

BUDGET CUTS
by Fred Coppersmith

INT. SMALL OFFICE-DAY

MURPHY and HOWARDS sit behind a desk. Enter DANNY.

MURPHY:
Hey there, Danny. C'mon in. Have a seat.

DANNY:
(sitting)
Thanks.

HOWARDS:
Danny, we wanted to talk with you about this new comedy sketch you submitted for the show this week.

DANNY:
Oh? Is there a problem with it?

MURPHY:
No, no, it's fine, Danny. It's just—

DANNY:
Because if it's about the chickens...

MURPHY:
No, no, the chickens are fine, Danny. They're funny animals. It's just—

HOWARDS:
Danny, the thing is, and I don't know if you've noticed this or not, but we've had some pretty big budget cuts in production lately.

DANNY:
Oh.

HOWARDS:
And so, with your permission, we'd like to make one or two small changes in the script you submitted. You know, see if we can't maybe make it a little more cost-effective.

MURPHY:
Specifically, we were wondering if, instead of making the main character an astronaut like you did, if maybe he could be an average college student.

DANNY:

I see.

HOWARDS:

And instead of visiting the moon, maybe he could visit Bellefonte.

DANNY:

Bellefonte?

HOWARDS:

There's not much atmosphere there either, Danny.

MURPHY:

(to HOWARDS)

Hey, that's pretty good.

HOWARDS:

Thanks. And Bellefonte doesn't require sets either. You've got to respect that about it.

DANNY:

But what about the aliens the guy meets? Won't aliens look a little out of place in Bellefonte?

HOWARDS:

(laughs)

You've never been there before, have you, Danny?

MURPHY:

Besides, I don't think we have the money in the budget for aliens. We'd like him to meet someone else, if that's okay.

DANNY:

Who?

HOWARDS:

Bob.

DANNY:

Bob?

HOWARDS:

Bob. He's a homeless man who lives in Bellefonte.

MURPHY:

He's got *great* comedic timing.

HOWARDS:

And he'll work for soup. That's always a plus.

DANNY:
(disbelieving)
You want me to write a sketch about a college student who meets a homeless man eating soup in Bellefonte?

MURPHY:
Hmm. You know, when you put it like that, maybe you're right. Do we really need the college student?

HOWARDS:
(nodding in agreement)
It *does* seem like needless clutter.

MURPHY:
And we'd probably have to get him soup, too.

HOWARDS:
Well yes, that's only fair.
(beat)
So it's settled then. We cut the college student altogether and just focus on Bob.

DANNY:
But—

MURPHY:
He's got *great* comedic timing.

HOWARDS:
Personally, I think he could carry the entire show.

MURPHY:
(eagerly agreeing)
Oh definitely.

DANNY:
(disbelieving)
You want an entire show about a homeless man in Bellefonte?

MURPHY:
Is that a problem?

DANNY:
Well...

MURPHY:
His soup-eating skills are second to none.

HOWARDS:
It's true. You have to see it to believe it.

DANNY:
What's so special about soup? It's just a bowl
and a spoon and—

HOWARDS:
A bowl! Yes! *That's* what we need!

MURPHY:
I think we may have one somewhere in the prop
department.

HOWARDS:
Excellent!

MURPHY:
It may be a little dusty, though.

HOWARDS:
Well that's okay. Bob's a trooper. He'll make it
work. Thank you, Danny! A bowl. That's an
excellent idea!

DANNY:
But—

MURPHY:
It's why you're one of our favorite writers on the
staff.

DANNY:
(pleasantly surprised)
Really? I am?

HOWARDS:
Oh absolutely. Bowls, spoons—that's comedy gold,
Danny.

DANNY:
Gee...thanks.

MURPHY:
I really think that screenwriting class you're
taking is starting to pay off.

DANNY:
(now very pleased with himself)
Really? Wow. Thank you.

HOWARDS:
Now I want you to go home, Danny, get some rest,
and try and come up with a list of funny soups
that you think Bob can eat on the show next week.

MURPHY:
He's especially partial to chowder.

HOWARDS:
And tomorrow, if there's time, maybe you can take
a trip to the supermarket and buy them for us.
How does that sound?

DANNY:
(rising, enthusiastic)
Great! I'll get right on it!

HOWARDS:
Thatta boy!

MURPHY:
Go get 'em, tiger!

Exit DANNY.

MURPHY:
Well that went well.

HOWARDS:
I thought so.

SALLY appears at the door.

SALLY:
You guys wanted to see me?

HOWARDS:
Ah yes, Sally, c'mon in. We wanted to talk to you
about the sketch you wrote for next week's show.

SALLY:
Oh?

MURPHY:
Sally, how do you feel about soup...?

FADE TO BLACK.