

"S h a k e I t U P "(8)

written by

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FADE IN:

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INT. BASEMENT - MORNING

A lava lamp wheezes like a dying asthmatic. A blow-up doll in a Christmas sweater leans against a treadmill, half-deflated, looking as disappointed as Gary's life choices.

GARY DAWSON (40s, basement-marinated, duck pajama pants, cold pizza on chest) scrolls on a buffering laptop. He flips through unopened mail:

FINAL NOTICE.

EVICTIION THREAT.

PLANET FITNESS: PLEASE RETURN OUR TOWELS AND ALSO OUR TRUST.

GARY  
(cheerful denial)  
This is fine.

A THUD upstairs. Dust snow-angels from the ceiling.

MARLENE (50s, nurse, professional scowler) stomps down the stairs like a tax auditor crossed with a drill sergeant.

MARLENE  
Did you clog the upstairs toilet  
again?

GARY  
(lying instantly)  
No.

MARLENE  
It was full of Hot Wheels.

GARY  
...could be anybody's.

She clocks his duck pants, sighs with her whole soul.

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INT. KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Gary rummages in the fridge. He grabs a mason jar: "LAXATIVE SMOOTHIE (FOR CONSTIPATION PATIENTS)." He CHUGS.

MARLENE  
Gary! That's medicine!

GARY  
(relieved)  
Tastes like accountability.

MARLENE  
In thirty minutes you're going to  
evacuate the 90s.

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EXT. GARY'S HOUSE - DAY

Gary waddles toward Marlene's minivan. A job interview  
printout sticks to his shoe like a desperate résumé.

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INT. MINIVAN - MOVING - DAY

Gary's stomach ROARS. He grabs a MAGIC 8 BALL from the cup  
holder.

GARY  
Should I stop for a bathroom?

Shake. OUTLOOK NOT SO GOOD.

GARY (CONT'D)  
(nods, loyal)  
Copy that, Commander.

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INT. CORPORATE LOBBY - DAY

Sweat. Trembling cheeks. He sits. A SONIC BRASSY HONK escapes  
—like a foghorn begging forgiveness.

GARY  
That was the chair.

He shifts. Another, wetter, sadder sound.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Very... old chair.

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INT. INTERVIEW ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Two stone-faced INTERVIEWERS. Gary plops the 8 Ball on the table like legal counsel.

INTERVIEWER #1  
Why should we hire you?

Shake. ASK AGAIN LATER.

GARY  
Ask again later.

INTERVIEWER #2  
Excuse me?

Gary's stomach KLAXONS.

GARY  
I have to—

(bolts)  
—network.

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INT. OFFICE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

STALL DOOR rattles. Apocalypse inside. Sounds of brass band, whale song, and human regret. Somewhere, a janitor crosses himself.

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EXT. OFFICE - LATER

Gary emerges twenty pounds lighter. Toilet paper trails his shoe like a scarf.

GARY  
(to 8 Ball)  
We crushed it.

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INT. OLIVE GARDEN - NIGHT

Blind date. SHANNON (30s, patience hanging by a thread).

SHANNON  
Do you want kids?

Shake. BETTER NOT TELL YOU NOW.

GARY  
Better not tell you now.

SHANNON  
...Cool. Super normal.

Gary slurps a breadstick like a shop-vac. Accidentally rockets another out his nose.

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EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Shannon peels off. Gary, Alfredo-splattered, consults the orb.

Shake. SIGNS POINT TO YES.

He strides confidently... slips on rogue spaghetti and FACEPLANTS.

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INT. PET STORE - DAY

OWNER (60s, grumpy, one finger missing) eyes Gary.

OWNER  
Experience with animals?

Shake. YES.

GARY  
Huge.

OWNER  
You start now.

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INT. PET STORE - KENNELS - LATER

Gary scoops steaming mountains. A Chihuahua attacks his shoe. A PARROT squawks:

PARROT  
Loser! Loser! Fat ass!

GARY  
Cool bird. I'll see you in a  
sandwich.

Parrot drops payload on his shoulder. Bullseye.

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INT. PET STORE - FRONT COUNTER - DAY

TINA (30s, scrappy-cute, weaponized wit) watches a Great Dane  
drag Gary like a mop.

TINA  
You're new?

GARY  
Gary. Head of Canine... Poop  
Logistics.

She smirks despite herself.

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EXT. PARKING LOT - AFTER WORK

GARY  
Should I ask Tina out?

Shake. WITHOUT A DOUBT. He beams.

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INT. OLIVE GARDEN (AGAIN) - NIGHT

Gary in Marlene's old prom tux—buttons stressed like  
submarine bolts.

TINA  
What's with the penguin formal?

GARY  
Respect for carbs.

He produces the 8 Ball.

TINA  
What is that?

GARY  
My life coach.

He shakes. Orders spaghetti.

CUT TO: SAUCE SHRAPNEL NAILS NEARBY DINERS. A CHILD  
WEEPS. A WAITER SIGHS INTO THE VOID.

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INT. TINA'S APARTMENT - LATER

Couch. Cozy vibe. A CAT eyes Gary's crotch.

TINA  
Do you want to kiss me?

Shake. MY SOURCES SAY NO.

GARY  
My sources say no.

TINA  
Your sources suck.

Gary panics, leans in-CLACK! teeth. Cat launches at his lap.

GARY  
(helpless falsetto)  
Not the nuggets!

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INT. BASEMENT - NEXT MORNING

Gary, scratch-tattooed, glares at the 8 Ball.

GARY  
You're supposed to help, not  
cockblock.

MARLENE (with laundry)  
You're arguing with a snow globe.

GARY (CONT'D)  
It listens.

MARLENE  
It's full of dye and lies. Like  
your LinkedIn.

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EXT. STREET - DAY

Gary's clunker dies. Shake. SIGNS POINT TO YES.

GARY  
Yes to what?!

Hood SLAMS his face. He stumbles into a PORTA-POTTY being craned.

Crane LIFTS. Porta-potty SWINGS over traffic.

GARY (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Not like this!

It tips. SHT-WATER TSUNAMI\* baptizes the street.

Gary, dripping, consults the 8 Ball.

LOOKS GOOD.

GARY (CONT'D)  
You're sick.

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INT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Gary before JUDGE. 8 Ball on the stand.

JUDGE  
How do you plead?

Shake. YES.

GARY  
Yes.

JUDGE  
Yes... guilty?

GARY  
...Yes?

JUDGE  
Case dismissed. I need a  
sabbatical.

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INT. PET STORE - "TOUR" - DAY

Gary leads kids.

GARY  
Fun fact: fish can't drown.

KID  
My dad says you're on a list.

Tank collapses. Goldfish spelunks into Gary's pants.

GARY  
Buddy, avoid the worm!

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INT. BOWLING ALLEY - NIGHT

DUKE (40s, mullet, lovable chaos) bowls with Gary.

DUKE  
You let a novelty ball run your  
life.

GARY  
It's mystical.

Shake. WITHOUT A DOUBT.

DUKE  
It's upside down.

On TV: Gary's porta-tsunami clip. Caption: #SPLASHZONE.  
Viral.

DUKE (CONT'D)  
Congrats, you're famous.

GARY  
For butt broth.

College kids chant "SPLASH! ZONE!" One asks Gary to autograph  
a roll of toilet paper.

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INT. CAR - MOVING - NIGHT

8 Ball buckled like a toddler.

DUKE

What's the endgame, Gare-bear?

GARY

Tina notices me, I get a job, move  
out of my sister's basement... into  
her garage. Dream big, start small.

Shake. OUTLOOK GOOD.

Fist-bump. Duke's weirdly touched.

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INT. TINA'S APARTMENT - SECOND DATE - NIGHT

Charcuterie. Candles. Two judgmental cats.

TINA

Ground rules: if you check with  
your orb, make it fun, not weird.

GARY

Fun, not weird is legally my middle  
name.

Mini-montage:

8 Ball "chooses" playlist: German techno yodeling.

He digs cork from litter box.

Laughs anyway. Chemistry sparks.

TINA

No toy. Just you.

He pockets it. They kiss. Cats glare.

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INT. DMV - DAY

CLERK, dead inside.

CLERK

Read the letters.

Gary shakes 8 Ball at eye chart. ASK AGAIN LATER.

CLERK (CONT'D)

Sir.

Driving test.

INSTRUCTOR  
Left at the light.

Shake. BETTER NOT.

Gary goes right-into a CAR WASH. Spinning wipers thrash them.  
They emerge sparkling.

INSTRUCTOR (CONT'D)  
(trauma-bonded)  
...Pass.

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INT. STRIP MALL - NIGHT

Sign: BEGINNER'S YOGA. Gary walks into the wrong door:  
TANTRIC GOAT YOGA.

A GOAT mounts him mid-pose. He crashes into an oils display.  
Slip'N Slides across mats. Gong collapses on bachelorette  
party. He flees, oil-slick, pants ripped, pursued by horny  
goat.

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INT. PET STORE - STORAGE - DAY

Gary unveils whiteboard: "ADOPTION FAIR PLAN (NO CHAOS!!!)"

Tents

Water stations

Quiet corner

NO GOATS (underlined)

TINA  
You did this... yourself?

GARY  
I asked the 8 Ball if I should try.  
It said yes. The trying part...  
that's me.

She almost kisses him—OWNER barges in.

OWNER  
Don't screw this.

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EXT. CITY PARK - ADOPTION FAIR - DAY

Festive chaos. Dogs in bowties. Meat Influencer fires HOT DOG CANNON.

Montage: Gary actually competent. Tina smitten.

Reporter interviews him.

REPORTER  
Viral "Splash Zone" now helping  
pets-

Gary panics, grabs orb.

TINA  
You. Not it.

He breathes. Delivers heartfelt speech. Applause.

Then fireworks misfire. Dogs bolt. Pug lifts via balloons.  
Gary ricochets through booths. Mayhem.

Finally, Gary SLAMS the 8 Ball. CRACK. Goo oozes.

GARY  
It was my only "yes."

TINA  
I said yes.

Cue: Fireworks about to explode. Gary belly-flops, saves the day. Crowd cheers.

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INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT

Gary shadow-boxes cracked 8 Ball die. Marlene softens, hands him a garage key.

MARLENE  
Laundry's in there. Don't drink  
detergent.

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INT. PET STORE - NEXT MORNING

Tally board: 31 PETS ADOPTED! Owner grudgingly proud.

OWNER  
Assistant Manager?

GARY  
A.M.— After-Midnight bad texts.

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INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Gary volunteers with therapy dog. Marlene sees him doing good.

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EXT. THRIFT STORE - DAY

Gary sees knockoff Magic 9 Ball. He sets it down.

DUKE  
Who are you?

GARY  
I know, right?

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INT. TINA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Pasta night. Food fight. Flour avalanche. Fire alarm. They laugh and kiss.

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INT. DAYTIME TALK SHOW - DAY

Gary and Tina with puppies.

HOST  
What changed?

GARY  
I said yes to being the guy who  
cleans up the mess—even mine. Turns  
out that guy's useful.

Puppy sneezes in his mouth.

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INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Gary's makeshift apartment. Shadow box with 8 Ball die. Photo with Tina, Marlene, Duke, and bald poodle.

Text from Tina: "Movie night? You decide."

GARY  
Action... comedy... horror... live  
dangerously.

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EXT. BOARDWALK - DAY (EPILOGUE)

Gary and Tina walk poodle. KID shakes brand new 8 Ball.

KID  
Will I be famous?

GARY  
Doesn't matter what it says. You  
decide.

Kid shakes: DON'T COUNT ON IT.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Then make it wrong.

Kid lights up. Tina squeezes Gary's hand.

TINA  
Corn dog?

GARY  
Without a doubt.

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MID-CREDITS STINGER - INT. CITY HALL - DAY

Gary sworn in as "City Animal Safety Czar." A therapy llama eats the Mayor's corsage. Hot Dog Cannon tips, chaos erupts.

Gary calmly whistles Jaws theme—everything freezes. Applause.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Still counts.

SMASH TO BLACK.

TITLE CARD: Sometimes you need a nudge... but you make the move.

THE END