

A BUNCH OF TIMES

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN FILM
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

September 2025

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Abstract

A comedic short film about intergenerational male discourse and the nuances of sexuality, *A Bunch of Times* centres around a recently married middle-aged man named Gord, and his ultimately inappropriate attempts to build a rapport with his new teenaged stepson, Kevin. Throughout the film, Gord becomes more and more desperate to double down on his tactic of teasing Kevin by commenting on the many attractive women, and the many sexual situations within the *Game of Thrones*-style TV show they are watching—which he is certain Kevin finds just as titillating as he does; whether he will admit it or not. As things become more and more uncomfortable for both Kevin and his mother, Susan, Kevin begins to turn Gord's suggestive questions and comments back on him, culminating in a poignant catharsis wherein the two share an over-the-top, dramatic embrace befitting the medieval fantasy epic TV show they are watching.

Acknowledgements

I wrote the bulk (and by that I mean essentially all) of this paper while reading for the first time Kazuo Ishiguro's classic 1989 Booker Prize-winning novel *The Remains of the Day*, and I think it shows in both my impeccable prose style, and perfectly crafted run-on sentences akin to that great work's narrator, the honourable Lord Darlington's head butler of some thirty years, Mr. Stevens—a man of both fine taste, and a keen sense of duty. So first and foremost I would like to thank Mr. Ishiguro and by proxy Mr. Stevens for getting me in the right mode for telling my story straight (and long-winded).

As for non-fictional characters who deserve a mention, I would like to thank: the (very) patient members of my committee, Tereza Barta and Ali Kazimi for humouring me as I fumbled my way through this project; program directors Manfred Becker and Mike Zryd for their wonderful leadership and expertise; program assistants Kuowei Lee and Aishah Rashid for figuratively holding my hand as I waded through the bureaucracy of doing a Master's program; my thesis accountability group friends Christina Dovolis, Jenny Laiwint, Braden Brickner, and Jonathon Watton for their endless and unique support; my entire beautiful, kind and talented cohort, including Simon Ruscinski, Devin Shears, Zach Lacosse, Yeimy Daza, Felipe Lopez Gomez, Sharon Mirsky, Alireza Keymanesh, Meysam Motazedi, Leticia Marques, Angela Onuora and Peter Howie; other York friends and faculty Ryan Steel, Beau Han Bridge, Moussa Djigo, and Jack O'Dwyer for their help with either the film, or the paper; and finally, my family for lovingly pestering me to finish writing my thesis paper so I could finally graduate. Thank you all!

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Image 1: An email from the Slamdance Film Festival's Screenwriting Contest, regarding the script for *A Bunch of Times*

Introduction

Personally, I don't feel that writing about my own artistic process is very productive. I tend to subscribe to the David Lynch school of "telling someone what your film is about is not the role of an artist", and that if I really knew exactly what the film was about, I wouldn't have bothered to make it. And I understand that that is both a pretentious notion, and an incredibly presumptuous statement as it pertains to whether or not most people even consider my bloated, ten-minute sketch comedy movie to be "art" in the first place. That said, this sophomoric short comedic work is, surprisingly (even to me) by far my most personal film. And I've made "personal films" before. But this is the first time I've ever been so reticent to talk about it, that I would almost rather not even graduate than write this paper. Almost. Because apparently I do want my diploma. And I don't know what else to talk about for twenty (or so) pages. But—and hear me out *now*—don't think that I will be writing more than twenty (or so) pages, because I will cut myself off at exactly twenty (or so) pages. Mark my words. I will not go past "(or so)". (see page 20).

The production for the film went strangely smoothly, and I did absolutely zero research. I didn't need to. I had lived this film, this scenario—as kitschy and over-the-top as it may seem on the surface. So, therefore, I am left with the sweaty-palmed task of actually talking about what inspired the film, and what it means to me, personally, I guess. And maybe by going through this most painful and possibly pointless exercise, I will come to appreciate the film more, or perhaps reflect on it in a way that may provide some kind of artistic levelling-up, for lack of a better word. Let's see.

The idea for this film had been percolating in my brain for a few years prior to hunkering down and writing it in early 2020. I feel like I have been in this situation a few times in my life (and I know I'm not alone in this), but there is one particular instance of being sexualized by an adult that has always stood out to me. (And let me first and foremost clarify that when I say "sexualized" I don't mean that this person viewed me as an object of sexual desire, but rather their words and actions directed at me prematurely hinted at the notion that I had a specific sexuality—in this case, that I was heterosexual. And I am, for the record, heterosexual. So what is the big deal? Well, that is what I am about to talk about next):

I was maybe 4 or 5, *possibly* 6 years old—no older—and I was playing soccer with my dad and his friend, and the friend's children, and my sisters, and my cousins. As the teams were being created, it was suggested by my dad's friend that I should be "on the girls' team" or some such thing. I maybe (as a small boy is wont to do) said something about wanting to play with my dad, and not with the girls. And then my friend's dad said something to the effect of "maybe one day you won't mind playing with the girls so much..." and this made me feel embarrassed in a way that I couldn't fully comprehend yet. Embarrassed in a new way. Embarrassment that turned into a feeling that I had maybe only felt once before (whilst accidentally hugging the legs of a strange woman at the store whom I took to be my mother at first): shame. A complicated cousin to embarrassment that always seems to mix a number of squirmy, complicated feelings together into a stinky feelings soup. Complicated because I did actually prefer to be with girls at that point in my life. Most of my cousins were girls; my sisters were both girls; two out of the three kids my mum babysat after school whom I played with were girls; and even my most favourite person in the whole world at the time (and still probably my most favourite, actually, for the record,

officially)—my mum—was also a girl. But I knew my dad’s friend didn’t mean it that way. He meant it in another, more complicated way that I didn’t have the emotional or psychological capacity to comprehend at that point. And maybe the fact that I didn’t even really understand what he meant made it that much more embarrassing, and therefore even more shameful. So it was this feeling that I was contemplating when I wrote *A Bunch of Times*. But because the film is fiction, I decided that I wanted to make it a full-on fantasy, and turn the tables on my dad’s friend (in this case the Stepfather), and get some more clear-headed revenge. The kind of thing one might rehearse in the mirror in a would-be confrontation one never ends up having. And for the record, I do not hold a grudge against my dad’s friend (anymore—I’m thirty-one years old), and I understand that to most people his words may seem quite innocent, if even funny, or normal. And I would sort of even agree, to an extent. But I think what I am getting at is that as adults, we oftentimes do not think about how such a young mind will comprehend a joke like that. A joke at their expense. And frankly, that is what it was: a joke my expense. I knew it at the time, I just couldn’t quite grasp what it meant exactly—though something primal within me knew full well. Young me, already maybe more sensitive (many, including myself would say *too* sensitive) than other kids, had not the context, nor the experience, nor the emotional intelligence to register what this adult was saying to me in any way other than with a jolt of pure shame. And that shame, because it is baked into such an impressionable, young, doughy brain at such a young age, lingers. And even with age, and context, that lingering scar does not necessarily fully heal. I can understand that it was “not a big deal” now, and if someone said that to me today, I wouldn’t feel so ashamed, but the little boy who still lives somewhere deep within my psyche is still crying

silently, with his head buried in his mother's sleeve. And that's what this film is about. It's a revenge film for that little boy.

Taking Time to Think: AKA How Long it Took Between Writing and Shooting, and Finishing the Film, and Writing the Paper

The idea for this film had been percolating in my mind for many years before I wrote it, because as I said in the earlier chapter, it is based on an incident that happened to me at such a young age, and had such a profound effect on my life. And so as long as I have been making, and even thinking about making movies, the idea of immortalizing this incident in some form or another has been at the back of my mind. That said, I didn't feel ready in any way to begin bringing it to life on screen until about five or six years ago, around the time the COVID-19 lockdowns started. Perhaps its emergence as a viable story subject came more seriously to the fore due to the fear that the world would never go back to normal, and that my most deep-lying, darkest, and therefore most personally-intriguing stories needed to be told sooner, rather than later. So I hunkered down and wrote it in early 2020, mostly because I had a lot of time on my hands and figured that I wouldn't be able to shoot it for another couple of years or so anyway, which felt like an emotional buffer at the time (as in, "maybe in two or more years, when we are 'out' of this time in our lives, I will feel emotionally ready to bear my soul in this way..."). So when I got into the Master's of Fine Arts in Film Production program at York, even after applying with a different short film project—one that would have required more locations, more actors, and more money—I decided to try out *A Bunch of Times* as my thesis instead. I guess I felt more ready than before to bear my soul in some way, having by then moved halfway across the country to study film with a group of strangers. And then even when getting the feedback of my intelligent and empathetic peers—much of which was very good feedback, let me tell you—I did not change much, if anything in the script. And then I shot the film very soon after the first

semester of school ended, and it strangely went off without a hitch, as they say. I cast ACTRA actors for the first time; paid those actors for the first time; hired crew who were all professionals in their respective fields for the first time; and enjoyed a set free of any major malfunctions or drama for the first time. And it felt great. I was riding high. And then I edited the film over the summer, and got a little money from York to pay a sound editor and mixer, and had a completed film by early fall of 2023. And then sent it off to film festivals. And then did not start writing the paper. And continued to not write the paper. Should I have been taking notes during each step of the filmmaking process? Probably. Did I take notes during each step of the filmmaking process? No, I did not in fact do that. And like I said, there were no major discoveries during the pre-production or production, or even the post-production. Everything went quite smoothly, and I mostly stuck to the plan I had set out for myself from the start. Was this a mistake? I don't know. Sometimes you just make the film you set out to make, without much of a fuss. And this was certainly the first time that had happened to me. And it felt great, so I didn't question it. So yes, I procrastinated with the paper. And yes, I am currently procrastinating getting to the point of this chapter. But at least I'm writing it now (this sentence is current as of 10:16 pm on Wednesday, May 14, 2025 CST). You can't say I'm not doing that. So, there you go. But anyway, that is why it took so long between each stage of the filmmaking and thesis-writing processes. If you'd like to learn more, please continue on to the next chapter, entitled, simply: "The Production", conveniently located on the very next page of this York University Master's of Fine Arts in Film Production thesis paper.

The Production

The production went very smoothly, generally speaking. I already knew I wanted to cast Beau Han Bridge as Kevin, having become friends with him through his MFA classmate (and our mutual friend) Ryan Steel, and having seen him act in a few other things. But I didn't know any other actors in Toronto, having only recently moved from Winnipeg. So I put out a casting call for ACTRA actors for the first time, with the help of my MFA classmate Yeimy Daza. We got a few very good applications for the roles of Susan and Gord. Cristina Paoletta was an easy choice for Susan, as I felt she had both the acting chops, and the even temperament to deal with what I hoped would be a somewhat unhinged performance from whomever I ended up casting as Gord. I knew I wanted Gord to be able to ad-lib a bit more than the other characters, as it would be on his awkwardness that I hoped the comedy would most overtly hinge. And maybe casting someone with less acting experience, but hopefully more experience just generally being a middle-aged dad would be the best course of action. And then hope that the other two actors would be able to reign in whatever loose ends he may have been dragging. We got a number of interesting audition tapes for the role of Gord, many of which were quite good, but there was something about Doug Cronkite's submission that immediately set him apart. First, his tape was so beautifully casual; he shot it handheld on his phone, with a preamble about having just returned from the lake, and not being entirely ready. And then he immediately dove into the scene in question, changing the cadence of the speech to fit his own in a way that I liked, before generating actual tears for good measure. Though clearly very green, I knew Doug was a perfect fit to play the awkward yet ultimately lovable Gord. And Doug did prove to be the perfect performer to play Gord. He used what I'm sure must have been real nerves to cultivate a

perfectly awkward, yet focused and emotional performance that fed so well off of Beau's blunt Kevin, and Cristina's lovingly open, yet skeptical Susan. He was able to effectively ad-lib in moments where he maybe forgot his lines a little bit, and was always anchored by Cristina and Beau's more experienced performances. He had the toughest performance in the film, and he pulled it off beautifully, as did Cristina and Beau. I am very happy with the performances in the film, and would love to work with everyone involved again. It was truly the smoothest, most enjoyable shoot I've ever had. So no complaints as far as the production went.

Influences

Though I cite many filmmakers as influences, such as Todd Solondz, Kelly Reichardt, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Roy Anderson and Mike Leigh, just to name a few, my films have all been influenced most profoundly by the work of comedian Nathan Fielder. I first became aware of Fielder about fifteen years ago, during his brief but now-legendary stint as a correspondent for the mainstay CBC political satire *This Hour Has 22 Minutes*. I used to watch *22 Minutes* with my parents as a kid, and I will never forget the feeling that came over me when I first saw one of his *Nathan: On Your Side* sketches. Very much a precursor to his Comedy Central show *Nathan For You*, the sketch revolved around Fielder interviewing a real small business owner about his Halifax pizza parlour, only under the impression that the business owner was in on the scheme to try and convince the viewing public that they were in fact in Italy, rather than Nova Scotia. The business owner was not in on the scheme. Not only were they not in Italy, claimed the business owner, but he himself was not Italian either, as Fielder was desperate to claim. Though it was not this basic comedic trope which so impressed me, but rather the manner in which Fielder, himself appearing frustrated and embarrassed by the situation, chose to frame the joke: it was entirely on himself. Clearly influenced by earlier comedians like Tom Green and Sacha Baron Cohen (whose somewhat similar antics involving real people would oftentimes frame the “victims” in just as much of a sour light as themselves), Fielder’s practical joke was almost entirely based around himself coming off as a try-hard wet blanket, a nervous wreck, and frankly, a massive nerd—and this was *before*, mind you, being a nerd was considered “cool”. It was painfully awkward by design. It was the kind of comedy I had never quite seen before, and it stirred within me the kind of gleeful aftershock I have yet to experience to quite the

same extent with any other comedian. I wanted to laugh, but felt almost ashamed to; as if laughing would not only hurt Nathan's feelings, but reveal myself to be as much of a socially anxious, try-hard nerd as he was. Experiencing this brand of comedy was borderline masochistic, and I was never the same afterwards. I began craving the kind of feeling that would later become colloquially known as "cringeworthy" like I craved food. And though I wouldn't be ready to create art like this myself for another six to eight years, the crooked seeds had been planted, and would need to bear jagged fruit eventually. Fielder's work, of course, has since become legendary, and I truly owe him a debt of gratitude for opening me up to allowing myself to be humiliated in the name of creating that most coveted of comedic experiences; the one in which we almost can't bear to let the laughter slip from our lips—perhaps because it is taboo, or perhaps because we feel it will betray us as akin to the person being humiliated. Either way, it's next level stuff, in my opinion, and made me want to be humiliated in a similar manner; albeit one in which I was playing a character a little less painfully close to my own personality. This led to a string of films made during my undergraduate degree at the University of Winnipeg revolving around a young man named Ross St. Clair. Though I conceived of Ross to be what I considered at the time my exact psychological opposite—a highly extroverted, yet lonely soul who tries and fails to seek the social gratification he so greatly desires because of his grave lack of social skills—he did of course bear certain similarities to myself: namely a distinct need to please others, and to appear affable in the face of even the most extreme bullying (toward himself and others, regrettably). And where I felt I saw most of myself was actually in the characters subjected to Ross' persistent and never-ending small talk. I have lived much of my life in fear of running into, and therefore facing the threat of having to grasp at conversation with the

most dreaded of personage: The Acquaintance. (I want to make a horror movie called *The Acquaintance*. It would star a meek little man under 5'8" and 120 lbs, and it would feature him walking around a mall with his parents who are forcing him to try on new clothes because he lives with them and has no money of his own, and he just keeps running into acquaintances who he feels obligated to talk to. It will be horrifying. And based on personal experience, of course). So aesthetic influences aside, Nathan Fielder is my biggest cinematic influence, in terms of tone and subject. I'm most intrigued by stories that make me wince when I think about them, and they are often based on personal experience in some way, or at the very least on people I have interacted with who have caused me great anxiety.

But to find out which filmmakers have influenced the more technical aspects of my work, please turn the page, as I will provide more details in the next chapter, entitled "My Thoughts on the Art of Film Comedy, and Why I Chose to Film My Movie the Way I Did, and Whether or Not I Feel Like I Did a Good Job at That".

My Thoughts on the Art of Film Comedy, and Why I Chose to Film My Movie the Way I Did, and Whether or Not I feel Like I Did a Good Job at That

There is a scene in the brilliant 2023 film *The Feeling That The Time For Doing Something Has Passed*, directed by nebbish New York filmmaker and actor Joanna Arnow, wherein the main character of Ann, played by Arnow, opens a bag of lentil soup, and commences trying to empty its contents into a bowl. Much of the scene plays out in an unedited close-up of Arnow's hands as she struggles to open the bag; gets soup all over her hands and the resealable bag itself; and finally attempts to empty the bag's contents much in the same way a frugal consumer might with a nearly-empty tube of Colgate. The scene is simultaneously entirely mundane, and riddled with layers of absurdity (and one I—and I'm sure many others—found specifically relatable, as someone who has struggled with the most banal of pre-packaged foods: the dreaded Bagged Soup). That Arnow details in an interview with Rico Gagliano of the MUBI Podcast from June 29, 2023 that she now regrets having cut a further ten seconds from this scene, shows the extent to which she was employing what I like to call the “So Long It Becomes Funny Again Shot”. The So Long It Becomes Funny Again Shot, or SLIBFAST™ for short, is merely a single, unedited shot of something very specific that goes on for just a little too long, to the point that it begins to become funny; and then very much not funny anymore; and then hopefully very much funny again simply because it has gone on too long. Its mere presence in the film points out its significance, and then its duration points out its absurdity—partly because of the fact that sitting with this unbroken shot of this mundane thing for so long, is absurd in itself. This is a notion that a Teaching Assistant at the University of Winnipeg first introduced me to when he described what he found funny about my films, and I have thought of it as a badge of

honour ever since. (And I coined SLIBFAST™ myself, so please do not steal this. You may ask for permission to use it yourself, and I'm sure other people have been using this idea to describe their own work for longer than I have, but I specifically coined the acronym just now, so if you are to use it, you *must* credit me, please). Though brevity is thought to be the basis of comedy, I find that sometimes going against that age-old adage is in itself funny—simply *because* it goes against the accepted definition of good comedy. And is therefore meta. And meta is, oftentimes (depending on who you ask) funny. And I wanted to make a film that was both funny, and strange; at least in its tone and basic idea. Did I accomplish this? That notion is detailed further in the chapter (see page 16). But this idea of elongating a scene, or taking too long, is something that I'm fascinated by, and have been employing in my work for a while now. In my third year undergrad film, *Really Great Friend*, for instance, there is a scene wherein the main character, Ross, who has been asking people (unsuccessfully) to come and throw a snowball with him all day, is finally standing out in the middle of a snowy field. And after a moment's pause, he finally does throw a snowball. And then we linger on him. Why? Because it is funny. And it is funny because it is in a wide shot and we cannot see his face, and therefore cannot concretely and viscerally empathize with him (as stated by the great silent film comedian Charlie Chaplin: "Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but comedy in long-shot"), yet by the mere fact of lingering on Ross in that wide shot, I would argue, it begins to become tragic. Because he is alone. Because he has just done something as ridiculous as having thrown a snowball, as an adult man. And that, again, makes it funny, *because* it is tragic; and therefore, the fact that that is tragic, makes it funny. And then, once we have lingered on Ross for a few beats post-snowball throw, he suddenly take off into a run in the opposite direction, and the camera slowly zooms in to see

where he is going, and we see that he is headed in the direction of a public bathroom. And bathrooms, of course, are inherently funny, therefore making the scene “traditionally” funny once again (you can watch the scene here, if you’d like...).

But do I, in my thesis film *A Bunch of Times*, actually employ the SLIBFAST™ system myself?

Or even the So Tragic It Becomes Funny Again Rule (similarly coined, by me, just now, as

STIBFAR™)? I would argue, as far as SLIBFAST™ goes; sort of—and as far as STIBFAR™

goes; sort of, as well. Though I do think that these rules have been used in conjunction well to

create a specific style of absurdity that I have coined called the How Am I Supposed to Feel

About This? Style, or HAISTFATS™, for short. HAISTFATS™ is something I employ often in

my work, and is a state of mind I put the viewer under whereby they do not know how to feel

about what they are seeing—specifically, that they do not know whether to laugh or cry.

HAISTFATS™ is a feeling I first encountered while experiencing the work of Nathan Fielder (as

discussed in great detail in the previous chapter, “Influences”), specifically the masterful series

finale for his hit Comedy Central Show *Nathan For You* (2013-2017), entitled *Finding Frances*.

It is an episode in which I felt both my funny bone as well as my heartstrings fondled,

simultaneously. And it is a beautiful feeling, as those who have experienced it will attest. And

I’m not saying my films come anywhere close to what *Finding Frances* is doing, but I will say

that they are perhaps in the same vein, certainly. Or I have been told, in so many words, that they

are (by a few people over the years, not just that one TA at the University of Winnipeg; though I

did, and still do value his opinion). And no, *A Bunch of Times* does not quite reach the same

heights of HAISTFATS™ as other works of mine (see next chapter, entitled “Do I think This

Film Accomplished Its Goal? That is, to be Both Funny, and Emotionally Interesting: In Short,

Do I Think it Made Anyone Both Laugh, and Cry (Possibly Simultaneously)—AKA HAISTFATS—?”), namely my feature film, *A Social*; but I think, if nothing else, it is barking up the same tree, if you will. That being the tree of HAISTFATS™.

Do I think This Film Accomplished Its Goal? That is, to be Both Funny, and Emotionally Interesting: In Short, Do I Think it Made Anyone Both Laugh, and Cry (Possibly Simultaneously)—AKA HAISTFATS—?

No, in short, I don't think this film entirely lived up to the lofty intentions I had initially set for it. And in order to tell you why, I first need to both complain, and gloat a little bit...

It all started when I submitted the screenplay for *A Bunch of Times* to the Slamdance Film

Festival's annual Screenplay Competition all the way back in 2020. And got this message back:

Dear Tavis Putnam,

Below is your feedback for the 2020 Slamdance Screenplay Competition.

Every entrant receives a few lines of constructive criticism from the first reader to review their work. The feedback includes a logline, genre suggestion and several sentences outlining strengths and weaknesses of your screenplay. It is designed to inspire you to come up with new ways to improve your script and fully realize your artistic vision.

We also highly recommend getting some more in-depth help including a one-on-one consultation with one of our readers at our Screenplay Clinic:

<https://slamdance.com/screenplay/#screenplay-clinic>

The Clinic operates outside of competition.

The following feedback is not an indication of how well your script is doing in our competition. We will not make those decisions until we prepare to announce our quarter-finalists on September 15th, 2020. Please stay tuned!

If you have any questions, email us at submissions@slamdance.com.

TITLE OF SCREENPLAY: A Bunch of Times

TRACKING ID#: 20-21348

GENRE: Black Comedy

LOGLINE: When an earnest stepfather attempts to bond with his new stepson by sexualizing women on TV, he ends up throwing the whole family into unprecedented discomfort.

SHORT FEEDBACK: It's rare to laugh out loud reading a script, but *A Bunch of Times* hits the mark. This feels very much a part of the Slamdance ethos and if the script is ever produced, I would highly recommend the writer submit it for the narrative shorts program of the festival. For future drafts, I would suggest an even more economical pace. It is the kind of short that functions more or less as a single joke and as such, really sings when it can get in and get out. Consider cutting down on the repetitions of Gord making cracks at Game of Kings. Establish the world with as much normalcy as possible (i.e. without winking at the audience and revealing your hand), and then allow it to quickly escalate to the absurd lengths it does. Along with that, it looked like Gord might have been previously named Don. It's a small note, but I think reverting to Don (or something similarly unassuming) helps establish a foundational baseline from which the comedy can spring. It's the, "you can walk through a funny door, you can walk through a door funny, but you can't walk through a funny door funny" line of thought.

Thank you for submitting your script to Slamdance!

Best,
Slamdance Submissions Team

Image 1: An email from the Slamdance Film Festival's Screenwriting Contest, regarding the script for A Bunch of Times

And you can then imagine my surprise, after getting this mostly superlative-laden bit of feedback, when my screenplay was not selected for the next round of the contest. And then was subsequently rejected by the Slamdance Film Festival proper, upon completing the film, just as this Slamdance Screenplay Contest reader had suggested. A reader, you might remember, if you

just so happened to have read the email I have included, who “highly recommended” I submit the film, if it were ever produced. And it were, it were ever produced. And it was not, it was not selected for the Slamdance Film Festival. And so you can imagine my confusion, when it was then not selected for literally any of the other film festivals I submitted it to. And you may be wondering, “did you take this Slamdance Screenplay Contest reader’s advice, and trim the script down to make it a little more concise?” No, I in fact did not. And so I guess you will not imagine my surprise when the vast majority of the feedback I have received on the film often pertains directly to the notion that the film needs to be trimmed down a little bit. And you will further not imagine my surprise when I continued to submit it to festivals anyway, and subsequently continued to receive rejection letters across the board. So do I think this film was successful? Well, if you take film festival submissions as a litmus test for success, then certainly not. Do I think the film is funny? Yes—well, I used to. I don’t know anymore. But I have also entered into the faze of Not Knowing What To Think of My Film Anymore, or NKWTTOMFA™, as I have coined it. I do like that it goes on a little too long, as I have discussed earlier, hence my reference to the SLIBFAST™ style of comedy that I pioneered in the mid-to-late 2010s whilst studying at the University of Winnipeg. That said, I can see, having now sat through more than a few screenings of the film (not at film festivals of great repute; though fun, delightful festivals nonetheless), that maybe I could have trimmed the beginning a touch. Maybe gotten into the film a little quicker. But that’s it. Did I need to include all of the kitschy suburban nuclear family-core paraphernalia at the beginning? Did I need the metaphorically-charged kettle corn pan about to reach its pop-zenith? Did I need the (I maintain that this was my intention:) *deliberately* cheesy expository scene with Gord and Susan talking about Kevin before they watch *Game of Kings*? I

think so(?). But do I wish I could have made a five minute version of this film that still built up in the same way, and maintained its sense of SLIBFAS™? Yes, of course. Its chances of playing at at least one film festival of repute would have likely doubled, at least. And isn't that what we're all searching for, in this world? To have our films programmed at a film festival of repute? I would argue that a growing number of people would rank that in the top three things they would love to have happen in their lifetime. And I, somewhat regrettably, am one of them. So, will I cut five minutes from this film? You'll have to stay tuned to find out. And you'll have to stay tuned to find out where, exactly, to stay tuned to.

In Conclusion: If You Think This Thesis Paper is a Joke, And if You Think I Had Fun Writing it, You Are Sorely Mistaken

If you think this thesis paper is a joke, and if you think I had fun writing it, you are sorely mistaken. This thesis paper is not a joke, and I did not have fun writing it. In fact, this thesis paper makes a lot of good, serious points about comedy, which is usually a fun topic to write about, but because it had to be directly related to my own thesis film, and because I had to write it in order to graduate (and I felt obligated to graduate), it was certainly not fun to write. So please don't think this was a cakewalk, as they say, for me. Or for the people who had to read it (either as a stipulation of their employment at York University, or as a stipulation of being a loved one of mine). All I have ever wanted is to be taken seriously as a great comedic mind, as well as an academic. To preserve and to further the art of film comedy is something that means a great deal to me, and has since the moment I realized that there are some people in the world who think the films I have made are at least somewhat funny. So please don't think that this was easy for me, or that this is just a big joke. I am a serious person, and I deserve to be taken seriously as a serious person.

As previously stated, this paper was not fun to write. And to be honest, I resent having to have written it at all. And as I stated in my introduction, I do not feel that writing about my own films is a fruitful exercise. That said, do I, now that I have come to the end of this thesis paper, feel like going through this most painful and possibly pointless exercise made me appreciate the film more, or made me reflect on it in a way that may provide some kind of artistic levelling-up, for lack of a better word? In short, not really. I think I had already come to terms with what worked and did not work with this film before I sat down to write the first page of this paper, and I do not

feel like writing this paper helped me to appreciate the film any more than I already do: that is to say, sort of. And will I go back and edit the crucial couple of minutes out of the film to make it potentially more palatable for festival programmers and audiences alike? Maybe. I haven't decided yet. And as stated in chapter 6 (entitled "Do I think This Film Accomplished Its Goal? That is, to be Both Funny, and Emotionally Interesting: In Short, Do I Think it Made Anyone Both Laugh, and Cry (Possibly Simultaneously)—AKA HAISTFATS—?"), you will have to stay tuned to find out whether or not I do decide to edit it again. And as stated before, you will have to stay tuned to find out what mode of communication to stay tuned to, in order to find out the information that may lead to the aforementioned potential information. So, that's what I have to say about that.

With all that out of the way, I'd sincerely now like to sincerely thank you for reading this borderline manifesto-esque thesis paper to the end. I understand how affected and inane most of it is. Truly I do. I wrote it that way on purpose. For the most part. There are some good points in there as well, but I understand that they are few and far between. So thank you for bearing with me. I hope I get to graduate.

And again, as stated in Chapter 1, entitled "Introduction", don't think that I will be writing more than twenty (or so) pages, because I will cut myself off at exactly twenty (or so) pages. Mark my words. I will not (barring the requisite "Works Cited" page, of course) go past "(or so)".

Works Cited

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“Life is a tragedy when seen in close-up, but a comedy in long-shot.” - Charlie Chaplin

Richard Roud, “The Baggy-Trousered Philanthropist”, quoted in obituary, The Guardian (London, Dec. 28, 1977)

The quotation, phrased slightly differently, also appears as the title page quotation of Gerith von Ulm’s 1940 biography ‘Charlie Chaplin: King of Tragedy’: “Comedy is Life viewed from a distance; Tragedy, Life in a close-up.”