticism toward selling a unified nationalist Canadian identity to Canadians, often citing geographic and cultural differences. During the 1950s and 1960s federal policy routinely met with wry responses from the very artists, including playwrights, who wanted a bigger piece of the state funding pie. The whole mechanism, of course, is absurd: artists required to beg for state funding so that politicians could congratulate themselves for supporting the country's culture by offering their handouts; the more public begging, the more congratulating while some funds changed hands.

When plying their trade at amateur theatres, playwrights found production environments in which their messages were received and encouraged. After all, unlike their professional counterparts, most longstanding amateur theatres had never relied

on government funding at any level and thus had benefitted from a unique sort of artistic freedom when new play production became a priority. As long as the box office was in good standing, and as long as the paying membership supported the programming, new play production need not be equated with experimental risk.

Like Canadian theatre, Canadian film—in particular the curiously definitive National Film Board of Canada—could be the target of quasi-nationalist satire. Historically dwarfed in comparison with Hollywood, the Canadian film industry has been seen by many writers to play out that recurrent and constitutive part of Canada's forever maturing national character: a perceived inferiority to its neighbour to the south. This is coupled with a “Hollywood bombardment,” according to the first director of *The Beaver Effect*, that erodes opportunities for Canadian identity-making (DeGagné). Facing the stereotype of low-budget Canadian film productions and narrowly defined “Canadian” subject matter, along with state-sponsored, top-down cultural policy, early-career artists may perceive both the film industry and the state as narrowly focused, aesthetically exclusive, and systematically frustrating. To the struggling screenwriter both industry and state appear unsupportive of Canadian talent working outside of certain socio-economic and conceptual boundaries. In this sense, Stubbings's play *The Beaver Effect* may be as much a comment on the discipline of Canadian theatre as it is on the discipline of Canadian film. But it is also, Stubbings asserts, “an attempt to understand what it means to be an artist in Canada and to recognize the roadblocks involved in doing so” (Stubbings). He does so in *The Beaver Effect* with the characteristic “muscular, funny, profane” dialogue (Nicholls) that has increasingly earned him the respect of Edmonton theatre audiences and critics alike.

Born in Kitchener, Ontario, in 1975 and raised in the Edmonton suburb of Sherwood Park, actor and playwright Mark Stubbings made his Walterdale debut in May 1991 in Tony Cain's one-act *This Wooden O*, which presented brief excerpts from Shakespeare's plays. Stubbings graduated with a BA in drama from the University of Alberta in 2004, forming with other graduates David DeGagné, Nathan Durec, and Elizabeth Ludwig the theatre and film company Last Night Productions. Stubbings has garnered a number of playwriting awards, including a 2003 Alberta Playwriting Competition award in the Discovery category (for playwrights whose work is not yet professionally produced) for *Dust* (later produced in 2004 and 2007 by Last Night Productions) and a 2004 Sterling Award for Outstanding Fringe New Work (with ten other writers) for *Redemption Thong*. His other critically lauded plays include *In the Doghouse* (Nextfest and the University of Alberta's New Works Festival 2002), *Fran Chews* (Alberta One-Acts Competition 2004, Walterdale 2005), *Our Kind of Love Is an Ugly Love* (Edmonton Fringe 2007) and *Stars and Sons* (Edmonton Fringe 2008).

Stubbings is one of a handful of playwrights who have come to define the playwriting scene in Edmonton during the past decade. He is also one of a number of Edmonton theatre artists who supplemented their undergraduate education with non-university exposure to theatre practice. (Conversely, as if to define one contemporary “town-and-gown” approach to playmaking, Walterdale has benefitted from the participation of undergraduate and graduate students, particularly since the mid-1990s, by offering directing, stage management, and production experience and

substantial roles, often in large casts, to students who gain experience from working beside non-university theatre artists. A number of university professors also have participated at Walterdale over the years, including English professors Wilfred Watson and Diane Bessai, French professor Vivien Bosley, and drama professors Piet Defraeye and Alex Hawkins.) Along with playwrights such as Scott Sharplin and Trevor Schmidt, Stubbings stands out as much for the critical acclaim his plays have received as for his dedication to an art form that has lost much popular cachet, particularly at the outset of the digital age.

The Beaver Effect, which Stubbings has characterized as “a Kevin Smith-type comedy about two (hapless) Ed Wood filmmakers trying to get a grant” (quoted in Nicholls) follows the dilemma of two twenty-something men trying to obtain Canadian funding to produce their science-fiction film. The challenge: to convince Denise at the Canadian Film Society to fund the movie, even though it does not fall under her Canadian content guidelines: “Prairie, Prairie, Prairie or a small fishing community of some kind”; “The more wheat, farmers and girls in frilly dresses the better.” The play takes aim at some of the ridiculous stereotypes related to “being Canadian,” while it encourages us to laugh at the parts of the stereotypes we find ridiculous, as well as at the parts we believe in. It updates the satire on empty nationalisms found in Watson’s *The Canadian Fact* for those who grew up watching Degrassi High, while dealing bluntly with those who claim to speak to “What Canadians want”: “Even the CBC airs American shows.” It is particularly representative of Walterdale’s ongoing interest in attracting young artists and audiences to the theatre.

The Beaver Effect ran June 10–15, 2002, at Walterdale Playhouse (firehall) with the following cast and creative team:

LAWRENCE SCHMIT	Jimmy Shewchuk
DENISE CURRAN	Shauna Johannesen
CLIVE ANDREWS	Mark Stubbings
DIRECTEUR	David DeGagné
STAGE MANAGER	Joelle Lemmen
DRAMATURGE	Sam Varteniuk

The Beaver Effect was produced in a previous incarnation at the Lloydminster Fringe Festival August 11–13, 2000.

The Beaver Effect

A Play in One Act

by Mark Stubbings

Scene One

Lawrence sits center stage in a pair of pajamas. He is barely visible under the cold blue lighting. Faint lighting washes over him, a gobo, the shadows of jail cell bars. As the sharp lines of the bars fall across him he begins to mutter and sing softly. He is cradling a golden statuette.

LAWRENCE (Sung) Wake up in the morning, alarm gives off a warning, gee, I gotta go to school. (Spoken) This is our independence day! (Sung) C'mon, give us a try, at Degrassi Junior High! (Spoken) sometimes you gotta take one for the team... Canadian Film Society, can you hold please? (Sung) There's a voice that keeps on calling me, on the road, that's where I wanna be. (Spoken) You killed him... Clickety click, Barba trick! Do we still have a deal? (Sung) You can do it, yes you can, put your muscles to it, in a jam, you can do it, yes you can, and you can too!

The lighting dramatically shifts and the stage is washed over by extremely bright lights. A projection screen behind Lawrence displays various images from Canadian film and television. Lawrence, now completely visible, jumps to his feet and excitedly addresses the audience. Awards music swells.

LAWRENCE Wooooo Hooo! Yeah! Thank you so very much. I ... I ... really don't know what to say. I am shocked. I want to thank god ... my mother that taught me the beauty of language ... my father that taught me to take care of my responsibility. My very supportive girlfriend Crystal ... we did it baby! Hooray, hooray for movies. Oh yeah, this guy in the front row knows what I'm talking about, you betcha! I have to say that you wonderful people of the academy are what make dreams come true. This film, which I shot on a handy cam for three hundred dollars, was a labor of love. It was blood, sweat and tears from the word go ... or should I say the word MAYBE, I'm talking to you there Paramount!

The projections continue but slowly the gobo of jail bars washes over Lawrence. The lights begin to dim. His tone changes from ecstatic to somber all at once. He falters through the next section of his speech.

LAWRENCE No, seriously, for a Canadian film to win best picture is ... well ... unthinkable. It's so hard, y'know, to find an artistic voice or something ... It all comes down to what you want to say. You can't compromise. You can't let people hold you back.

An alarm sounds and off stage we hear the voice of the warden.

WARDEN LAST BELL!

LAWRENCE Oh, they're telling me to wrap it up. I should thank my collaborator ... (*a second bell*) Oh, my time's up ... I guess all that's left to say is ... (*raising the statuette over his head*) It's mine! It's mine! It's all mine!

Black out.

Scene Two

A basement apartment. Lawrence lies on the couch stage right. He is dressed in his bathrobe and pajamas. He speaks in his sleep muttering things like "I'm the king of the world" until he suddenly springs up looking around in bewilderment. He rubs his eyes and crosses to a mini fridge stage left. He opens it and pulls out a can of V-8 juice. He produces a can opener from his bathrobe pocket, cracks open the can and guzzles the juice until it is empty. His Mother's voice from offstage startles him.

LAWRENCE'S MOTHER
Lawrence! Your fucking girlfriend is here! Put your goddamn pants on!

LAWRENCE Mom! Do you have to use that language? You sound like a trucker! And this would seem a lot more like my own apartment if you didn't yell at me through the vent!

LAWRENCE'S MOTHER
Don't yell at me like that! If I wanted abuse I'd go find your father! Put some fucking pants on, I'm sending her down!

LAWRENCE Mom! She's already seen me without pants! And you want to know what that means? It means we've had sex! Yeah, you heard me! I'm not the twenty three year old virgin you think I am. I have made sweet love to her! I am a love machine! I am extremely well hung!

An extended pause.

LAWRENCE'S MOTHER
Well, she just left Lawrence. I hope you're happy, you little prick!

LAWRENCE Shit!

Lawrence meanders over to his dresser upstage left. He roots through a collection of video tapes, finds the tape he is looking for and stares at it intently. Clive comes bursting in stage right.

- CLIVE What the fuck is wrong with your Mother!
- LAWRENCE Holy! Man, you scared the hell outta me!
- CLIVE Sorry. You okay?
- LAWRENCE Yeah. What are you doing here? It's like eight in the morning.
- CLIVE Larry, it's two thirty in the afternoon. On a Monday.
- LAWRENCE What? I ... who came up with the concept of time anyway?
- CLIVE I don't know ... Christopher Lloyd? Look, I'm sick of sitting around waiting for her to call back. Let's just go see her.
- LAWRENCE She just left. And I don't think she is in the mood to deal with you.
- CLIVE She just left? She was here?
- LAWRENCE Yes, Crystal was just here and I said the wrong thing again and she left.
- CLIVE I'm not talking about Crystal. Jesus, does anything in your life ever change? I am talking about Denise.
- LAWRENCE That woman at the Canadian Film Society?
- CLIVE Yeah. I've called her about the arts grant meeting ten times and she still won't set up a meeting. So, I say we go down there right now and give a pitch.
- LAWRENCE Right now?
- CLIVE Yes. Right now. We go down there and we make her listen. She can't turn us down. Not with the revolutionary film scripts we have.
- LAWRENCE Look, Clive. I'm really not in the mood right now. Crystal and I are fighting again and I have to work a drive thru shift tonight.
- CLIVE She'll forgive you, she always does. And if not, you ankle her.

LAWRENCE I really screwed up Clive. I'm telling you. After last night, I'm surprised I can still count two testicles. And she was just here and I messed that up too. We weren't even in the same room and I messed it up.

CLIVE Yeah, I hear ya. Ever since the days of the fucking caveman, men have been pissing off women. Some Neanderthal didn't help clean the cave and we're fucked for the rest of eternity.

LAWRENCE I told her she was fat and smelled like fish.

CLIVE Holy shit! Why would you ... what? Out of all the things you should not say to a woman you said two out of five.

LAWRENCE It was taken out of context. We were at the carnival at the house of mirrors when I said she looked fat. And when I said she smelled like fish we were at Red Lobster.

CLIVE Even still you can never say those things to a woman if you want to keep your groinal area.

LAWRENCE Wait a second, what are the other three things you can't say to a woman?

CLIVE Where's my dinner. Your sister is hotter than you. And, "Hey, did you give me this infection"?

LAWRENCE Crystal doesn't have a sister.

CLIVE Crystal's not going to dump you. You don't sleep around, you make decent money at the burger baron. You're pretty stable and that's about all any woman really wants.

LAWRENCE I'm twenty three and I live in my mother's basement.

CLIVE Well, there is that.

LAWRENCE I go out with Crystal and the stupidest things come out of my mouth. Like some synapse in my brain is firing telling me to say the most insensitive thing I can possibly say.

CLIVE Women are trouble. Hey, did you get your DVD player fixed yet?

LAWRENCE Clive, I'm asking for help here! Could you just listen for a second?

CLIVE Alright, go on.

LAWRENCE It's just I feel like I'm being swallowed up by this thing with Crystal. She really puts me through the paces man. Flowers, back rubs, long walks through the park. I hate walking. That's why I have a car. Do you see what I'm saying? I have to walk to make her want to stay with me. I didn't know it was going to be so much like work when I asked her out. So, I'm left here, surrounded, totally besieged by this swarm of questions about us and her...

CLIVE Questions? About us? (*Indicating himself*)

LAWRENCE No you idiot! About me and her. There's like this voice in my head posing all these questions about our relationship. And it says stuff like "What? You think you're gonna marry her?" or "You think you love her you prick!"

CLIVE The voice swears at you?

LAWRENCE Yeah. And you want to know what else? When it asks these questions. I don't know how to answer. I don't know if I love her. And I should know that. I should be sure it's real and worth it. I should because that's important. It's probably the most important thing. Clive, no offense, but you wouldn't understand.

CLIVE What's that supposed to mean?

LAWRENCE You haven't dated anyone for more than a day. You just don't understand what it's like to be in love or even try to be in love.

CLIVE Look, what's all this rhetoric about love anyway? I swear to god I'm sick of it. My whole life ... both our lives we have been told that love conquers all. All you need is love. Love is a many splendored thing! Love, love, love! Well, you wanna know what I say. I say phooey! I say phooey to love!

LAWRENCE No one says phooey.

CLIVE Well, they should. They should say phooey and cockamamie and when they really like something they should say "Say, that's swell." And they should bring back that invisible cola. That stuff was awesome! The point is we have spent all our lives being told that we should be so lucky to fall in love. Can you imagine how much we could get done if we weren't always preoccupied with the notion. Think about this: Two people meet, fall in love, get married, house, car, blah, blah, blah! And then when all the sex and passion and butterflies in their tummies disappear? Then what?

LAWRENCE Divorce?

CLIVE Work! You give up on the relationship and go through the motions of being someone's husband or wife or whatever and you focus on your career. And you try to become the best shoe salesman, garbage man or cola company executive that you can possibly be. So, why'd you waste all that time finding someone to love when you are just going to neglect them and focus on your career anyway?

LAWRENCE That's a little too cynical for my blood.

CLIVE Is it? Well then. Answer me this optimist boy. How many films have we finished since you started dating Crystal?

LAWRENCE That's completely unrelated!

CLIVE No. Answer the question.

LAWRENCE One.

CLIVE Correct. Now, how many films had we finished before you started dating her?

LAWRENCE Clive, c'mon...

CLIVE Nine. Nine films. So why don't we get on with our real life long passion and forget about love because it's irrelevant in the end.

LAWRENCE I haven't been that bad. Have I?

CLIVE Yes. You have. So shut up with your shit about "My girlfriend's mad." "I'm in the doghouse," "Why won't anyone love me." It's defeatist and it's not what you want. It's love or movies. You choose movies. So go and do that. Be a filmmaker. If you can do that. If you have the balls enough to do that and you still aren't satisfied. Then you can walk down that aisle and throw away your talent. Don't waste your time on your girlfriend if you don't know if you love her. You know you love making movies. So, let's go! Denise is in her office until four so we gotta hurry.

LAWRENCE We can't go in there empty handed. She'll throw us out.

CLIVE Alright then, it's pitch time, Larry!

LAWRENCE What are we going to bring her?

CLIVE Well, we should probably come prepared with a bunch of ideas but I say we bring her the last one we made. While the iron's hot.

LAWRENCE You think?

CLIVE Yeah, but like I said we'll have to have some back-ups. That's how the professionals do it and if we want to get that grant we have to be professional. Alright? So, it's your turn to go first.

LAWRENCE Alright, I'll humour you but she probably won't...

CLIVE Just do it! Movie idea number one ... take it away!

LAWRENCE Okay ... uh ... *Mortician's Academy*. A group of wacky students at the mortician's academy play pranks on their tight assed dean, madcap hilarity ensues!

CLIVE Not bad ... okay ... How about ... *The Adventures of Banana Bob*. He's an archaeologist who goes in search of petrified fruit. And in order to get that fruit, he has to battle the evil gorilla king. And I know where we can get a gorilla suit!

LAWRENCE Well ... okay ... but how about this. *The Man with Mechanical Pants!*

CLIVE Or ... how about *The Seventh Sense*. It's about this kid who sees dead people but in the end it turns out that ... THEY ARE JUST REGULAR PEOPLE!

LAWRENCE That's a little too close to the original.

CLIVE You're right. Let's just stick to the one we just shot. But we'll keep *Banana Bob* in mind just in case.

LAWRENCE What's the point? You know what she's going to say.

CLIVE Yeah, I do. She'll say yes.

LAWRENCE She never says yes. I don't think the word is in her vocabulary. She won't even say yes to a meeting. Last time I called her she said our film ideas weren't Canadian enough. What the hell does that mean?

CLIVE That's just the way these things work. You have to keep banging away at this shit. Pay your dues. And we have paid them. We've made ten films in two years. Nobody does it better or faster. These executive types just want to see that you're not just a flash in the pan. That you've got staying power. We DO. And Denise will see that.

LAWRENCE So I forget about Crystal and we pitch the film to Denise. You realize I'm going from begging to one woman to begging another.

CLIVE It ain't something for nothing. Look, we get the grant and we start running the film festival circuit and we don't stop until we're on the cover of *Maclean's* being hailed as the Canadian equivalent of Steven Spielberg! So, stand up and accept the fact that you are destined for film greatness. You, yes you, Lawrence Schmidt, are about to hit the big time!

LAWRENCE The last film was pretty great!

CLIVE Fuckin' A right!

LAWRENCE We have a good chance at getting the grant or at least some sort of funding.

CLIVE It's almost a guarantee!

LAWRENCE Crystal's a pain in the ass anyway.

CLIVE Like a Drano enema!

LAWRENCE Okay! Let's do it! Let's make some movies!

CLIVE Atta boy! I'll be waiting in the car. *(He moves to exit snatching some loose DVDs as he goes and hiding them in his pants)* And Larry. Bring some pants okay?

Clive exits as Lawrence notices his lack of pants.

Scene Three

The office of the Canadian Film Society. A desk with three chairs is stage right. There is a projection screen down centre. Clive and Lawrence enter and conspire.

LAWRENCE Alright, keep your mouth shut and let me do the pitch. I know how to handle women.

CLIVE Really? Because between Crystal and your mother I never would have guessed it.

LAWRENCE Look, do you want to be in my Oscar speech or what?

CLIVE I really inspired you didn't I? I got you talkin' the Oscar talk.

LAWRENCE Yeah, you did alright. Just let me do this.

Denise enters and crosses to greet them.

LAWRENCE Alright, here she comes. You just stand here, smile and try not to have an aneurysm or go off on a rant. (*Loudly to Denise*) Ms. Curran, I'm Lawrence Schmidt and this is my collaborator Clive Andrews.

DENISE Gentlemen, how magnificent to finally meet you. Lawrence, how have you been? Good, fantastic! Clive, you look every bit as handsome as I thought you would. You must work out. I bet you do. Wonderful. Spectacular. Great. Now, down to business. I see you have brought me a little piece of cinema, have you?

LAWRENCE Yes, we have. Let me have a second to pitch this to you. (*He clears his throat and speaks with great importance. Clive acts out the story silently as Lawrence delivers the pitch*) The year is 2049. The place: Earth. Not the earth you and I know, however, but an earth that has been over run by a race of three-legged aliens!

DENISE (*Interrupting*) Three legs, yes, good.

LAWRENCE Now, these aliens feed on the human soul. Something Clive and I call The Kinesphere. Now the most powerful kinesphere on earth belongs to our hero Blade Simco...

DENISE Lawrence, darling, I'm seeing a lack of ... oh, how shall I say it ... content. Of the Canadian variety.

CLIVE Aw, c'mon. Not this shit again.

LAWRENCE Listen, Ms. Curran ... Denise, I've been thinking about what you said about making my films more Canadian and...

DENISE Shall we go to the chart, Gentlemen? Yes, let's take a look at my little chart.

Denise produces a remote from her pocket. As she makes her points during the following exchange she clicks the remote to display various images, graphs and figures to support her case.

- DENISE Let us consult the Canadian Film Society's guidelines for cinema. These rules, designed and enforced by yours truly, are what decide whether we issue a grant to wonderful filmmakers such as yourself.
- LAWRENCE Wait a second, they're your rules not the Canadian Film Society's?
- DENISE Lawrence, let's be honest with each other. We both know they're the same thing. So, alright, back to the guidelines. Rule number one: Location, and I can't stress this enough. Prairie, Prairie, Prairie or a small fishing community of some kind. Because let's face it, wherever you are in this great country of ours you are either near the ocean or on the prairie.
- LAWRENCE What about the Northwest Territories? And there are other places...
- DENISE Lawrence, really, as if they count. Rule number two, let's talk time period. Think pioneers, covered wagons or at least the depression era. Trust me gentlemen. People don't want to see the road to Avonlea paved. The more wheat, farmers and girls in frilly dresses the better.
- LAWRENCE Hold it. What about *Degrassi Junior High*?
- DENISE I know, I know. A contemporary television program with a cast made up of completely hideous children. I warned them but they had a moral in every episode and that seemed to keep the soccer moms happy so we kept airing it.
- CLIVE You consider Joey Jeremiah hideous?
- DENISE Yes. Then and now. Hideous. It's what we were all thinking, I just have the courage to say it. Moving on there is the issue of the representation of all cultural groups. Native Canadians, African Canadians, Asian Canadians, French Canadian and of course let's not forget the Newfies!
- CLIVE Newfies! That is so prejudiced! The proper term is Newfoundlander.
- DENISE Clive, all linguistics aside, be realistic. Have you ever heard those people speak? They call themselves Newfies. Whatever the case, everyone must be represented and heard from. No matter how unintelligible.
- LAWRENCE You know, we do have an African Canadian in the film.
- DENISE Really! Where in god's name did you find him? This is Alberta.
- CLIVE Now that is definitely prejudiced! And racist!

- DENISE Now, now, boys, this is counterproductive. You obviously don't meet the criteria so why are we beating a dead horse here?
- CLIVE She's prejudiced against horses too!
- LAWRENCE Look, Ms. Curran, all of these guidelines are based on the success of shows like *Anne of Green Gables* and *The Beachcombers*. And it is my contention that these shows suck! Do you know why Canadians watch more American shows than Canadian ones?
- DENISE Because they have breasts and violence?
- LAWRENCE No, because people don't have friends like Relic. They have friends like Chandler or Phoebe. And they don't live in log cabins anymore or walk thirty miles through the snow to school! Let's get modern alright! And what could be more modern than the year 2049 when the earth has been over run by a race of three-legged space aliens!
- DENISE Look Lawrence, I would like to help you. I really would. But we here at the Canadian Film Society have made a commitment to the people of Canada. A commitment to provide quality, non-threatening entertainment. Canadian people don't want to turn on their TV and see violence or wise cracking thirty somethings. They want pioneers, beavers and Mounties! They want the farm report or at least a nature program about bison.
- CLIVE So much for freedom of expression then! The fact that we are Canadian and we make films isn't enough. No, we have to represent a minority or tell a certain kind of story to be heard! A great movie about three-legged aliens isn't as important as a show about some neon rider guy who helps out wayward teens, is that it?
- DENISE That's about the long and short of it, yes.
- LAWRENCE Hey, could you just watch it? How are we supposed to get ahead in the business if we can't even get you to watch our films?
- DENISE I'm very busy and your time has elapsed. I wish you luck and happy filming. You know, I have a good feeling about you two. In twenty years or so when you've paid your dues I'm sure we'll work together. Good afternoon.

She moves to leave.

DENISE And Gentlemen, nobody likes science fiction, at least nobody who matters.

Denise exits.

CLIVE Excuse me! Have you ever heard of Trekkies! There's about a million of 'em!

LAWRENCE Calm down! It's over.

CLIVE Just watch the damn tape! This will not stand! We will overcome! We will be heard! I got my eyes on the prize you fuckin' ...

LAWRENCE Clive! Clive! She's gone.

CLIVE This is not over.

LAWRENCE Clive, this was a total dog fuck! She won't even watch the tape. What's the point any way. Even if she saw it she wouldn't give us a grant. She thinks we're too young.

CLIVE Just hold on.

LAWRENCE You hold on. It took us two months to finish *The Tripods Have Landed* and three months when we made *Indiscreet Merger*. And how long did it take for us to finish *Being John Tesh*? And Tesh wouldn't even sign on for that film.

CLIVE Hey, I thought you made a very convincing John Tesh. Look, don't you give up now. You want to go back to your girlfriend a failure? A man who can't make a living without a paper hat?

LAWRENCE No.

CLIVE We just have to try a different approach.

LAWRENCE How long are we going to do this? You tell me that I'm wasting my time with Crystal. How do I know I'm not wasting my time with movies?

CLIVE Because you can't love something this much and fail at it.

LAWRENCE Clive, I think you can.

Lawrence exits. Clive remains for a beat or two then follows.

Scene Four

Lawrence's room. Lawrence is on the phone trying to reason with Crystal.

LAWRENCE Don't you see what I mean, baby? It was just a misunderstanding about Red Lobster ... Why? Because the whole place smells like fish! It's not a comment on your personal hygiene.

Lawrence's Mother yells from off-stage.

LAWRENCE'S MOTHER Lawrence! Put some fucking pants on! Your mongoloid friend Clive just pulled up!

LAWRENCE I'm wearing pants!

LAWRENCE'S MOTHER Go fuck yourself, you little prick!

LAWRENCE Mom, what is wrong with you! *(To Crystal)* Look, Crystal, Clive is here, I should go ... No ... he's not weird...

Clive enters in a beaver costume. He begins rummaging through a knapsack he has brought with him. Lawrence doesn't notice him or his attire.

LAWRENCE He's not weird ... he did that to you as a joke ... hasn't anyone ever frozen your bra at a slumber party? ... I know it wasn't a slumber party but ... What do you mean I should stay away ... from him or from you? Crystal?

Lawrence hangs up the phone after realizing Crystal is no longer on the line.

CLIVE She's not taking you back, eh?

LAWRENCE What do you care?

CLIVE You're right, I don't. Listen up, we have to get ready for our next meeting with Denise.

Lawrence rises and suddenly notices Clive's costume.

LAWRENCE What the hell are you doing Clive?

CLIVE Getting into character.

LAWRENCE Did you join the ice capades?

CLIVE No, I'm going to go back to Denise's office and I'm going to make a statement. I believe it is called a protest.

LAWRENCE Or an episode in your case.

CLIVE Say what you will but the way I have it figured, she'll have no choice but to watch our film. And when she does, we are definitely going to get a grant. Or at least some media exposure.

LAWRENCE You're not serious? You're actually going to do this?

CLIVE WE are going to do this. I got you a costume too.

Clive reaches into his knapsack and produces a Mountie uniform.

LAWRENCE What?

CLIVE You'll be a Mountie and I'll be a beaver. Get it? They're representational. She wants Canadian content, that's what we'll give her.

LAWRENCE She'll call the police. Do you hear me Clive? If a giant filmmaker beaver walks into her office, she will call the police.

CLIVE So we get some attention. It's a peaceful protest. When people see that we are so dedicated to creating Canadian art that we are driven to protest in costumes like these, they'll see how unfair Denise is being. Then, we'll meet other film reps who will be dying to give us a grant. Or Denise will respect our efforts and give us a grant herself.

LAWRENCE We might as well pitch that patriotic porno you wanted to shoot. Y'know, *Canuck Fuck*? Get it through your head Clive. She's not going to watch our movie and we're not going to get a grant. Think Clive. We grew up on American television and movies. We know more about Bill Clinton's wang and O.J.'s golf swing than we do about Louis Riel or how parliament works. Even the CBC airs American shows. So how the hell are we supposed to know what is Canadian much less make distinctly Canadian films. We are just American byproducts. And we'll never get past these Canadian content regulations if we make the kind of films we want to.

CLIVE I don't have a problem with ALL of the regulations. So the radio stations have to play a Canadian song once an hour, fine, good, so be it! But does it have to be that sell out Bryan Adams or Celine Dion. I mean, if I hear that fucking boat song one more time I'm gonna shoot myself! We get it Celine! The boat sunk, Leo drown, your friggin' heart will go on. What the fuck does the Titanic have to do with Canada anyway?

LAWRENCE James Cameron is Canadian.

CLIVE Yeah, but he moved to the states to make it big.

LAWRENCE So did William Shatner and he's a good actor.

CLIVE Shatner! Are you kidding me? You could drive a Mack truck through those dramatic pauses!

LAWRENCE Lorne Greene was Canadian.

CLIVE Who's Lorne Greene?

LAWRENCE Y'know, Lorne Greene's new wilderness?

CLIVE Never saw it.

LAWRENCE He was the starship captain on *Battlestar Galactica*.

CLIVE Oh yeah. *(Pause)* But that show was just American space propaganda.

LAWRENCE We are arguing the same point! They defected and they made it. Don't you get it? If they can't make a great film here then we don't have a chance. And if we follow Denise's guidelines and make a shitty one, well, we might as well give up and get day jobs.

CLIVE Not in this lifetime. C'mon Larry, let's do this. It's the only way.

LAWRENCE They'll arrest us.

CLIVE So what? I can read the headlines now, "Artists suffer for their work," "Canada needs to wake up and smell the movies." Sometimes you gotta take one for the team ... THE MOVIE TEAM!

LAWRENCE What are you talking about?

CLIVE I'm talking about the little guy. All the other brilliant filmmakers out there that can't get their film shown because of some spoiled executive. I'm talking about giving the Canadian moviegoer what he wants! Explosions and Aliens! I'm talking about the beaver, the Mountie and the good ol' hockey game! I'm talking about winter in Alberta, summer in Saskatchewan and the almighty toonie! Because you want to know what? I AM CANADIAN!

LAWRENCE YOU ARE AN IDIOT!

CLIVE You lost your girlfriend over this. Do you want that to be for nothing?

LAWRENCE I miss her.

CLIVE If you become a success, you can get her back.

LAWRENCE I don't know.

CLIVE You are such a pussy, you know that? Every fucking time I had a vision, some brilliant moment of completely Zen thinking, you back down. Remember when we were twelve and I said "Hey, let's get on our bikes and go to the D.Q. and get some ice cream"? And you were like "No, that's too far. My Mom will get mad if I go all that way on my bike." And then I said "Let's get some fucking ice cream, you asshole!" Then you were like "okay." And what happened?

LAWRENCE I don't even remember this.

CLIVE We got some ice cream and it was awesome! And you wouldn't have done it if I didn't call you an asshole. Don't you want to have some ice cream Larry? Because I am offering you some ice cream.

LAWRENCE I have no idea what you are talking about.

CLIVE I do. So just listen to me and you'll be happy. We do this, the film gets shown. And if we do a couple of nights in the joint, so be it. We gotta represent.

LAWRENCE Represent, huh?

CLIVE Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Find your balls and use 'em.

LAWRENCE Give me that uniform.

CLIVE I've got the car running outside. Now let's get that coat on you.

LAWRENCE Thanks buddy.

Scene Five

Denise's office. Denise sits at her desk arranging and rearranging papers. Clive enters from behind her. He is dressed in the beaver suit as before. He carries a knapsack and a sign that reads "Make Movies, Not Love." He startles Denise as he begins to sing "O Canada" off key, getting all the lyrics wrong. Denise springs to her feet.

DENISE What is this?

Clive stops singing and stares at her silently.

DENISE What do you want?

CLIVE *(In a ghostly voice)* You, Denise Curran, you have made a grave error! You have used your position to corrupt Canadian art! I have come to teach you the error of your ways!

DENISE *(Immediately recognizing Clive's voice)* You are a beaver, yes?

CLIVE *(Ghostly voice)* I have taken this form so I may represent all that you have turned your back on. You will listen to the beaver or you will be punished!

DENISE Is this supposed to be like an Ebenezer Scrooge thing? Like you are the beaver of Christmas past and you've come to teach me the evils of eating beaver meat or something to that effect?

CLIVE *(Dropping the voice)* You've eaten beaver before?

DENISE Yes, once, in college.

CLIVE *(Again with the voice)* Listen to me! Since the dawn of time the beaver has represented Canada. Therefore, the meaning behind...

Lawrence bursts in wearing the Mountie uniform. He carries a sign that reads, "Film 3:16."

LAWRENCE Clive, where have you been? It's a fucking madhouse out there. People kept throwing cans at me as they drove by and a preschooler punched me in the nuts!

CLIVE Silence! The beaver is speaking to the corrupt woman!

LAWRENCE Why are you talking like that? You were supposed to wait for me!

CLIVE (*Pulling off his mask*) Great Larry, way to ruin the whole mystique of the thing.

DENISE Gentlemen, shall we explain ourselves? You know, as to why you two are having your little costume parade in my office.

CLIVE We're here to give you one last chance.

DENISE Boys, don't waste your time. You have no appointment. So, tragically, I cannot help you. It's called professional courtesy. And, sadly, you don't seem to be extending any to me.

CLIVE Courtesy? Fuckin' courtesy? If you had just had the courtesy to watch our film in the first place then I wouldn't be here now dressed as a beaver trying to scare you!

DENISE Yes, and why are you dressed as a beaver?

CLIVE It's representational!

LAWRENCE Alright, calm down. Denise, this is a protest. All we want is for you to watch our film with an unbiased eye. If you just let go of your preconceptions as to what Canadian film has to be, you will like it.

DENISE The guidelines I've set out are in place for a reason...

LAWRENCE Forget about the guidelines for a second. Forget about who the film may offend or who it does or does not represent. Forget about geography and educational value and just watch a movie. It's supposed to be fun.

DENISE Well, what are the themes involved?

LAWRENCE Forget about themes. Let me ask you something, did you like *Star Wars*?

DENISE The original or *The Phantom Menace*?

LAWRENCE The original.

DENISE Of course I did.

LAWRENCE It didn't provoke thought. It didn't have covered wagons or fishermen. And you liked it. Would you have used your guidelines to stop that film from being made?

DENISE Alright then Lawrence. You made your point. If Canadian content doesn't really matter perhaps we could consider negotiating. Perhaps agree on a few alterations to your work, yes?

CLIVE Artists! We are artists and we don't alter or negotiate! We create, we emot, we rock your emotional world or at least mildly sway it.

LAWRENCE Wait a second Clive. She has a point. My dad used to say that a deal only works if both parties benefit.

CLIVE Who benefited when he left your mother to become a rig pig?

LAWRENCE He did. Work not love. Remember?

DENISE Excuse me but I was in the process of offering you a grant.

Clive and Lawrence freeze.

DENISE What if I were to promise you a film grant if you take my suggestions about your film, and, you know, alter it accordingly. I won't even expect a credit.

LAWRENCE You would do that? Why would you do that? You haven't even seen the film.

DENISE Because I am sick of it. I am sick of the four phone calls a day. Because I want you out of my office and I realize that to get you out of my face for five seconds I have to give you a grant. So I just want to change the film enough to justify it to my bosses. Alright, okay, good, let's do this.

LAWRENCE We get this down on paper then?

DENISE Darling, I wouldn't have it any other way. Yes, good, let's begin.

Denise moves to her desk to get the contracts.

CLIVE Larry, don't do this.

DENISE Clive, you're wearing a beaver suit. You don't exactly exude credibility. Lawrence can do this without your input.

LAWRENCE Clive, it ain't something for nothing. We do this, we get a grant.

CLIVE Fine. Continue. But Denise I am warning you, don't fuck up our movie.

DENISE Such vulgarity. Do you kiss your beaver mother with that mouth?

LAWRENCE Let's just get this done.

DENISE Yes, let's. Now, I will ask you some questions about your film, yes, and then for each question I will offer a possible solution. The grant relies on how accepting you can be in regards to said solutions. I'm only proposing minor changes to the look and feel of the film, agreed?

LAWRENCE Yes, go on.

DENISE First, where is the film set? I mean location.

LAWRENCE As I said before, it's earth in the year 2049.

DENISE Can we localize that? Because the Earth is a pretty large place. It's a location scout's nightmare.

LAWRENCE How about Toronto?

DENISE Little more specific, please?

LAWRENCE Downtown Toronto?

DENISE Alright, let me provide you with a similar solution. Let's say ... Lloydminster!

LAWRENCE How is that like Toronto?

DENISE Well, Lawrence, it's not. But it is cross provincial.

LAWRENCE Fine. Lloydminster.

DENISE Good, yes, we're making progress here. You say earth, I say Lloydminster. They're the same thing really.

CLIVE You're on thin ice over here!

DENISE Fine, good, whatever, Clive. Alright. Let's talk protagonist here. Is he swarthy?

LAWRENCE Swarthy? I guess.

DENISE Because he must be swarthy. Women love swarthy. What about abs, does he have great abs? Like cheese grater abs?

LAWRENCE Not exactly cheese grater but he's a really talented actor.

DENISE So was John Candy but no one wants to see him in a shower scene with Neve Campbell.

CLIVE There is no shower scene.

DENISE I see. I'm getting ahead of myself. Lawrence, people don't want to see fat people fight aliens or take showers. They want hotties. So you'll have to cast a ridiculously handsome leading man.

LAWRENCE We could recast. Stewart's not going to like it though.

DENISE He'll live. We'll find him a nice supporting role as a pretzel vendor or a Kiwanis member.

CLIVE Alright, I draw the line at Kiwanis!

LAWRENCE Shut up, Clive!

DENISE We are almost finished if you don't mind. Finally, let's talk climax, the ending. How does your little epic come to an end?

LAWRENCE This is the best part. They swap planets!

DENISE I don't follow...

LAWRENCE Well, the aliens have taken over Earth, right? So all the humans leave Earth, blow it up, and go live on the aliens' home planet which is in much better shape environmentally.

DENISE The humans blow up Earth? I mean Lloydminster?

LAWRENCE Yeah. Which kills all the aliens! Pretty cool, huh?

DENISE Yes, yes, cool. However, Lawrence, and hear me out. And keep in mind that this is the last thing I propose to change before I bestow upon you this film grant. Let's say the humans don't blow up the Earth.

LAWRENCE They don't?

CLIVE That's how it ends!

DENISE I propose that instead of blowing up the earth, let's say that the United States army rescues the people of Lloydminster and sends the aliens back to their planet. And the humans blow up their planet!

CLIVE The US army? Are you shitting me? How does that represent Canada in any way?

DENISE Lawrence, you told me to forget about Canadian content. This way I think people will enjoy the film more. Because, well, it's more American.

LAWRENCE We came to you so we wouldn't have to make American films. So we could do what we love here in Canada.

DENISE You can't have it both ways. You throw out the guidelines and what are you left with? An American film ... made by Canadians. Only this way you don't have to defect. As I said before, it's all about location.

LAWRENCE (*Shyly*) But I am Canadian.

DENISE The film you've made isn't any different than the kinds of films that come out of America. They make these kinds of films all the time, so no offense boys, but they do a much better job than you. So, in the end, doesn't it make sense to give grants to people who make unique films?

CLIVE You call *Anne of Green Gables* unique?

DENISE Compared to *Independence Day*? Yes, I do. So Lawrence, do you accept the changes?

LAWRENCE I...

DENISE Because the grant is here if you want it.

LAWRENCE I'll take it.

CLIVE No, no! This is horseshit! It's the same thing as defecting. She's just feeding you a different set of rules.

LAWRENCE It will be a success Clive.

CLIVE Oh, I see, I get it. You're just doing this to get Crystal back. Crystal doesn't know what you need. I do. You're whoring yourself for her. You're a corporate whore!

LAWRENCE It was your fault that I lost her in the first place. Wasting my time with you and our movies! Well here it is Clive! This is what we want.

CLIVE This isn't what we want. It's what you want. You can't do a fucking thing without being led by the hand. Told what to do. And when you do decide on something you make the wrong fucking choice!

Clive removes a pellet gun from his knapsack.

CLIVE Well, I won't let you, you are not doing this!

LAWRENCE Holy shit! What the hell are you doing!

CLIVE I'm leading you by the hand, as usual.

LAWRENCE Where did you get that?

CLIVE Shut up. Denise, you are not going to change a single frame of our film. You will shut the fuck up and give us a grant for the film as is.

DENISE Don't shoot. I have something to tell you. Please, put the gun down.

CLIVE No, you don't get to tell us what to do any more. Canadians can't make films as well as Americans, fuck that! It's people like you that fuck it all up. Well, sister, you will not drive me across the border!

LAWRENCE Are you fucking nuts, put the gun away!

CLIVE I will not sell out. I will not let you sell out! Did you hear what she said? The U.S. army saves the day! (*To Denise*) You ... you get out that contract or so help me...

DENISE I'm not who you think...

CLIVE Get out that fucking contract.

LAWRENCE Don't shoot Clive. If you don't shoot we can get out of this.

CLIVE I love you Larry.

Clive abruptly grabs Lawrence and kisses him full on the mouth. Lawrence and Denise are dumbstruck. There is a short pause.

CLIVE This is for us. We have been together our whole lives. If we do this we can share ourselves with the world our way. I love you, I really do but you won't help yourself. So I have to do it for you.

DENISE You're insane. I can't give you a grant I'm just...

Clive pushes her to her knees. Lawrence goes towards her but Clive turns the gun on him.

CLIVE Stay right there.

LAWRENCE You call this help?

DENISE All right, I'll do whatever you want, just put the gun away. I'll give you the grant. Just don't shoot anyone.

CLIVE *(Throwing his arm around Lawrence)* Look Larry, she's going along with it. Shit, I should have pulled the gun earlier.

LAWRENCE Give me that!

Lawrence tackles Clive. They struggle for the gun.

DENISE Listen to me! I'm not ... stop it ... I...

Denise runs to the phone and dials 911.

DENISE I need some help. I'm being held hostage...

Lawrence, having overcome Clive and snatched the gun, pauses and looks closer at it.

LAWRENCE Hey, this is just a pellet gun?

Clive lunges at Lawrence and Lawrence instinctively fires. Clive is hit and falls to the ground.

LAWRENCE *(After a long silence)* Clive ... c'mon Clive, it's a pellet gun. Clive?

Denise drops the phone and rushes over to Clive.

DENISE You ... you shot him in the eye.

LAWRENCE What?

DENISE He's dead. Oh God. You killed him.

LAWRENCE What? No ... you saw it ... it was self defense ... oh, shit, I'm sorry. He was going to hurt you, I protected you.

DENISE You killed him.

LAWRENCE I didn't mean it.

The faint sound of police sirens is heard.

DENISE Get out. Get out of here!

Lawrence moves to exit.

LAWRENCE I ... Do we still have a deal?

DENISE What?

LAWRENCE A deal. I change the film and you give me a grant.

DENISE I can't do that Lawrence.

LAWRENCE Why not?

DENISE Because I'm just the secretary.

LAWRENCE What? You promised...

DENISE I'm just the secretary, Lawrence. They tell me to pretend I'm an executive so they don't have to deal with people like you, so you don't waste their time. There never was a grant for you. You have to apply. You can't just show up with some hand held piece of garbage and expect them to pay for it. Just because you want it. Just because you are Canadian.

LAWRENCE Then why did you do all this?

DENISE Because I put up with people like you all day, every day. And I'm sick of it. Space aliens and action flicks. You people are a waste of my time. I was teaching you a lesson. *(Pause)* I'm sorry.

Lawrence crosses over to Clive's body.

LAWRENCE Shit.

Lights fade as the sirens grow louder.

Scene Six

The scene is as it was in the beginning. There is a gobo of jail bars lighting Lawrence. The screen behind him projects images of American films, Independence Day, etc. Lawrence is standing centre stage and is still dressed as a Mountie. He is holding a golden statuette.

LAWRENCE I would like to thank the Academy and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for this award. I would also like to thank Denise Curran for allowing me to be here tonight and for the next few years...

OFFICER *(Offstage)* Lights out Schmidt!

LAWRENCE *(Quietly)* They are telling me to wrap it up. I would most like to thank the great country of Canada for being a country that supports unique talent. A country that uses brains to make movies instead of special effects and explosions. That's why it's such a shock for me to win this. Because my films tend to use violence and special effects. There is one more person I would like to thank...

Clive enters still in the beaver suit. He has an American flag wrapped around him.

CLIVE I'm sorry, Lawrence. There's been a recount.

LAWRENCE What?

CLIVE *(Approaching him)* You didn't win. There's been a recount.

LAWRENCE What do you know about it, you're dead.

CLIVE I just do what they tell me. The recount says you lost.

LAWRENCE Who won then?

CLIVE *Anne of Green Gables: The Next Generation.* Sorry, pal, nice effort though.

*Clive snatches the award away and struts off holding it over his head.
The projection now shows Anne of Green Gables.*

LAWRENCE No, no, that's not right. It's mine. I won. It's mine, it's mine...

Lawrence continues raving.

Officer (Offstage) LIGHTS OUT!

The lights fade and Lawrence is left being lit only by static.